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MAET Y2

07/17/13

Reflection Paper

Professional Development is defined as the advancement of skills or expertise to succeed in a particular profession, especially through continued education. When I became an educator I knew that Professional Development would be an essential part of my growth throughout my career. I view my progression toward “perfect teaching” within the subject area of Social Studies as a journey and not a destination. To this end, I will continue to employ whatever resources necessary to constantly educate myself and improve the teaching within my classroom. In an effort to improve my educational background and expertise, I am currently achieving a Master of Arts in Educational Technology from Michigan State University. I firmly believe that this degree will allow me to further my growth in the areas of educational theory and the implementation of technology within the classroom. This reflection will serve as a guide to evaluate what I have learned going forward and looking back on my time taking courses CEP 800, 815, and 822 during Summer Semester of 2013.

Looking Back:

There is much that I have learned throughout this summer that I anticipate will be valuable information for my professional development moving forward.

Most of this subject matter revolves around educational theory and best practice within the classroom. These theories are applicable as I develop projects, lessons, units, and assessments for my students. All of these ideas can be utilized as a progress through my time as a teacher.

Educational theory is the foundation for which teachers create and establish sound lessons in the classroom. These theories combined with the observations a teacher makes about their students create a positive, effective learning environment. The first theoretical ideas that I will benefit from in my teaching are conclusions of Daniel T. Willingham in his book, *Why Don't Students Like School?* This text seeks to evaluate why children do not enjoy school by analyzing statistical data about why children are not successful in the classroom. This text covers a variety of issues relating to how students learn and why they do not enjoy their schooling. While not all of these theories are applicable to every teacher, there is much that can be learned from this book. Teachers must read these texts and determine what ideas are useful for the environment they want to create within their classroom. Willingham's most useful tool is a chart of cognitive principles and classroom implications that will benefit every educator.

Chapter	Cognitive Principle	Classroom Application
1	People are naturally curious, but they are not naturally good thinkers.	Think of to-be learned material as answers, and take the time necessary to explain to students the questions.
2	Factual knowledge precedes skill.	It is not possible to think well on a topic in the absence of factual knowledge about the topic.
3	Memory is the residue of	The best barometer for every

	thought.	lesson plan is “of what will it make the students think?”
4	We understand new things in the context of things we already know.	Always make deep knowledge your goal, spoken and unspoken, but recognize that shallow knowledge will come first.
5	Proficiency requires practice.	Think carefully about which materials students need at their fingertips and practice it over time.
6	Cognition is fundamentally different early and late in training.	Strive for deep understanding in your students, not the creation of new knowledge.
7	Children are more alike than different in terms of learning.	Thinking of lesson content, not student differences, driving decisions about what to teach.
8	Intelligence can be changed through sustained hard work.	Always talk about successes and failures in terms of effort, not ability.
9	Teaching, like any complex cognitive skill, must be practiced to be improved.	Improvement requires more than experience; it also requires conscious effort and feedback.

This easy to follow chart provides a detailed checklist to follow when planning lessons, units, projects, etc. I will utilize this tool when determine what to teach within my classroom.

One of the most valuable schemas I hoped to achieve during this set of graduate classes was a theoretical framework to apply to how I approach using technology in my teaching. Over the last three years of teaching I have seen how positively students respond to technology based lessons. In the past I was only applying trial and error to how I created these lessons. Over this past summer I have learned of several theoretical principles that I will apply moving forward. The first is the TPACK framework developed by Punya Mishra and Matthew J. Koehler at

Michigan State University. This framework asks teachers to not just use technology, but rather to combine their pedagogy, technology, and content knowledge when approaching such lessons. When combining all three of these areas a teacher can create “good” technology education.

Another cognitive framework I would like to apply when approaching how to use technology within my classroom is the SAMR Model developed by Ruben Puentedura. This set of principles establishes that the purpose of using technology within education should be to enhance my lessons. SAMR establishes four unique ways you can employ technology; Substitution, Augmentation, Modification, and Redefinition. Substitution and Augmentation seek to enhance curriculum while using technology. Modification and Redefinition develop a transformation to change how teachers teach subject matter. While Substitution and Augmentation are valuable in certain situations where lessons can be redesigned using technology, I firmly believe that an educator’s goal should always be to Modify and Redefine learning using technology. An example of this Modification and Redefinition are the many uses of Web 2.0 tools that allow teachers, students, educators, and scholars to collaborate using the Internet. This feat was previously unachievable without the use of technology.

Another area of great interest for myself in education is the topic of creativity and how to develop this skill within learners. I firmly believe that this is one of greatest problems facing the traditional school model today. Ken Robinson describes this issue well in his RSA talk titled *Changing Educational Paradigms*. His belief is that the traditional schooling model does not allow students to develop

creativity through problem-based learning. The traditional school teaches students to search for one correct answer by listening to their teaching and reading a textbook. To develop creativity there were theories covered during this summer that will help changing this growing dilemma. The first concept to acknowledge is that we must teach students that creativity is a goal-oriented process developing solutions that are NEW.

Novel: Unique, Fresh, Etc.

Effective: Valuable, Useful, Etc.

Whole: Organic, Organized, Etc.

The next concept I will remember to include within my curriculum design is the educational five-step framework to creativity covered during class this semester.

These five steps are;

Preparation - interest in a problem

Incubation - churning below threshold of a consciousness

Insight - Aha, Pieces falling into place

Evaluation - Is this worth pursuing?

