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# What's inside the Pandora's box of student teaching? Lessons learned from student teachers education personnel preparation

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# **What's Inside the Pandora's Box of Student Teaching?**

## **Fall 2007 /Spring 2008 semesters**

**Lucia Buttarò, Ph.D.**

### **Introduction**

I am an Adelphi University student teacher supervisor. I have been in this position whole year (fall of 2007 and spring of 2008), and I would like to discuss the lessons that I have learned by working with these teacher candidates in the schools throughout Long Island, Brooklyn, Queens, The Bronx, and Manhattan.

My role for the past year has been that of a liaison between the school where student teaching is taking place and the university that is sponsoring the experience. I was/am ultimately responsible for recommending the student teacher for certification. As a University Supervisor, I served as a public relations agent and was the only person from the university to work directly with the schools. An additional responsibility of the university supervisor is to provide interpretation of the university program to student teachers. This involves visiting the student teacher in the school, conducting seminars, and conferring with principals and cooperating teachers. Seminars in which the fall and spring group gathered for discussion with me provided a high level of comfort to the student teacher and offered the group an excellent opportunity to exchange materials and ideas.

I guided these student teachers through the development and use of teaching skills. The one-on-one relationship between them and me presented an ideal teaching atmosphere; the unique problems faced by each student teacher was considered and suitable courses of action were prescribed. My role was primarily of evaluator during the supervisory visits. I visited each participant four times (once a month) for the duration of the semester. My trouble shooting role was evident. I served as an intermediary in situations that arose between student teachers and cooperating teachers. Because many student teachers faced difficulties, they felt free to confide in me, who by virtue of my position, kept confidences. I did, however, discuss with them my intention to write an article about their experiences and that I would keep their names confidential. They all agreed to give me permission to share their experiences. My area of expertise is second language acquisition, bilingual education, multicultural diversity and Spanish methodology at the secondary level. I was recognized and used as a professional resource during student teaching both in and outside the class. One of the most important tasks that I had was to ensure close communication and getting all persons involved to give their best efforts in providing a successful learning experience for the student teacher.

### **Abstract**

The purpose of any student teaching program is to provide a situation in which real students learn and practice varied techniques of teaching while working with “real students” under the direction of a certified teacher in a public or private school. The length of the student teaching at Adelphi University is one semester in which they work for a total of 480 hours, 240 hours in the first placement and then another 240 hours in their second placement. The actual placement of student teachers is done through a cooperative arrangement between the university and the school district, resulting in a placement that meets the needs of that particular student teacher as closely as possible. The director of student teaching at the university meets with designated individual representing the school district and reviews the individual applications, and then works with the teachers at the school district who have been designated as appropriate for the role of cooperating teacher. The next step in the placement is to request that the principal at the school review the application and discuss with the cooperating teacher the likelihood of accepting that student teacher. If all parties agree, then the student teacher is notified and encouraged to visit the classroom to become accustomed to the setting.

### **Methodology**

I had a total of six students to supervise in the fall of 2007 and eight in the spring of 2008. I had to supervise each one for a total of four times, twice in each placement. We also met once a week for student teaching seminar. Part of the class assignment was to write a weekly journal where the student teachers had to tell me the following:

- 1) Things I have done well this week that helped students learn.
- 2) Thoughts I have had this week.
- 3) Feelings I have had this week.
- 4) One important thing I learned this week.
- 5) Things I want to remember to do in the future to help students learn.
- 6) Things my university supervisor should know.

I sifted through all the journals to see if I could find any commonalities and / or similarities. I triangulated the journals with the school visits, the weekly seminars and the post observations/conferences that took place after their observations. The following paragraphs illustrate what we, as university supervisors, need to bring to the seminars in the future.

### **Starting on the right foot**

The atmosphere at every school is quite different. In most schools, student teachers receive a warm welcome from the staff, but, if a cooperating teacher is assigned a student teacher without having the opportunity to volunteer for the assignment, problems can result that affect the student teacher. Normally, the cooperating teacher is quite eager to have the opportunity to work with a student teacher who will bring fresh ideas into the classroom. Student teachers began by wondering if they would be able to complete the assignment satisfactorily. Many of those with whom I have worked

expressed suffering from insomnia, and not sleeping at all the night prior to my visit for supervision. The possibility of failure is real, and it does exist. Some of the questions that appeared quite frequently in their journals were: Will I perform satisfactorily for my cooperating teacher? Will we have a personality conflict? Will I be able to be myself, or must I become a clone of my cooperating teacher? Will I be able to control a classroom full of students? Will my cooperating teacher assist me in filling in the gaps? Will the pupils accept me as a teacher or see me as a student?

