For my teacher internship I have been afforded the opportunity to student teach at Green Run High School in Virginia Beach. In the week that I have been there I have come to like the school and have found the other faculty, staff, and students to be warm and friendly. Rebecca Burnsworth is acting as my clinical faculty and has been supportive and encouraging to me in this first week.

As a veteran teacher with twenty years of experience, she knows how to create a classroom environment that allows students to learn and grow. Her classroom is arranged to allow for easy instruction and collaboration; the desks are grouped into pods which allow students to communicate with each other but also direct their attention to the teacher as she moves around the room. Mrs. Burnsworth has embraced Green Run High School’s “digital anchor” program and makes use of the Promethean white board, her Apple laptop, and Classroom Dojo for management and motivational needs.

Most of the learners at Green Run (83%) are considered to be of low socioeconomic status. This means they have to deal with issues that I may not be immediately aware of. For example, I commented on the apparent trend among students of wearing fleece blankets around their shoulders. Unlike some of the other fads that students go through, this is not one that is based on a fashion choice. My clinical faculty reported that because many students do not have winter coats, they have resorted to wearing blankets in order to keep warm. Despite all this, the students are not afraid to talk with their teachers or ask for help, and they have also been friendly and welcoming to me.

During instructional time, there are not many disruptions that warrant anything beyond a simple warning. For example, there are a couple of students who have been purposely separated as a consequence for talking and off-task behavior who will now leave their assigned seat to get up and talk to each other. This usually happens once, then after the first request to return to their seats, the students do so. Disruptions have been greatly minimized by my clinical faculty’s bathroom policy. The students know the school policy of prohibited restroom use in the first and last ten minutes of the block and do not try to argue about it. During the block, Mrs. Burnsworth allows the students to use the restroom as needed by signing out on clip board and taking a bathroom pass; they are required to sign in and return the pass upon their arrival back in the room. This prevents serious interruptions during instructional time and prevents squabbles between teacher and student about bathroom use privileges.

However, there are some behaviors that I would consider a passive form of disruption that are permitted by my clinical faculty. This includes the use of digital devices for non-instructional use during instructional time (playing games, texting, listening to music) and wearing earbuds in the classroom. In most cases, neither of these behaviors support learning when they are unsupervised and as such I asked about her policy during planning time. Mrs. Burnsworth’s policy is that if the behavior is not disrupting the learning of others, then it does not warrant teacher attention. As this is her classroom and not mine, I will do my best to uphold and maintain her management style, however, I think I can take subtle actions to at least attempt to bring these distracted learners back to attention. I had an opportunity to try this out during an independent research activity. I noticed one student was playing a game on her cell phone and that she had become loud and agitated. I asked why she was playing a game in class and the student stated that it helped her get out her frustrations and increase concentration. Rather than fight it, I asked her to show me how this works; I allowed her to play one more round (less than one minute) and she was just as frustrated as before. At this time I pointed out that her assertion was mistaken, the student agreed, and her seatmate asked her to put her phone away, stating, “Maybe you should listen to the lady.”

If I am able to handle perceived disruptions in this way during my student teaching, I think I will be able to maintain a harmonious relationship with my clinical faculty and support a productive and positive learning environment. My efforts so far to learn from the teacher, build rapport with the students, and make connections with other members of the faculty and staff have encouraged my belief that I will be successful in my student teaching at Green Run High School.