

Three Week Teaching Experience Reflection

ECS 311

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Reflection on Three Week Teaching Experience

My three week teaching block in a grade three classroom at St. Gabriel elementary school was an unforgettable experience. Every single day I became more confident in my teaching and classroom management skills. Both the students and my cooperating teacher welcomed me into their class and gave me the freedom to try new things throughout the weeks. Overall, my arts education dance/movement unit went wonderfully and the students really enjoyed bringing more movement into their class. I had so much fun every day and this experience just confirmed that becoming a teacher is the right path for me.

Professional development goals:

Throughout my three week block I worked through many different goals for both teaching and learning for every one of my lessons. I had different goals everyday that surrounded the same general category. These main 'big' goals were classroom management, engagement, instructions, and working with groups. My every day pdp goals for each lesson fit into these categories. Most of my feedback was positive, with ideas and constructive criticism to help me improve for the next day. Within each and everyday I chose my goal depending on what I was teaching and what the students were learning in the lesson.

Classroom Management

The feedback I received from when I was working on classroom management was very positive. One of my favourite strategies when doing a movement lesson where students are moving around a lot, to grab their attention I would stop and put my arms completely straight in the air. I went over what this meant with the students before I used it. I found this to be a good strategy when I couldn't use my voice and students who couldn't hear well had a visual to look off of. When observed by my faculty advisor, they expressed how impressed they were by this strategy. Some other feedback I received was for students who wouldn't always listen was to use positive affirmation either asking them to show or what they are participating in the activity. By my next lesson I was trying this technique and it worked amazingly. The last part I am going to talk about for classroom management was to move around the room more when giving instructions. When I had students at the back of the room being disruptive I slowly walked to the back of the room and started teaching over there. This was another suggestion from my faculty advisor that I really liked and worked immediately.

Engagement

This was my next professional goal of focus. To engage my students I tried a many different strategies. To list a few, within my dance unit I chose to do different movement activities that did not focus directly on dance, as this was not something all students wanted to do. This included using different prompts and partner movement activities, rather than always dancing together. I had an exit slip at the very beginning of the unit to get song requests from the students. So when we did dance I played songs the students liked, which really got them moving and everyone engaged. Again, I used positive affirmation suggested from my faculty advisor to have students show what they are doing to the class, this worked on engaging them. Both my cooperating teacher and faculty advisor were impressed of my one hundred percent engagement of students throughout all movement lessons.

Instructions

A professional developmental goal I focused on for multiple lessons was for giving clear and concise instructions. My feedback after practicing was very positive. I used modelling as a technique, where I would model the activity and then have a student model as well. I thought this was working very well and my faculty advisor and cooperating teacher agreed. I also found that repetition of instructions and questioning worked very well. I also used a technique called 'fist to five' where once I gave instructions students could hold up a number between zero (fist) to five fingers to represent how much they understood. At the end my faculty advisor wrote that my instructions were very clear and having the students noise level quiet before giving instructions was working extremely well.

Group work

The last main goal was focused on how to work with many small groups. One piece of feedback I received was to make sure the student groups were all close so one teacher would be able to check on all groups without having to go very far. Since I had my cooperating teacher and teaching partner with me, this is something I did not consider on how I would do it with only myself, so I found this feedback very helpful. I circled from group to group, asked comprehension questions, and dealt with problems in each group. The rest of my feedback from my teacher and advisor in regard to groups was very positive and overall using this strategy worked very well.

Internship

For internship I have a few main aspects that I want to work on in my professional development plans. The three main goals are working with building new relationships with staff members and students, giving more adaptations for students, and using multiple instructional strategies. Each of these goals will differ and become much more specific depending on the lesson and its content.