The cooperating teacher also has questions, especially if this is her/his first student teacher. Will the student teacher be critical of my teaching? Will I perform as a satisfactory cooperating teacher? Will I be able to turn over my class to a student teacher? How will my pupils feel about having another adult in the classroom? How will I get along with my student teacher? Will the student teacher be competent enough to work with my class? How will I get along with the university supervisor?

Prior to their assignment, we met as a group to discuss crucial issues for survival. The decision to become a professional educator carries with it the responsibility to appear professional both in appearance and in habits. Dress and physical appearance are important when working in a teaching role. Subject matter and classroom equipment often dictate types of clothing student teachers should wear. Female kindergarten student teachers discovered that wearing a skirt or dress was impractical. I made sure that student teachers understood the importance of the personal impression that they make on all those who see them; such as faculty, staff, students, administrators of the school and the parents of the school's students. Punctuality and attendance are also important.

When it comes to second language acquisition, it is critical that student teachers not only get to know the community but also the kinds of homes their students come from. This information will aid them in their understanding of why some children get sleepy around midmorning and why the school may have a breakfast program. A drive through the community is a good beginning. A visit to the grocery store, drugstores, and gas stations is a good way to get a reference point on the culture of the students who attend that school. The fall of 2007 and the spring of 2008 group had similar questions and concerns that kept coming up in their journals week after week. That is why I felt it was important for them to keep a weekly journal with guiding questions for them to answer. This was a good way to keep track of their questions and concerns.

### **Who are all these people: faculty, staff, students and administration**

Becoming acquainted with everyone is a wise move for the student teacher. Knowing the characteristics and qualities of everyone who works at the school will make the student teacher feel at home and also know who to turn to if he/she needs something. Getting to know administration can be very helpful in the job hunting process. The student teacher should use every opportunity to meet and talk with other faculty members from the first day of observation until the last day of the assignment. Additionally, knowing the name of the school secretary, the counselor, the nurse and the custodian, teacher aides and para professionals is a valuable professional practice.

At a minimum, student teachers had students of both sexes from various economic levels. Some of these students also had disabilities. Most schools have a population variety from several races, ethnic groups, and countries of family origin. Most classrooms showed a rich cross section of different skin tones, different hair and facial characteristics, different styles of clothing and a variety of psychological characteristics.

Many teachers felt they needed to learn a great deal more to function effectively with different kinds of individuals. They learned to keep in mind that the most essential element and the key to success with each student were to relate to each one individually. All other differences mattered little if a real desire to work together for the benefit of the student was expressed by the student teacher to each individual student. This expression took the form of patience that was gained throughout the semester, body language, use of eyes in communication and facial expression. Student teachers learned that a smile can go a long way when languages are incompatible. It was important to keep in mind that the purpose of the school and the student teacher's relationship was for the purpose to educate children, to take them from where they were and move them forward in the skills of living, working, studying and getting along with others in order to make their lives better according to their own definitions of what is better. Many times teachers were frustrated because students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were not making the same progress as other students. Throughout the semester they learned that those students were making far more progress because of their point of beginning, the amount of translation they had to use, and the kinds of feelings they had to deal with as they worked on their school assignments.

Student teachers used differences among students as instructional assessment. The music, art, customs, food, dances, styles of clothing and folklore of the different cultures within a class generated many approaches to learning. When information about these exciting differences was used, the subjects in the curriculum were more exciting for all students. Language arts was a natural subject for examining cultures: writing story telling, listening, reading. Library research and even spelling was involved in studying different cultures. Any subject in the curriculum could be related in this way; it all required creativity and appreciation of differences.

The differences in the cultures tended to stimulate students into their own research, whether that took the form of interviewing older people or spending more time in the library or on the Internet looking up specific topics. These differences were a source of rich, available educational activity. Student teachers enlisted the parents and other family members of students from culturally diverse backgrounds to come to the school for presentations, interviews and cultural reviews.

### **Familiarizing oneself with school property, policies and students**

In elementary settings, it is important to know where to deliver or pick up students for art, music and other special classes. When and where students arrive and depart on the school buses must be understood; where students are delivered can often be quite different from where they are picked up. Student teachers must also know what the procedures are for rainy day or snowy day schedules together with fire drills and other emergencies. Student teachers assigned to middle or high schools might be assigned hall duty.

It is important to obtain from the cooperating teacher or the secretary school district policies and read them carefully. Student teachers need to understand that state laws pertaining to education are translated into rules by the state department of education. Urban districts have rules that are different from suburban or rural districts. The student teacher should become familiar with specific school rules relating to student behavior, parental interactions, governance of the school faculty and school board issues that may affect the school, the faculty or the community. One rule that many of my student teachers were not aware of and almost got them into trouble was the role of photographing or videotaping students without their parents' written permission.

