Pre-Student Teaching: Stage 1 Reflection

Being placed at Donegan Elementary Fall of 2018 has provided me with valuable experience that I will carry with me through the entirety of my teaching career. Each of my students and my cooperating teacher made this experience valuable for me as a preservice teacher whose passion lies in urban education. The pre-student teaching class that attached to my field experience was helpful in that it prepared me for my time in the field. In this class we were able to produce lessons and work collaboratively with our peers to ensure these lessons were of the best quality they could be. The textbooks that were used in this class served as a valuable resource and tool for us as pre-service teachers, teaching us various ways to differentiate in the classroom as well as implement total participations techniques.

Urban education has been my passion since living in Philadelphia my freshman year of college. This field experience has provided me experience in an urban setting, solidifying my desire to teach in an urban school district. Through my lesson plans this past semester, I was able to include considerations for students with disabilities or behavioral issues. In my lesson plans I was also able to take into consideration and embrace diversity in the classroom, including language and socioeconomic circumstance.

Two courses that further aided my experience during the Fall 2018 semester were my science and social studies education courses. These courses provided valuable information on how to incorporate science and social studies education into elementary school classrooms. I also learned through these courses how much science and social studies education have been placed on the back burner in elementary curriculum. These courses helped me to see even with the time constraints, and at times, limited resources for implementing science and social studies education, it can be done. I was able to successfully implement two science lessons and two social studies lessons in my field experience classroom. My science lessons focused on the life cycle of pumpkins, and the production of winter weather. For my social studies lessons, I focused on extending Donegan Elementary school-wide program “Leader in Me”. I did this by implementing a lesson on being a leader, as well as a lesson surrounding diversity and building community. Through these lessons I was able to explore the subjects of science and social studies and their corresponding standards for Kindergarten, gaining a better grasp on the Pennsylvania Department of Education’s expectations in these subjects.

My fourth education course that supported my field experience Fall 2018 semester was a course that focused on early-childhood assessment. Assessment is an area of education that I was unfamiliar with before entering the Fall 2018 semester. Through this course, I gained knowledge on the various assessment techniques, their advantages as well as their disadvantages, as well as how to ensure the validity and reliability while implementing each assessment form. Requirements for this course allowed me to implement assessment methods in my field experience classroom. I wrote several reflection papers on these experiences of implementing these forms of assessment and collected data from these assessments. Evaluating and analyzing assessment data is another skill I gained through this course.

Each education course that I completed in the Fall of 2018 helped prepare me for my current field experience and future field experiences. I gained valuable information from each of these courses and the professors that taught the courses. Each provided me with new information that I lacked, and with it, have shaped me into a better educator. I am looking forward to my pre-student teaching field experience next semester that will further prepare me for student teaching in the Fall of 2019.

Pennsylvania Department of Education Competencies

**Demonstrate an understanding of Child Development, Cognition and Learning:**

* **Demonstrate the application of effective, developmentally appropriate (appropriate for diverse ages, individual characteristics, cultures) curriculum and assessment. (Child Development and Learning Applied in Practice -B3)** 
  + Through my Stage 3 field experience I was able to plan lesson plans and conduct various forms of assessment that were both developmentally and culturally appropriate. My lesson plans involved both science and social studies lessons that integrated literacy. Assessments that I conducted included observations and various forms of checklists with my Kindergarten students.

**Demonstrate a “Focus on Every Child” by:**

* **creating a “Positive social context for learning,” (Professionalism A– 1)**
  + Creating a positive environment for learning was a priority while I was placed in my field experience classroom. I maintained a positive environment for learning by incorporating collaboration among students to create a better social context for learning.
* **“Responding to children’s emotional communications,” (Professionalism A– 2)**
  + Several students in my field experience class struggled with behavioral and emotional issues due to their circumstances. Instead of acting as a “savior” for these students, rescuing them from their circumstances, I worked with students in order to regulate their behavior and emotions. In one instance, I approached a students frustrated with his laptop who had become violent. Instead of reprimanding him for his behavior and labeling him a violent student, I removed him from the situation and worked on his breathing to de-escalate his emotions and frustration.
* **“Setting developmentally, culturally, linguistically and individually appropriate expectations for children,” (Professionalism A– 3)**
  + Through my lesson plans I made sure to include universally designed elements. In addition to this, I included supports for students with disabilities or emotional/behavioral issues in order for them to be successful with this specific lesson.
* **“Developing and fostering understanding of values that underpin procedures, rules, and expectations,” (Professionalism A– 4)**
  + In order to instill values of procedures, rules, and expectations, I made a lesson plan about adopting good habits and being a leader. Donegan Elementary follows the Leader In Me program, instilling leadership qualities in students beginning in Kindergarten. This school-wide program provided me with a basis for me to build my leadership lesson off of.
* **“Helping children develop self and emotional regulation,” (Professionalism A– 5)**
  + In addition to teaching de-escalating practices in stressful situations, I introduced my field experience class to mindfulness. I introduced yoga and mindful movements to my students in order to alleviate stress and anxiety in the classroom. I did this in order to help students release built up energy due to the limited time they have for recess.
* **“Using developmentally appropriate motivation techniques,” (Professionalism A–69)**
  + I motivated my students in my field experience by using positive reinforcement with them. Positivity was my driving force in my field experience classroom to ensure students were able to build confidence and self-esteem which then allowed them to thrive in the classroom.
* **“Creating a safe physical environment that is conducive to learning,” (Professionalism A– 7)** 
  + During my field experience, I experienced instances of students being violent with one another. Right away I knew that I had to be very aware of what was going on in the classroom at all times to ensure each of my students were being safe. This included constantly walking around to check on students during small group work, especially while using scissors or other tools that could potentially cause harm to others. When/if there was ever an incident, I served as a mediator to de-escalate the situation and ensure students reflected on their actions and apologized genuinely.
* **“Establishing and maintaining fair and consistent standards for classroom behavior,” (Professionalism A– 8)**
  + In order to ensure my students were treated fairly in the classroom, standards applied for each student equally. My cooperating teacher used the clip chart, which I adopted and implemented fairly for each student.
* **“Individualizing behavior support including the use of prompting, environmental arrangements, scheduling, visual supports, involving families and outside resources.” (Professionalism A– 9)**
  + Included in my lesson plans were instances for small group work, collaboration, and individualized attention for students. This helped students be successful individually and in group settings. Work that they produced during my lesson plans were works that they were able to take home and show their families. I was able to interact with families directly at parent-teacher conferences which allowed them see how invested I have become in the success of their children.