Reflective Paper II

11/5/10
Illinois Professional Teaching Standards

Standard 1: Content Knowledge

1L. Facilitates learning experiences that make connections to other content areas and to life and career experiences.

During my time teaching I created a literature unit for fourth and fifth grade students using the novel *The Indian in the Cupboard* by Lynne Reid Banks. This unit provided ample opportunities to relate what the students were reading to social studies and their lives. The book gives a lot of information about the Iroquois Indian tribe. Since the fifth grade class was studying Native Americans I decided to tie the novel unit in with their social studies. As a group we created a KWL chart to find out more information about the Iroquois. I then split the students into partners to do research on the Internet to present to the rest of the group members. Each group of students had particular information they were responsible for finding. I also related the novel to the student’s lives. The main character in the story is a fourth grade boy so I was able to ask many questions that got the students thinking about how they would feel or what they would do in a situation.

Standard 2: Human Development and Learning

2E. Understands how to include student development factors when making instructional decisions.

During student teaching I was responsible for making all the decisions about what was being taught for several weeks. This time period really helped to broaden my understanding of being flexible and changing plans to fit each student. At the beginning of my planning I had two third grade students for instructional spelling that were on the same lesson. After a few weeks it became apparent that one of the students needed more challenging words than the other student. He had been getting 100% on every Monday pre-test. So I moved that student up several lessons and kept the other student at his current level. The student is still successful in spelling, but it requires more practice to get a 100% on the spelling test.
Standard 3: Diversity

3I. Uses information about student’s families, cultures, and communities as a basis for connecting instruction to student’s experiences.

From the very beginning I made an effort to get to know as much as possible about my students. I asked them questions about their families, their favorite shows, foods, places to go, etc. Then when creating sentences to use on the board for grammar I was able to incorporate things the students liked. This made the “boring” stuff like finding nouns, verbs, subject and predicate, etc, more interesting for the students. I was also able to use what I knew about the students to modify charts we used in math to show places or things they know about so they weren’t thrown off by names and places they had never even heard of before. Doing this really helped me to connect to the students and shows the students that I really listen to what they tell me.

Standard 4: Planning for Instruction

4E. Understands how to integrate technology into classroom instruction.

The classroom I was in was fortunate to have four computers and a Smartboard. This was a great asset to my lessons. I used many different interactive websites during my teaching to enhance student learning. I also incorporated the Smartboard by having students practice spelling words or math problems. This was more fun for the students than just doing it on paper. There were also several educational games loaded on the computers for the students to use. If students completed their math homework early they were allowed to go on the computer and use a program called FastMath. This program works on improving student’s basic math skills in the four basic operations. We tried to make sure students used this program at least two times a week. Another program we tried to use frequently was Type to Learn. This is a typing program for elementary students. When students finished grammar or spelling early this is what we let them do with the extra time.
**Standard 5: Learning Environment**

5C. Understands how to help students work cooperatively and productively in groups.

During my student teaching I got the chance to work in literature circles in the fifth grade classroom with the lowest group of readers. This required a great deal of cooperation from the students in order to be productive. Each student had a role to fill each time we read. These roles were: prediction leader, wordsmith, character recorder, reading guide, and discussion master. The student's rotated roles each time we read. The students were very responsible and took pride in fulfilling their role for the day. I was just part of the group to assist with reading and understanding. I also made sure the students worked cooperatively and did their part in the group. There were very few times when the students had difficulty with not paying attention. All it took to get them back on task was a verbal reminder.

**Standard 6: Instructional Delivery**

Adapts the general curriculum and uses instructional strategies and materials according to characteristics of the learner.

Teaching special education students means constantly changing, modifying, and adapting instruction for individual students. I created a whole unit on rounding for my work sample for two fourth grade students because the rounding in the general education textbook offered no review and went quickly to rounding to the nearest million. These students were not at that level yet, so I created my unit and started with place value and went all the way up to rounding to the nearest ten thousands. The students were very successful because it was broken down into small pieces that they could understand. I adapted spelling lessons for all of the students by starting them at words lower than grade level and using fewer words. I also did a lot of review with the students in every subject. An instructional strategy I used during a novel unit was to allow the students to choose how much they wanted to read with the minimum amount being a paragraph. The students responded well to this because if they didn't feel like reading a lot they didn't have to and if they did feel like reading more they could.
Standard 7: Communication

7G. Creates varied opportunities for all students to use effective written, verbal, non-verbal, and visual communication.

