Participating in practicum field experience this year provided me a number of learning opportunities. Right from the beginning we were out in the community exploring the importance of place, allowing me to recognize how much community effects the attitudes, dispositions, and overall mindsets of not only students, but teachers. We were able to openly share our preconceived notions, explore misconceptions, and then build a true understanding of what community means throughout our practicum experience, which led me to understand the importance of reflection. After spending six months there, believing that it was a place where people kept to themselves, I saw how close the community truly is, and how caring they are for each other. I hope to continue watching this community build stronger bonds as I enter my student teaching (provided I am still placed there). From this initial experience I realized the importance of cultural context within the classroom, and although I have yet to take that up in my two teaching experiences, I plan on doing so in my student teaching and future practice.

Beginning my experience in the classroom, I was unsure of my place as a practicum student. I did not know what authority I had in the classroom, nor where I was supposed to be in terms teacher-student relationships. From my extended experience in the classroom I built strong bonds with my students. I intentionally spent several months learning every single name, and this simple change from winter to spring quarter allowed me to see the engagement difference that students display when you call them by their name. I learned how much simply saying “good morning [name]” when they walk in can make a real difference for some students. Having the chance to apply the theory we learned extensively in Teacher Identity and Diversity, as well as Adolescent Development allowed me to see the reality that is the high school classroom. It also helped me solidify my position as a facilitator of learning in the classroom. Extending my learning from winter into spring with Instructional Practices for Classroom Management, and my belief that students are people who deserve to be spoken to with respect all the time, allowed me to take steps toward classroom management that I would never have been able to in the fall. Moving from the awkward phase of being a stranger in the room, to knowing everyone’s names, to finally in my second microteaching managing the classroom by myself (with a sub in the room) because my mentor teacher was sick, truly displays how much I have grown as a teacher candidate.
In my first microteaching I did not have any idea how to maintain the attention of my class, except by just trying to maintain their attention with the lesson itself. I taught transformations of parent functions, and the first day it was mostly lecture. This was my first mistake, talking too much to the class as a whole. This created a power struggle where I was trying to keep their attention and they just wanted to do their group work, causing my mentor teacher to intervene, shushing the class on at least two occasions. Not only did this frustrate me, because I would never have shushed the class, but it made me realize that I did not have the tools to maintain their attention myself. In my second microteaching I took deliberate steps toward creating a more engaging lesson, as well as limiting my lecture time, but I was still talking too much. In this second microteaching experience I taught quadratic word problems, and told a little story about my dog’s yard, which engaged the class more than my first microteaching, but the conversation I had about the logistics of the lesson pushed my talking time too far. At this point I did have more tools to maintain their attention and keep a rapport up, recognizing that the room was drifting and promising to be done soon. Only from these experiences did I truly realize that I need to create a classroom experience where student voices are heard more than my own. Although I had read this in many of the strands, I hadn’t really seen the practice, and having the chance to experiment with it in the field allowed me to start understanding how independent students can be. I do have a ways to go in creating a classroom space where students take initiative and act as self-managers, but this year has been a wonderful beginning to finding my place as a classroom facilitator.

Having the chance to facilitate learning in the classroom from the beginning also allowed me to solidify the distinction between teacher and tutor. As my mentor teacher has noticed, I still struggle to push myself into the role of teacher and out of the role of tutor in the classroom, but from my first microteaching to my second I believe I have taken steps toward becoming a more efficient questioner, monitor, and facilitator of learning. From fall to winter quarter my mentor teacher noticed that I needed to take more initiative in the classroom, to be another teacher in the room, which I took up in my first microteaching, but I still needed to be more of a teacher and less of a peer tutor. In my first microteaching I found myself as more of a wanderer in the classroom because my lesson plans were really vague and
although I had planned what to say in the beginning, I did not have questions I could ask students to help them move forward, so I became the tutor when working with groups. This was noted for me in my faculty feedback for the first microteaching assignment, and so in my second microteaching, I gave myself a list of explicit questions I could ask students when they got stuck, and I kept a monitoring sheet so I could select and sequence groups to present in the discussion to follow the group work. Keeping these back pocket questions did allow me to better facilitate student responsibility for their own learning, but I still found myself falling into the role of tutor, so this is something I hope to improve upon in my continued field experience. Working on my presence in the classroom is definitely something I hope to do in my student teaching, but also how I use student work to inform my next steps.

