



### *Day in the Life of a Sixth Grade Teacher*

Donovan White arrives at Artesian Community School this Monday morning at 7:18 AM—two minutes before the time teachers are required to arrive at school. Mr. White generally arrives 15-20 minutes early so that he can get his thoughts together and make any final copies before the majority of the staff arrive, but his wife had an early meeting this morning, and he was in charge of getting the kids fed, dressed, and to daycare.

At 7:20, all the staff meet in the cafeteria for a quick whip-around to hear important updates of what is going on at school this week. Tuesday through Friday, only members of the Leadership Team, one representative from each Teaching Team, and the Special Education Director meet for this whip-around.

The doors to the cafeteria open at 7:30, when students begin arriving for breakfast. Two Academic Coaches man their posts at the homework collection and extra help tables and the Executive Director and Principal begin greeting students individually as they walk into the cafeteria. One Character Coach stands nearby checking uniforms.

Mr. White teaches three science classes to a total of 80 students and one Social Studies class to 26 of those 80 students each day. The Special Education teacher, Mrs. Willis, co-teaches with him during one of his Science classes, in which 15 of the 33 students are classified as needing accommodations through special education services. Mr. White never co-taught before this year, but the Artesian Leadership Team has continued to provide useful and practical professional development on co-teaching best practices and expectations for a co-teaching environment, so his partnership with Mrs. Willis seems natural. He has learned a lot from her this year on how to implement small-group intervention strategies during independent practice time when he is on his own in his other three classes.

Since he teaches social studies and science back-to-back, Mr. White heads to his classroom to prepare for his first two classes and writes the standards-driven aim for the day, a “Do Now” to immediately engage students in their work, a high-level agenda, and that night’s homework assignment on the whiteboard for both classes.

At 7:55, Mr. White stands in the doorway of his classroom to greet his students. Five students are already lined up in the hallway, chatting quietly while they wait. Because of PBIS, he is able to reinforce students’ positive and appropriate behavior during various school settings and is constantly on the lookout for ways to reward students for doing the right thing. He signs all five students’ Artesian Attitude debit cards, giving them each 1 Artesian Asset, as recognition that they were choosing proper behavior in the hallway. At 8:00, the bell rings signaling the official start of class. Any students entering the classroom after this point are considered tardy. An Academic Coach enters the classroom to take attendance in PowerSchool while Mr. White circulates through the classroom checking his students’ progress on their Do Now.

After teaching social studies and then science, Mr. White has a planning break from 9:45-10:30 and then teaches his second science class, followed by 40 minutes of planning. Today he makes two phone calls home to parents during this break because he won't have time after school due to a faculty meeting. Mr. White tries to make at least one positive call to a parent each day which ensures that each of his 80 students' parents are called at least twice a year, and then as needed, he calls parents if students are falling behind academically. The second phone call is to one of his Advisee's parents for their weekly check-in.

During his second planning period, Mr. White enjoys reading and catching up on articles from his Zite app on his iPad. However, once a week on Mondays, Mr. White eats lunch with any of his students who have accumulated at least 10 Artesian Assets since the previous Wednesday. He and his Team of teachers decided to each own one day a week where they would incentivize their students in such a way. For example, Ms. Boyd's fiancé played football for the University of Mississippi, and he comes each Thursday after school to play football with any SEC students who earned at least 10 Artesian Assets *and* who grew at least one level toward one of their growth goals in their Growth Plan.

At 12:15 Mr. White teaches his final Science class and then enjoys a full 60 minute planning period each day. A fourth year teacher, he was burned out from his last job—just two years working in a charter school; the long hours and seemingly never-ending expectations from the staff meant planning for his classes late at night or most of the weekend. He moved to the charter school because he wanted to make more of a difference in the classroom with students who were further behind. He loved his kids but didn't feel he was able to provide them with the education, emotional support, and attention they deserved. Although skeptical about working in another charter school, Artesian's Principal shared a compelling teacher schedule with at least 3 hours of planning time built into the daily schedule. Artesian lived up to its promise—he has 2 hours and 25 minutes daily to plan for his classes. Eighty additional minutes are a common planning time for him and his Teaching Team, while their students go to a combination of PE, electives, or tutoring.

It is mandatory to spend this time, beginning at 2:05, with his Team, but it is very worthwhile because for 45 minutes each day they get to really focus on individual student needs and discuss and plan strategies to tailor instruction for students needing intervention or acceleration.

At 2:50, other staff who are a part of the full SEC Support Team—the Character Coach and Academic Coaches—join the Teaching Team. Two days each week, their students' achievement data drives the discussion: they determine whether to adjust curriculum plans or pacing, talk about how best to group the students into small groups during independent practice in class, or discuss with the Academic Coaches about which skills particular groups of students should focus on. Once a week, the ADAA and/or Principal join in these meetings to add any insights or simply to be able to hold them accountable to their plans. The other three days each week, the Support Team spends their 35 minutes together discussing individual students and their needs—academically, socially, and emotionally. Because there is a prescribed agenda with expectations for specific outcomes (including updating the students' Growth Plans to be sent home) for each student discussion, the Support Team is able to confer over an average of 5 students a day, or 15

students each week—meaning that each student in the SEC cohort is discussed individually at least once every six weeks.

It is now 3:35 PM and time for Mr. White's Advisory class. He looks forward to this class each day, as he has been assigned 9 sixth grade boys, and they have all become very close over the past couple of months. On Thursdays, the Advisory curriculum is based on mini-lessons reinforcing Artesian's Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS) system. Tuesdays and Wednesdays the curriculum is centered on team building, self-esteem, and Artesian's values, and Fridays are times for the students to evaluate their Growth Plans and for celebrating their progress with the Advisory. Once a month, the whole school meets during this time for a Community Meeting. Today—Monday, Mr. White's Advisory is exploring different learning styles, and next week, they will tie individual learning styles into ways to more efficiently study.

At 4:00, the bell rings, and Mr. White escorts his young men to the locker area, where they get the materials they'll need that night. Mr. White stands by the lockers as a hall monitor in the afternoons during dismissal. This afternoon he signs two students' Artesian Attitude debit cards as they demonstrate responsibility (picking up a crumpled paper in the hallway and throwing it away) and respect (making eye contact with another student while speaking and then holding the door open for her).

At 4:05 PM, Mr. White walks with a couple colleagues to the library for a faculty meeting. The Executive Director intentionally designed after-school meetings to begin at 4:07 as a reminder that every minute counts and that it is important to respect the Team's time. The meeting starts with updates from the Executive Director about interim assessment and behavior data, and she surprises two teachers with tickets to the Grizzlies game this weekend for going above and beyond expectations the past couple of weeks. The Principal leads professional development on a classroom management strategy from Teach Like A Champion, and everyone breaks into small groups to role play while the Leadership Team circulates to give pointers. Mr. White and his two partners are called up to the front to redo their role play for the entire faculty. The three of them each receive a \$5 gift card to Starbucks for demonstrating Fortitude and Growth Mindset in front of the group. By 4:55 PM, the faculty meeting is finished, and Mr. White packs up for home.