During a novel unit I created for *The Indian in the Cupboard* the students shared various work they completed. After every chapter we did a group discussion using discussion questions I had written. If the question was an opinion I had each student give a response. After one chapter the students had to draw a picture of their favorite part of the book and then explain it to their classmates. The students did an excellent job on their pictures as well as with telling what the picture was of and why it was their favorite part of the story. They were very creative with their drawings and I could tell they had all thought carefully about the part of the story they chose. The students were also responsible for finding out information about the Iroquois Indian tribe and sharing it with the group. They did a very good job researching information on the Internet and found some really good information to share with the others.

Standard 8: Assessment

8L. Maintains useful and accurate records of student work and performance and communicates student’s progress knowledgeably and responsibly to students, parents, and colleagues.

While I was teaching I was also responsible for grading all the students assignments and recording the grades in the grade book. I made sure to grade all assignments the day they were completed. This way I could see how the well the students understood the lesson and was able to know if I needed to re-teach a lesson the next day. It also gave the students more immediate feedback on how they did on an assignment. At the end of every day I would discuss with my mentor teacher about how the students were doing so she would know what was going on in her classroom since she wasn't teaching and was often out of the room. If students did well on assignments I made sure to give them verbal praise when I handed the assignment back to them. If a student struggled with an assignment I would find a time to pull them aside and re-teach and allow them to re-do the assignment for partial credit. I
also worked with a student with behavior issues and helped to keep record of his behavior in a behavior log and talk with his teacher about his behavior often.

**Standard 9: Collaborative Relationships**

**9T. Demonstrates the ability to co-teach and co-plan.**

This semester in my high school portion of student teaching I am in three co-teaching classes. I have had the opportunity to co-teach and co-plan in a Basic English class. I have been working closely with the general education teacher to create lessons to go in a short story unit that she has planned. The teacher gave me a story that she would like me to teach the class. She asked that I come up with vocabulary and questions. She also wanted me to come up with a writing assignment to go along with the story. I haven’t had the chance to teach it yet, but the teacher and I have worked very well together to come up with the plan. Since I have six more weeks at the high school I will be doing more co-teaching with the English teacher. I am also planning on working with another special education teacher to create a cross-curricular unit that combines science and literature.

**Standard 10: Reflection and Professional Growth**

**10G. Participates in professional dialogue and continuous learning to support his/her own development as a learner and a teacher.**

While I was student teaching I have had the opportunity to attend two workshops with teachers from the school. It was a very good experience even though I had difficulty relating to some of the information. The first workshop I attended with the special education teachers, a few general education teachers, the school psychologist, and the school social worker. This meeting was about Response to Intervention and special education eligibility for students with a learning disability. A lot of the information I received was very hard to understand since I don’t have as much experience as the other teachers. It was also in very scientific and professional terms. There was also a lot of information in a short period of time. I also attended a workshop on information for parents to know about behavioral IEPs. This was geared towards parents and was very interesting. There were a lot of parents at the workshop sharing their thoughts and feelings. It was very informative to hear their point of view and what they understood.
Standard 11: Professional Conduct

11S. Complies with local, state, and federal regulations and policies related to students with disabilities.

While student teaching I made sure to look at the student's IEPs. I wanted to be familiar with their IEP goals so I would know what the students are working toward. I also created a chart for my personal use of each student’s accommodations and modifications listen in their IEP. I did this so I could make sure they were getting the appropriate help during assignments and tests. I also learned a lot from my mentor teacher about the law as far as what you can and can’t ask a parent. The teacher I was with had a lot of contact with her student’s parents. She would always explain to me why or why not she was or wasn’t contacting a parent about different things.

TEP Dispositions

Disposition 1: Collaboration

I had a lot of chances to collaborate with other teachers this semester. I was able to work closely with my mentor teacher to create my work sample unit and to make sure all of my lessons met the student's educational needs. I also got to spend time with the fifth grade teacher and help her to implement literature circles at the beginning of the year by working with her lowest group of readers. The last two weeks of my time in the elementary I spent in the fourth grade classroom. The teacher and I worked together to create and implement a behavior plan for a new student with behavior issues. We spent time every day discussing the positives and negatives from the day and going over the observations we had documented. At the high school I am working collaboratively with the general education English teacher to create lessons for the class since it is a co-teaching classroom. I have enjoyed working with others because I have gotten so many new and good ideas.
Disposition 2: Honesty/Integrity

I think the biggest way I showed honesty in my student teaching was by admitting when I was unsure about something. If I was unsure about how to teach something I would go to my mentor teacher and just tell her I wasn’t sure and that I needed help. My mentor teacher liked this a lot because she felt it really gave her the chance to teach me something. I also was entrusted with confidential information about students. I of course did not share this information with anyone or talk about my students outside of school.