Classroom management:

I now consider my overall classroom management skill to be developing quickly and positively. My class was really good when I needed to give instructions or teach so it wasn't that much difficult, but when the class would get loud and chaotic I was able to get everyone back on task. My classroom management skills seem to be much more relaxed, rather than yelling. My favourite techniques I used was clapping (having the students clap back), using vocal cues (they would finish the song), playing music, counting, and visual cues such as freezing and holding my hands in the air. I do think I still need to work on having many different types of classroom management strategies for when I am in different classes and they don't have the basic strategies they already know and work for the class. I also think it will be different once I am starting from the beginning with a class that I can choose and have my classroom management techniques become routines and work with the class.

Differentiated Learning:

There were many different types of adaptive dimensions and differentiation that I included in the four main areas throughout my unit. This is where my learner profiles I did before the field were really useful. There were only a few students in the class that need drastic adaptations. I did however make different adaptations for each of the four categories. For **environment**, I took my class to many different locations for movement such as the art/science room, the gym, and open spaces within the school, rather than staying in their classroom all day. I found there was a noticeable difference from when I taught a lesson in their classroom versus another space. Along with having flexible seating and choosing different groups and students to have a quiet space, I felt as though I couldn't do too much with the space as we were doing movement for a majority of the lessons. Next, a few examples of how I differentiated learning in regards to **content** was to use different types of teaching resources such as including videos, audio, and visuals (powerpoints, drawings, pictures, etc) into each lessons, rather than just lecturing. I used many different exit slips and formative assessments to create

assignments that students were interested in or where they had the choice to research what they wanted, rather than them being told and unengaged. For one lesson specifically I had four different sheets students could pick from for an assignment based off of a story we read, where I told them a number of little assignments they needed to do, but allowed choice. For the process aspect, a few examples how I adapted to different students needs were having flexible deadlines and checklists. I found some students needed to be pushed to complete an assignment, therefore had a due date, while others needed more time and a less stressful environment. I also included different activities and students choices when done assignments, rather than always working on bellwork or reading. Lastly, another example for process was having small groups, think-pair-share, and little formative assessment tasks. This let me know what was working and what wasn't. Adaptations for the product aspect includes using more formative assessment, rather than just summative assessment. For our final project, the class and I created a checklist and from there, a rubric, together with everything we thought they needed to include. This allowed for student autonomy within how they were going to be assessed. For a mini inquiry unit, students could research a topic (based off of the unit) that they were interested in and whether they wanted to work in groups or alone. With the final project being a dance, I adjusted the performances to be recorded and watched through the computer, rather than sitting and watching in person. This gave the opportunity for each group to have a few tries and pick their best performance and to ease anxiety of performing in front of others. As I am looking back I realized there were many ways I differentiated learning for every student, yet I know there are always more strategies I am wanting to try in my internship.

Assessment and Evaluation:

During my three week block I was constantly assessing my students in many different ways. I used both formative and summative types of assessment to make sure my students were meeting the outcomes. For formative assessment I used multiple exit slips, questioning, anecdotal records, self evaluation, and assessment tools (stoplight, thumbs up, etc). I found that these are what worked with me for this specific class I was in, but I know these may not always work with every class I have. I chose to organize this information in my anecdotal notes for each student. I had a class list where I could easily and quickly check the students name along with pages where I could write notes and comments. Using many different ways of assessment was extremely helpful when it was time to individually assess the outcomes students met. Something I found was necessary for assessing their final project was recording their performance so I could go back and watch it carefully to see if each group and individual was meeting the criteria

we created. Overall, I realized that I am constantly assessing and using my essential questions to guide their learning. I am becoming more confident in learning ways to assess students, yet I am still understanding and developing how to set expectations for a grade level, class, and individual.

Relationships:

Developing relationships is one of the most important aspects of teaching. Firstly, having a good relationship with your cooperating teacher and colleagues was extremely valuable in an experience where you won't be doing everything perfect and need a welcoming space to try new things and collaborate. However, relationships with your students is even more important. Building a good and trusting relationship with your students will make the learning experience much more authentic and rich. Building relationships with students and colleagues develops connection and is very important in teaching. I found that the more I got to know students the easier it was to assess and differentiate their learning. The more comfortable we all were, the more learning and enjoyment was happening within the class.