

Over the last couple of months, I have been gaining the experience of a lifetime, while being a Practicum student at one of the very few one-room schools left in our area. This school is called Valley Elementary, and it is located in the remote Southfork Valley of Cody, Wyoming. As it sits in a rural and gorgeous mountainous setting, this unique teaching opportunity has provided many students with a hands-on learning journey that has beautifully blended traditional pedagogy, with the realities of a multi-age classroom. I have been assigned to observe, assist small groups, and sometimes instruct a group of 5 students, all very diverse in their learning needs, spanning across 1st through 3rd grade levels, in subjects anywhere from reading and math to art and science. With many added variables such as the challenge for schools like Valley Elementary like lack of resources and personnel, varying academic needs, and the close-knit nature of the school community has been providing me with invaluable lessons that will create lifelong skills in adaptability, creativity, and classroom management. The experience also has fostered a deeper understanding for me of the dynamics of rural education and the vital role that teacher flexibility and community involvement plays in every student's success, no matter where the school is. This reflection highlights the transformative nature of teaching in both rural and regular public schools, and the critical skills developed in managing diverse learning environments while cultivating meaningful educational relationships, creativity, and always ensuring an element of fun is involved.