

Name: Paige Pohlmann

Date: 11/29/16

Classroom Grade Level: 3rd/4th Split

BSU Instructor: Mrs. Varner

Over the duration of the last few months, I have had the opportunity to observe a third/fourth grade split classroom, as well as create and implement a unit on fictional story elements. During this time I was able to teach small, leveled reading groups. However, I also taught several whole class lessons for the first time. Throughout this experience I was able to recognize my strengths, areas I could improve, and the importance of culturally responsive teaching.

I believe it is important for reflective teachers to consider their strengths within the profession. Upon reflecting on this practicum experience, I have noticed that I am very well prepared. I believe preparation is crucial to providing a successful learning experience. I always spent time preparing thought-out lessons, and gathering materials ahead of time. This preparation helped my lessons to run smoothly, and ensure that I could teach the students the content to the best of my abilities. I also have found that I did well at making the lessons engaging. I did this through cooperative learning and making the content applicable to real life. I often implemented cooperative learning through small group discussions and group projects. However, I also incorporated independent work. I commonly used “think, pair, share” as it allowed students to think independently and work together with their peers. I also made the lessons engaging by applying the content to real life. I often provided examples of content that would relate to my life. For example, I told a story of how I used to be afraid of spiders but overcame that fear. This was a simple story that grabbed the students’ attention, but led to a discussion about how people can change, and how characters can change too.

I also did well at incorporating different forms of meaningful assessment. I have found formative assessment to be extremely beneficial, even if it is simply in the form of questions throughout the lesson. I have also found that project-based assessments are extremely valuable and fairly easy to implement. Projects take more time, but provide more feedback on what the students have learned. To assess the unit I taught over fictional story elements, I had the student write their own short story that incorporated character traits, a well-developed setting, a plot, and theme. The students had to apply what they learned, think critically, and use creativity. The students were able to grow confident in their ability to be authors, and were able to share their stories with each other. Last, I felt I did really well at using positive behavior management. I have found that I do well at telling students what I do expect them to do, and complimenting them on positive behavior. However, behavior management is also the area I have learned the most.

I have always been taught the importance of using positive behavior management, and informing students of what they should do. However, I have learned that it is equally important to tell the students what they should not do. As a teacher, there needs to be clear expectations of behavior. During my time in the school, I have learned a lot about the implementation of a classroom token economy, and a school-wide PBIS system. Both of these were extremely beneficial at the school, and are tools I could see myself using in the future. I have learned that as a teacher, you need to have clear consequences, and you must follow through in order for the classroom to be a productive environment.

I have also learned a lot about the importance of culturally responsive teaching. Throughout my lessons, I enjoyed incorporating literature that focused on varying

cultures and diverse topics. I have found culturally responsive literature to be one of my favorite ways to incorporate diversity into the classroom discussion. However, I have learned that sometimes it is easy to miss opportunities to be culturally responsive. In one lesson I was teaching setting. This was the time of Halloween, and I was going to have the students picture the setting of the town on Halloween. However, my classroom teacher informed me that not all students celebrate Halloween. Instead, I had the students picture the setting of their favorite holiday. This simple change allowed all students to be included and helped all students understand the content.

The last area I have developed over this experience is by developing my knowledge of the External Developmental Assets. The school created the motto that all students are “responsible, respectful, and safe.” This motto clearly demonstrated a caring school environment (asset number 5), safety (asset number 10) and high expectations (asset number 16). I have noticed that this motto allowed all students to know what was expected of them, to feel safe, and to feel a sense of community and belonging at their school. I noticed that this motto and the implementation of these developmental assets guided the students in their behavior and academic learning.

Overall, I have learned so much about the teaching profession in just these few short months. I was able to recognize the many strengths I already had in regards to teaching. I was surprised how many “tools” I was able to use during my teaching. However, I was also able to learn a lot and recognize that there is still so much room for me to continually improve.