Elaboration - Translation into final product

It will be important to include these five steps in the learning process when developing projects for my students. As the creator, I must embed these five steps when designing creative lessons for my students. Lastly, throughout my time in classes this summer there is a fundamental theory we discussed that connects with my philosophy on education. Many educators simply require students to gain knowledge of course content covered in class. However, students must be driven not only to know, but to understand and apply these concepts. With this deeper understanding students employ higher-level thinking and retain content longer.

Additionally, as an educator I must remember to employ the Seven Habits of Mind when constructing lessons, projects, and curriculum.

These seven habits of mind or cognitive tools are:

- 1 perceiving - observing and imaging
- 2 patterning - your ability to see patterns and formulate new ones
- 3 abstracting - come up with the fundamental meaning and apply it
- 4 embodied thinking - kinesthetic thinking + empathy
- 5 modeling - dimensional thinking - designing and reworking
- 6 play - deep play is constructing a new way of being in the world by playing (failure - trial and error)
- 7 synthesizing - putting multiple ways of knowing together (any of the above six)

Of all of these habits of mind I am most interested in developing more “deep play” in my teaching. I firmly believe that as educators we often do not allow students the opportunity to actually “play” while learning. Teachers often tell students they are “wrong” or give them limited time to learn a concept. The best way to utilize “deep play” within the classroom is to create project based learning and facilitate longer time period learning opportunities so that learners can grow at their own pace.

Looking Forward:

My personal manifesto looking forward on my career for the next five years is developed from my experiences as a teacher, student, and life long learner. It also incorporates my goals as an educator of young people. I firmly believe that my passion for my profession will continue to drive me to develop my curriculum, teaching and learning environment to provide additional opportunities for student learning.

I believe that the goal of every educator should be to mentor students,

assisting them in educational discovery and construction of knowledge. I believe that this is accomplished through inclusive teaching which incorporates various learning styles and backgrounds. A teacher must diversify how and why they teach subjects in order to include all cultural, social, ideological, and psychological individuals in the learning process. Technology is paramount to the movement. Our goal as educators should also be social progress both for the person and society, this I believe is essential for education. I believe education is student driven as well as teacher driven. A teacher must not only transmit knowledge, but include students in the process allowing for a positive democratic classroom environment. This is accomplished by incorporating student input in unit planning, discipline, lessons, etc. Lastly, I believe a teacher must always be forward thinking and reflective in nature. A teacher has to constantly push themselves toward discovering new and exciting ways to teach. This is achieved through reflecting upon lessons, units, and incorporating collaboration with colleagues and input from students. In reflecting upon our practice we, along with the students, are working towards improving education.

To employ this philosophy there are a variety of steps I will take in the future of my profession. The first step I must take is to continue to grow as an educator. In the next five years of my career I must attend conferences, participate in research, collaborate, share, remain “plugged in”, and “risk take” to find best practice in my own educational environment. This will require that I utilize my personal learning network, PLN, to become aware of new philosophies and approaches to learning. Using social media tools like Twitter and Facebook will be beneficial in the future.

The next area I must continue improve is remaining “plugged in” using educational research databases and news sources such as; Education Weekly, Education News, Edutopia, and EdTech k-12 Magazine. Furthermore, because I am an educator of Social Studies there are numerous subject area resources I must continue to make use of as well. History Channel, The Economist, World History of Us All, and various current world news sources will benefit me greatly within my content area.

In the future I also see myself as a collaborator who is willing to share and teach other educators about my practice. I am already becoming a educational technology leader within my school that helps others become users themselves. In the future of my career I anticipate developing professional development tools for my peers as well as social media support systems so that other educators can benefit from what I have learned. I anticipate that I will also grow from sharing with other educators as well. I have already developed a Facebook group and Twitter hashtag that educators within my school use to collaborate on education and technology issues.

There are also various state, national, and global organizations that I will participate in over the next five years to become a better educator. I am a member of the National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS), and Michigan Council for the Social Studies (MCSS). Both of these professional development organizations provide content area learning opportunities for Social Studies educators. Now and in the future I will employ online and conference resources to improve teaching within my classroom. These organizations also have quality technology based learning networks that I will use to improve as an educator.

In the area of technology education there are many organizations that provide similar professional development opportunities. I am currently a member of the Michigan Association for Computer Users in Learning (MACUL), and in the future I will become a member of The International Society for Technology in Education (ISTE). Both of these organizations will contribute to my future as I continue to expand my use of the TPACK framework. These organizations will also help facilitate the use of new lessons and technologies within the classroom. One of the greatest challenges related to technology education is the idea that this field is constantly in flux. To become a successful educator who uses technology effectively I must stay current. This will also benefit my student body that continues to use these resources for personal use. I believe that it is also my job to build digital citizenship within my students. I must use these new technologies to help them become positive users of technology in their own lives.

In my future as an educator I would also like to push my school and district to try new things and become better technology users. I am and always will be a passionate educator. I challenge, push, and inspire students to become life long learners who are guided by their passions and goals. Five years from now, I anticipate looking into the mirror and seeing a person who is never content with his own teaching practice. In the future I would like to continue to take graduate studies and classes that will benefit my teaching for my students. In a year, I will graduate with a Master of Arts in Educational Technology from Michigan State University. Although this degree will be complete I will continue to actively educate myself through a variety of resources. I will continue to use my Professional Learning

Network of fellow educators I have become colleagues with at Michigan State. In conclusion, over the next five years I will still be someone who continues to love what he does. Who is guided by his passion to educate and inspire young people. I will constantly utilize all of these tools to improve upon my craft as an educator.