Disposition 3: Respect

Respect is very important when you are entering someone else’s classroom or school. I was very respectful of not only my mentor teacher, but also all of the staff in the school. Even after I became comfortable and like a part of the school staff I always asked before suing anything or before leaving the classroom. I also made sure to ask my mentor teacher’s opinion about how I did things or how I could change things because I had a lot of respect for her. I also made sure to always ask if there was anything she would like me to do if I didn’t have anything I needed to do and before I left for the day. I also felt it was important to respect the students as well. Each student has his or her own opinions and ideas. I made sure to take the time to listen and value what they said.

Disposition 4: Commitment to Learning

Teachers must be committed to learning for themselves and for their students. The one thing that bothers me the most is when a student says they are too dumb to do something. This is coming from somewhere; either the student heard someone else say this or had someone say it to him or her. When I show students problems they have missed I don’t tell them they are wrong, instead I simply say, “Let’s look at this problem again.” I want students to be committed to their own learning. I took every opportunity I could to ask questions during my student teaching. I would ask
questions about how my teacher chose curriculum or why she did certain things so I would have more information for my future classroom built up.

**Disposition 5: Emotional Maturity**

During my time student teaching at the elementary I had the chance to work with a student with a behavioral IEP. This student was very difficult to work with because his behavior changed constantly. You had to be very firm and consistent with this student. He would often tell me he hated me or didn’t want me anywhere near him. Then a few minutes later he would want my help and to have me right next to him. I had to know to not take his outbursts at me personally and to ignore them. I also had to learn that I needed to be firm when I said no and not let him try to talk his way into getting his way. I have also shown emotional maturity at the high school because I know I cannot try to be friends with the students. I also eat lunch in the teachers lounge and listen to teachers talk negatively about students every day. It would be very easy to become part of this discussion, but I choose not to because it really bothers me that they make such negative comments about students.

**Disposition 6: Responsibility**

I think the biggest way I showed responsibility during student teaching was by being prepared every day. I made sure to get to school at the same time as my mentor teacher everyday. I always had all of my lesson plans planned out a week in advance. I also made sure to get copies made of anything I needed for class a few days ahead of time in case the copier or printer would malfunction. I made sure to grade all work for the day before I went home so that it would be ready to hand back to the students the next day so we could review any problems they may have had. Before leaving at the end of the day I would make sure I had everything prepared. I would also ask my mentor teacher if she had anything she wanted me to do before leaving. I wanted to make sure that I was an asset to her classroom and the school during my time there.

**Disposition 7: Fairness**
While teaching I always did my best to be fair with students. I would try to call on student equally so everyone had a chance to participate. I would also make sure I was giving every student the help they needed. For example, I had one student that preferred to have a teacher sit next to him while he completed assignments which I had no problem doing as long as no one else needed my assistance. If there were other students in the room I would always occasionally check their progress and remind them to ask for my help if the need it. I also did my best to have the same expectations for each student to follow the classroom rules. If I had to punish a student I made sure to explain why so they could understand the consequences of their behavior.

**Disposition 8: Belief that All Students Can Learn**

I think that being a special education major means that you believe that all students can learn. If a person went into special education and didn’t believe this then I would definitely say they are in the wrong field. I enjoy trying to share this belief with others because I truly feel so strongly that all students can learn. There was one student in my special education class that would participate in our classroom, but would not participate in his general education classroom. The teacher in the general education room formed the opinion that he was mentally challenged, until we showed her the quality of work and level that he could actually perform. She was very surprised and started pushing him more to answer questions and participate.

**Strengths & Weaknesses**

A strength that I possess is the ability to work well and collaborate with others. During my time teaching I truly became part of the staff at the elementary. Not only was my mentor teacher sad to see me leave, but also so was everyone else. I took the time to get to know all the staff and as many students as I possibly could. If we had a break in the special education room I would go to general education rooms and help out. I even stayed after school for meetings and parent nights to make more connections. I think another strength I possess is that I can tell when a student is struggling and offer guidance or extra practice. As stated earlier I have very strong
feelings that all students can learn and I do my best to come up with different ways to teach things to meet different students needs. I know every student learns differently.

A weakness that I have is I think sometimes I give students too many chances. The school used a behavior system of pulling sticks if you did something wrong. I rarely chose to have a student pull a stick if I saw them doing something wrong, as long as it wasn't something that hurt anyone or anything. Instead I would just verbally remind them what they are doing is wrong. I usually gave students three times of me reminding them not to do something before I would have them pull a stick. I believe another weakness of mine is that I have a hard time judging whether or not I have enough material to fill the time during a lesson. I often find in reading I have too much planned to do so it has to go on to another day. In math and grammar I find that the students fly through assignments and I don’t have enough to fill the time. I usually corrected this problem by having the students use educational computer programs or games that focus on that subject area. I feel that pacing and time management are skills that will develop in time with more experience and practice.