In my first microteaching I had no real skills in saying what would happen next after seeing that my students were struggling with the material I was presenting them. I took their pleas to not have the test because I recognized that even the most diligent students were struggling, and my mentor teacher and I figured out that a formative assessment where I collected their worksheets would allow me to see their growth, while causing the least amount of damage. The decision my mentor teacher finally made was to not cover the material again, but rather let it go. After this experience and a chat with my mentor teacher, I gathered I had a pacing problem, that I was trying to fit way too much material into three days, and this is something I explicitly addressed in my second microteaching. For my second planning and teaching experience my mentor teacher and I planned a two week sequence of building word problems so that students would have a firm grounding in the material before they were tested. I believed that my lesson plans were sound, but by the end of this experience students were again pleading to not have a test, but my mentor teacher decided that the test would go on. If it were my decision, I would not have had the test, rather having another section of the unit, but there was no time so this was not the case, and I administered the test, graded them, then saw that 6 students out of my three classes passed. In looking at the tests I saw how much of the issue was truly that students were not trying to do every problem, despite having told them several times that literally anything they write down would give them credit. This realization allowed me to make the decision (in my edTPA practice write-up) that we as a class should
move on from quadratics because they had collectively done well on the fluency of solving our of context problems. I decided that I would (in my ideal next steps) include contextualized problems in the next unit with new math learning so that the class could move on.

Through having this experience of not meeting my own expectations, I had the chance to practice real world feedback. In my first teaching experience I did not give feedback to students because I was told that they would just throw out their worksheets if I handed them back. Considering I had seen them do this many times, and that my mentor teacher was not going to continue with the transformations unit, I decided that I would not give students feedback, but just examine their work using a rubric I found on the internet. This gave me no real opportunity to learn because I had no hand in creating the rubric, so I was really just judging student work based on third party criteria. I am very grateful to have had the second microteaching experience because I had the chance to create my own grading criteria, share it with students multiple times, and give ample written feedback. The feedback I gave was positive in nature, and encouraging of students to come in and add to their current tests, giving them a chance to raise their grade and demonstrate their further understanding. This chance to give feedback to students also allowed me to further understand what I needed to do differently in my teaching, giving me an opportunity to reflect on my planning and teaching, then analyze what I could do.

In analyzing my first microteaching experience I examined at my teaching with a focus on developing what I already knew I could build on. I understood it was my first experience and that I would have a lot to learn. In my second microteaching I gave an honest analysis of how I did and did not meet the needs of the students in front of me. I recognized in looking at the edTPA rubrics that I would have to be a lot more reflective in my analysis from the first microteaching to the second if I wanted to become a better teacher, therefore I cited evidence of not only what I could do better, but what I could build on in my second analysis. I not only took the extensive learning we have done around metacognition and applied it to my teaching process, but I also looked back into the research and books we have explored throughout the first year of this program and backed up my analysis to real theory that would attend to the needs of students in general. Then I took that theory and tried to fit it to how my students best learn.
Given the chance to plan lessons with a new set of students I look forward to attending to research when I first begin my planning, and identifying the key aspects of theory that apply to my classroom, then adapting the theory to my students, rather than my students to the theory as I believe I ended up doing in my second microteaching with group work.

In the end, I believe through my field experience I have learned extensively what it means to be a teacher, how teaching looks in reality, and I look forward to continuing this experience with student teaching. I hope to learn more from my students every day I work with them in students teaching, then in my career as a teacher. I hope that my continued growth in these areas remain a reality check, and I always learn more from my students than they could ever comprehend.