


Feinstein School of Education and Human Development

Preparing To Teach Portfolio-Reflection Essay


Secondary Education-History

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Education is one of the most demanding professions in the world. It requires extreme patience, preparation, and creativity. While in practicum, I had the opportunity to teach for six weeks in two different schools. These two experiences taught me a lot about the teaching profession and the different teaching strategies that can be used in a classroom. In addition, I had the opportunity to interact with my two cooperating teachers (Mrs. Katie Reeve and Mrs. Susan Pangborn) about important aspects of teaching which gave me important insight about the many different strategies that teachers use in the classroom. My experiences in practicum taught me some valuable lessons about how to become an effective history teacher.

When I entered practicum at the beginning of the semester, I had already taught a couple of lessons at North Providence High School. However, I felt that my teaching skills needed to improve in many areas. While in the class, I learned a couple of important lessons. First, I learned that planning a lesson is one of the most important skills that a teacher must master in order to foster learning in his/her classroom. Throughout my practicum experience, I felt that my lesson planning skills improved in a couple of areas. First, I improved my questioning techniques especially when developing critical questions for my lessons. While in class, I continually practiced this skill so that I would be ready to venture out into the field and execute some of my own lessons. Secondly, I improved at developing creative activities for my lessons. When in practicum, I learned that differentiating instruction is extremely important when trying to keep the students engaged in the lesson.

The second important lesson that I learned from practicum was how important it is as a future teacher to “know your audience or class” when developing activities and tasks for the students to complete. Through many different examples, I learned how to incorporate activities that accommodate different learning styles and levels of development. I felt that as practicum

went on, I became more aware of these different elements when I planned lessons. Although I had made some improvements in different areas, I know that there are things that I could work on. First, when planning a lesson I need to be more aware of English language learners and special education students. I feel that I did not address these students enough when planning my lessons. Secondly, closure is a one of the most essential elements of a lesson and I feel that during the planning process I did not address this well enough. In general, I think that practicum afforded me with some valuable opportunities to enhance my teaching skills that I would eventually use during my two field experiences at Lincoln High School and Nathanael Greene Middle School.

For the first three weeks of my field experience, I taught at Lincoln High School. This experience made me realize how important it is as a future teacher to create a positive, learning environment for the students. In addition, I also learned how important it is to have the students work with each other on different activities so that they can develop positive relationships with their peers. During my individual and team lessons, I found that the students worked extremely well in groups and the work that I received definitely proved my hypothesis. While the students were working in groups, I also learned that classroom management is a critical aspect of teaching. Additionally, I thought that group work enhanced the student's understanding of the material that I presented in the class. On the other hand, this experience also made me realize that I needed to improve my follow up questioning skills. When going over student work, I did not elaborate on their answers enough in order to present the students with more information about the content presented. On the whole, my experience at Lincoln High School gave me a lot of confidence about my teaching skills moving forward.

My second field experience was at Nathanael Greene Middle School in Providence. Throughout this experience, I took what I learned from Lincoln and used it to further enhance my teaching skills. However, I found that there were many critical differences between the two schools that made me adapt my teaching strategies such as student makeup and classroom environment. As a result, I needed to develop some different lessons in order to accommodate the student's differing cognitive levels of development. I thought that my individual lesson was one of the best aspects of this experience because it showed how differentiating instruction can benefit all students. The biggest challenge that I encountered during this experience was developing activities that would engage middle school students. This dynamic of my experience helped me learn about the importance of teaching to different audiences. Additionally, this experience taught me that creativity is a crucial aspect of teaching and managing the classroom.

Overall, both my experiences in class and in the field gave me tremendous confidence moving forward. I learned many precious lessons that will help me enhance my teaching style and skills. These experiences also made me more aware of the different learning styles and zones of proximal development presented in various classrooms. In addition, both experiences also helped me understand how important it is to be a reflective practitioner when charting my growth. In conclusion, practicum provided me with ample opportunities to not only develop my teaching skills, but to also see how different strategies are implemented in the classroom. These experiences will serve as indispensable stepping stones that will help me better prepare for student teaching and beyond.