

The FLE(x) of Teaching for Transformation in Action at ACS

The culmination of the learning that happens during Teaching for Transformation (TfT) is the Formational Learning Experience, or FLE(x). This experience is when the students do real work for real people with real needs. The idea behind the FLE(x) is that students apply their learning in meaningful ways, actively living out the throughlines that are displayed and talked about in each classroom, practicing the kingdom work they are being equipped to participate in as Christ followers. Our goal is to give students opportunities to live into these throughlines in authentic ways, following the TfT approach learning by presenting FLE(x) throughout a student's time at ACS. Below are two FLE(x) examples at ACS this year.

8th Grade Family Life Center FLE(x)

(written by Rebeka Mesbergen)

This FLE(x) started with Real People. Through what can only be explained by the Holy Spirit's mysterious ways, I found myself drawn to the Family Life Center (The FLC is a maternity home that offers housing and various kinds of support to homeless young women facing an unwanted pregnancy.) of Allendale. I invited Rochel Prah, the FLC's executive director, in for a visit. At the end of our 45-minute conversation, I knew that God had exciting plans for this relationship between ACS 8th graders and FLC staff and residents. I had a whole notebook page filled with Real Needs that my 8th graders could meet with Real Work connecting to our language arts curriculum.



The next step was to invite the students in and give them voice into how they wanted to use their abilities and interests in this work. Rochel returned for a second visit--this time with the 8th graders--and she brought with her two residents (one of whom brought her newborn daughter)! After learning about what the FLC is, how it serves its residents, and what some of its needs are, the students and I settled into having three different groups. One group is practicing their oral communication skills as they interview staff and residents to learn their stories. Another group is taking those stories and sharing them through technology, learning about how different social media are used and how to share stories and information online with integrity. The third group is taking the stories of the interviews and crafting them into writing to be shared via a FLC blog.

As the students are learning more about how to use God's gift of communication well, they are compelled to wrestle with our class storyline: Who Am I? Who Do I Want To Be? While they love to be on their phones and use various devices for anything and everything, these students are also being invited to ponder who God has created them to be in their use of communication. And this is not just on technology but in how they interact with whomever God puts in their path each day.



During our opening reflection, we predicted that Loving Communicators would be the Throughline we lived into the most. And it is! But we also discovered that God is giving us ways to be Image Reflectors, Servant Workers, and Community Builders.

And in all of this, our ultimate goal is to tell this little part of God's Big Story! Each staff member and resident at the Family Life Center is a part of God's story. Each 8th grader is a part of God's story. God is at work redeeming His world through each one of us! To Him be all praise and glory!

7th/8th Grade Ottawa County Water FLE(x)

(written by Nathan Wiechel)

My Deep Hope for the unit is that we could practice earth keeping and community building as we discover ways to decrease our impact on the water around us.

Beginning last spring and through the summer I was made aware of the some water issues beginning to crop up for some in Ottawa County. In middle school science we learn about the water cycle, the watershed, and our impacts (positive and negative) on the watershed. Through some connections at the Outdoor Discovery Center, I was able to connect the students with Paul Sachs, the director of Planning and Performance in Ottawa County. He was able to share stories of people running out of water, or experiencing an increase of salt content in their water. As a class, we spent time modeling how water flows, how wells work, what a watershed is, and how humans impact areas around them. Through all of this, we learned more about how God's Story and our story are connected - even in things like the water cycle and water availability. I created a website to gather some of their reflections and public service announcements that the 7th graders made.

We would love to share what we learned!

<https://sites.google.com/allendalechristian.com/ottawacountywater/home>