Student Teaching Reflection April Anderson

Fossil Ridge, 7th Science

As I reflect on my student teaching and intern experience, I am overwhelmed at the amount of work that it took to make this a great year for my students. They had their original teacher leave just before the end of the first trimester. Once I took over the class as a teacher intern, two of my classes (5th and 6th hour) had to endure a substitute teacher twice a week as I finished my course work at Dixie State. Once I was able to be with all my students full time every day, I really wanted to give them all I had to ensure that they had a successful year learning the 7th grade Science Standards as well as having an enriching and fulfilling experience in my class.

The biggest lesson I learned is quality teaching is hard work and extremely time intensive. It requires a ton of preparation. It’s a good thing that I absolutely love the students, the content, and the teaching and learning process. Despite the amount of hours I poured into preparing engaging lessons, labs, and other activities, I really had a fun time doing it. There wasn’t a day that went by that I didn’t enjoy being in the classroom with my students.

The area where I improved the most was using formative assessment to redirect my teaching or redirect the course of the lesson. It requires much energy, constantly walking around the room, to make sure each student is understanding the concepts and demonstrating that understanding by completing various assigned tasks.

During my student teaching experience I also discovered some of my natural abilities and strengths. I’m able to establish and maintain a good rapport with my students. It’s easy for me to develop a caring, yet professional relationship with them that focuses on mutual trust respect , and acceptance. Classroom management hasn’t been an issue for me either. The key, in addition to establishing a good relationships with the students, is to keep students actively engaged. When there’s been sufficient preparation for the lesson and learning activities, students have less opportunity to become bored and act out. By developing a safe, creative, and interesting learning environment with established procedures, classroom management rarely becomes a problem.

Despite having these strengths, there are areas where I can definitely improve. One of the things that I’d like to explore is ways of providing alternative means by which students can individually demonstrate their learning. In our PLC group we’ve agreed as a team to create common assessments so that we can use the results to make data driven decisions for intervention, so alternative forms of summative assessment haven’t been used. Another area for improvement would be to provide clear, tight, and definitive instructions on class assignments so students aren’t constantly asking questions such as ‘What am I supposed to do?’ Having instructions provided on each assignment also helps those students who have been absent make-up the work without having to ask for instructions.

Overall, the student teaching experience has greatly influenced my teaching efficacy. I’ve always known that I could be a great teacher, but now having had the experience provides me with much more confidence in what I do. Several factors have contributed to my efficacy as a teacher. First, I’m confident in my content knowledge and can answer most questions from students with easy to understand analogies, applications, or examples. I’m also confident in my ability to create a classroom environment and healthy student-teacher relationships so that classroom management is easily maintained.

The factor that contributed the most to my efficacy as a teacher was the kind comments that came from my college supervisors and school staff developer. After putting in long, hard hours of preparation for lessons, it’s rewarding to hear from those that observe my teaching that I’m doing something right! Reading quotes that were written on my   
evaluations from Dale Barlow provide me with confirmation that I really can be a great teacher.

“From my observation, April has demonstrated the highest standard in every way as a professional educator. She is ready in every respect to be a full time teacher. I would hire her in a minute!” - Mr. Dale Barlow

The following quotes are from my content methods instructor at Dixie State. “This was a great lesson. Students were engaged the entire time.” “You are very confident in your content knowledge.” “Great environment – very effective classroom management.” “Your preparation was outstanding!” “Excellent!” (in reference to using appropriate technology to enhance instruction and support student learning) - Dr. Pamela Cantrell

Teaching can be a thankless job. These evaluations are welcomed and are important factors that have influenced my teaching efficacy. However, there is no greater reward than to see how students have evolved and improved while in my class. When my students’ test scores on common assessments are comparable to other veteran science teachers’ scores it validates my efficacy as a science teacher as well. Having finished this first year of teaching, I look forward to what I’ll be able to do for students in the years to come.