

EDU 390 Practicum Reflection

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Cultural diversity is becoming more of a necessity for all people to learn and be more well rounded in since our culture, over time, has gotten more and more diverse; this need for knowledge is especially important for those who desire to become teachers so they may be efficient in their future career. Due to this need it is important to be able to go out into the field and experience diversity in the schools and that way we may prepare for the diversity that will be in our future classrooms. Through this I realized what a beautiful gift it is to have had the diversity practicum class and the opportunity to go to Fort Yates to visit the students that attend the St. Bernard's Mission School and all that it consists of. As I completed my diversity practicum at St. Bernard's Mission School, I would like to reflect on the experience through this essay by discussing the demographics of the school, adaptations in both the environmental and instructional aspect, what we may use in the future, as teachers in our own classrooms, how it pertains to the objectives of the course and the mission statement, as well as a summary on resources used in our lessons that we taught for physical education.

At Fort Yates, considering it is on a Native American reservation, the demographics do not change much in comparison to other places and schools that are around the state. The school consists of Native Americans and Native Americans only, there are no other ethnic backgrounds. As far as socioeconomic background I am not completely positive about it but I reckon that there is a good mixture of those who are well off and have no financial worries and those who struggle with finances more than the average family just as every other place does; reservations tend to have people that are more impoverished than those who live on a land that is not a reservation and they also tend to have a lower average income for households in general. This low income of households is due to a reason that I do not know, but could guess it has something to do with

government and how it is a reservation. The grades that are included in the mission school are kindergarten through sixth grade but the administration and clergy are working on trying to get seventh grade into the school as well so that the students feel more comfortable as they will be with the same students for another year instead of moving to the public school with all different peers; resulting in less stress on the students. All students regardless of their ethnicity get nervous about big changes in life and it is good to have the opportunity to push this off for at least another year, but also to get them ready for this switch as we can not protect them from life and its realities forever. At this particular school there seems to be more females than males but it is not a significant difference, an example of this is the kindergarten class that consist of three students and two of them are girls and the other is a boy, I am not sure what the other classes look like in the aspect of gender ratios. When it comes to limitations, I am not entirely confident in the status of the students for cognitive or physical abilities; as stated before I do not imagine it is entirely different from other places as I am sure some students struggle more than others and some students strive immensely especially in certain subjects. As for physical limitations I am sure that there are no significant limitations as there are no students who are in need of a wheelchair or anything as drastic as this. The school is just like any other school, has a variety of different students who consist of different needs, accommodations and have different weaknesses and most importantly strengths.

Adaptations are also a necessity when it comes to teaching, as a teacher, one must be able to be flexible and ready for anything so that we may encounter it, process it, and respond to it in order to have an effective and effective classroom that has no major flaws. The activities that we took part in with the students were physical education activities; the first trip we played kickball

with all ages, which they love to do and the second trip we played a rock, paper, scissors relay race and a snake-tag game with pool noodles. For these activities the types of environmental adaptations that I used correlated to the artifacts that I used in regards to both the first and second activity of our second trip down there. For the first activity we needed an obstacle course for the relay race so we used cones and chalk in order to draw the course so that the students would know where to go in order to participate smoothly in the activity. For the second activity we used pool noodles as the “snakes” to tag students and once they got tagged they were to do five jumping-jacks, after a couple minutes we would rotate taggers so all students could be the “snakes.” Since instructional adaptations are used to increase the likelihood of learning success we demonstrated how to complete the relay race which the students so that they quickly understood and were able to repeat it themselves. The second activity myself, MaryGrace, and Dr. Taylor demonstrated on how to be the taggers first so the students would observe that we tagged the students gently, not harshly, and how to complete the game so they could then be the taggers as well and tag their peers with a sense of gentleness. As we demonstrate this the students also learn how to be kind to one another, that they can still enjoy their activities but be genuine in playing it, this lesson teaches them and prepares them for the future for as a community they are going to have to learn how to be kind to all people and to accept all people for who they are, not just by ethnicity, or race but people of all different types of variety. This will result in a community that loves one another and can come together as one in times of need and hardship but also in the good times as well.

Considering our culture here at the University of Mary is an environment based on community and the benedictine values; the use of interventions such as resources from the home,

school, family, and the community around us is an important tool in understanding and dealing with diversity in our culture. In this particular experience of mine I did not refer to these interventions as much as I could in the future as I teach more lessons and have my own classroom. One idea I used from my home and family was the rock, paper, scissors relay race as I did that as a kid with my family and friends all the time as we used the trees in my backyard for the obstacle course; so I adapted to using the chalk and cones in place of the trees in my backyard. As for community resources, since I work at the Cathedral after school program, I am able to learn more activities for the students to participate in. In arriving early for work I am able to observe a gym class for a couple minutes before work where we can learn new ideas and games; we also have our own activities in the program for our students to participate in, especially when they are cooped up inside due to the cold weather. Another form of community resources is when we as peers come together on our observations and put our brains together to come up with new ideas that brings more of a variety to these certain students so they do not become bored in playing the same games or partaking in the same physical education activities over and over again.

Education is based on standards, objectives, and missions of the classroom. Lesson plans are one of the most used materials by teachers and are very important in revolving a lesson around them. Through lesson plans we are able to think about the entire process of teaching a lesson starting with the basic age group, grade and subject of the class which eventually leads into the procedures and assessments for that specific lesson. One of the main parts to the lesson plan is the objectives and standards that are to be met upon completing the lesson. The course outcome or standard for the cultural diversity practicum is to “understand what diversity is by

observing and working with students of diverse backgrounds and learning needs” (Taylor, 2). How I, personally, have met this course outcome is going to the St. Bernard’s Mission School and observing the students that attend it. Considering the population of the school is completely Native American I was able to understand what diversity is and what it consists of; as I have not had much diversity in my life with where I have lived and gone to school, it was intriguing to see what diversity truly is. In my opinion I do not think that our ethnicity defines us as people and that it means they are significantly different, although they can be. Another thing I came to understand was how to work with these students in the best way so that they learn to their best ability and push them to achieve their most attainable goals or even their most unattainable goals. In this observation I also decided that just because they are Native American does not mean they learn differently than any other student or that they need extra help or accommodations. In my opinion all students are the same in the aspect of that they need to learn, want to learn, and can learn but not the same in how they learn, let alone who they are as a person which consists of their personality and characteristics among other things.

In reflecting on my wonderful experiences of my observation at St. Bernard’s Mission School in Fort Yates on the Native American reservation I have stated the demographics, adaptations and interventions used, as well as the standards of the class these techniques correlate with. After reflecting, I realized in wanting to be a teacher in the near future it is important for me to grasp these abilities of adapting to all different experiences in the classroom in order to maintain the structure of the class so it does not become chaotic and inefficient. What I mainly want to use in the future is this technique of flexibility and adaptability in the classroom so the students can have the highest successability to learn the material presented. I find it

important to be able to respond to anything that happens in the classroom environment whether it is good or bad, so that it can be dealt with and move on, a consistency in the classroom is necessary.

References

University of Mary. (2018). *Diversity Practicum: Fall 2019*. Bismarck, ND. Dr. Mike Taylor.