My Effective Teaching placement for winter and spring term 2014, was at Thomas R. Fowler Middle School, a public school in the Tigard-Tualatin School District. Built in 1974, the school is located in an older suburban neighborhood of Tigard, Oregon and is connected to the Fanno Creek Trail. Fowler Middle School was named after Thomas Fowler who was the principal of Tigard High School from 1928 until his death in 1954. The school was originally designed to be an open-space school. This meant, larger rooms with multiple teachers, who taught students according to their individual needs. However, this was a short-lived experiment, and eventually walls were erected to separate the school into multiple smaller classrooms. As a result of these design changes, the walls between classes are very thin, and the heating and cooling system is inefficient. Therefore, classes vary in noise level and temperature depending on their location.

Fowler Middle School has just under 800 students enrolled. Each classroom has anywhere from 25 to 35, 6th, 7th, or 8th graders per teacher. The day is divided into seven, 48 minute periods. Every Wednesday, school starts an hour late and the periods are shortened to 40 minutes each. During that extra hour in the morning, teachers meet according to subject and grade level taught, to plan and coordinate lessons. On these days, each period lasts 40 minutes and school lets out ten minutes later than normal.

For the majority of my student teaching time, I worked closely with the 7th grade Language Arts and Drama teacher, Miriam Ibanez. Miriam teaches four periods of 7th grade Language Arts and two periods of 7th and 8th grade Drama. Each period accurately reflected the overall demographics of the school. There is a fairly even gender makeup. About 62% of students are white, 21% are Hispanic, and 9% are Asian. I’ve included a graph of the school demographics as a reference.

The school rating in 2013 was considered “below average” and fell within the 15th-45th percentile of overall ratings in Oregon. This score is down from the previous year. Out of the three middle schools in the district, Fowler falls in the middle. Currently, Fowler is working on improving their school through various changes. There is currently a School Improvement Plan, called Site Council. Part of that plan involves getting the school academics aligned with common core standards. There is also a discussion of switching to block scheduling instead of periods. Additionally, Fowler is known for having a successful SPED program and has a multitude of in-school and after-school activities including P.E., track, choir, drama, pottery, and performances put on by the students for Fowler parents and the surrounding community.