One of the major concerns of the student teacher was classroom control. It was a shock for most student teachers to realize that soon they would be in charge of the discipline of the entire class. One of the mistakes that I encountered was student teachers not distinguishing between teaching students and "making friends" with the students and many times not having the knack of handling the entire group. Until the student teacher gains self confidence and more knowledge about the group, it is necessary to begin working with individual students and small groups. The following are some personal and professional qualities that the student teacher should attempt to refine during the placement in the classroom:

- 1) A desire for fairness to all students
- 2) A respect for all students regardless of ethnic, cultural and socioeconomic background or state of health.
- 3) The desire to be a good role model for the students and to help them in developing their own positive self-image.

### **School referral services**

The guidance departments of various schools offer a variety of services to children and youth. The variety of services available depends on the financial capability of the school district and the cooperativeness of local public health officials. In addition to the school district offering services, communities frequently offer assistance through community mental health, pregnancy consultation services and the division of youth services. Some schools have school nurses and immediate referrals can be made when needed. Under no circumstances should a student teacher administer medication to a student. This ruling applies to all medication, including aspirin as some students are allergic to aspirin.

Family problems of students are another area of concern to the student teacher. Traumatic experiences in their family lives can affect their performance in the classroom to a great extent. The student teacher should be aware of such possibilities and develop special patience and consideration for those students whose home lives are in upheaval. These students need special counseling. Care should be taken to remain objective yet kind and supportive. Students can have life altering experiences and sometimes have no one but a teacher with whom to discuss their problems. Experiences such as a death or separation in the family, being witness to an accident or a crime, being victim of a crime, being a victim of abuse in the home, or poverty can permanently damage a student's self image and ability to work successfully at school.

Referral for dental needs are sometimes more difficult to discover. Unexplained changes in behavior, a droopy head, unusual grouchiness, and general inattentiveness may indicate some otherwise hidden dental-related pain or illness. Mental health problems are usually handled differently. Keeping a daily log of the behavior of the student helps in explaining the problem to the referral professional. Such a record is frequently required to initiate a referral to a psychologist. Student teachers should know about child abuse and how to recognize it. Suspected abuse victims must be referred to the proper authorities. Some students are irritable and disgruntled because they are hungry. Free lunch programs and food stamps for the families of such students should be investigated.

## **Observations**

It is advantageous for student teachers to observe in classrooms of different subjects and different ages in order to maintain an objective assessment of the classroom situation. Two things must be taken into consideration when doing an observation: one is the schedule of the observations which should be arranged with the cooperating teacher. The second is to determine what to look for in the individual classrooms. Students usually think that teachers have eyes on the backs of their heads. Student teachers must learn this trait. Through peripheral vision or through sound cues learned from various students, teachers know what is happening in the back of the room even though they are not looking in that direction. By observing other teachers, student teachers can develop this trait. Student teachers also get to see what kind of interaction goes on in the classroom. There are student-student interactions, student-teacher interactions and teacher-other person interactions. Student teachers should be able to adjust to the intensity of an interaction on both part of the of the student and of the teacher (or whoever the involved parties happen to be).

It is important to be aware of the physical logistics of the classroom including awareness, such as the management of physical objects in the classroom (desks, the seating of students, the lighting in the room, etc.). Student teachers should be aware of the following:

- location of pencil sharpener
- order that the teacher has for students to go and sharpen pencils

- location of trash basket
- location of teacher's desk in relation to students' desks
- ventilation system (hot/cold)
- adjustment of lighting
- amount of free movement allowed in room
- emotional climate and styles of rapport

### **Student teacher evaluation and record keeping**

Paranoia is the condition that student teachers develop when they feel everyone is watching them. Time was spent at the university at the beginning of the term discussing the evaluation forms and to discuss the criteria for successful completion of the student teaching. Direction at this stage of the professional training is imperative for the student teacher. Midterm and final evaluation forms are completed by the cooperating teacher. The university supervisor routinely completes an evaluation form after every visit, two in the first setting and another two at the second setting. Student teachers get copies of these evaluations. Usually, general topics such as professional manner, classroom management, lesson preparation, and presentation ability are cited on these observation forms and space is provided to discuss this report with the university supervisor following the observation. A final evaluation is also done by the university supervisor, and this includes a comprehensive assessment of the probability of success of the student teacher as a teacher.

It is very important for the student teacher to have a positive attitude about evaluations. A few have found it very difficult to accept criticism. This is a very immature response. One of the major purposes of student teaching is growth in teaching competencies, and this can not take place without constructive criticism. Most student teachers want feedback. An important part of the evaluation of student teachers is the ability to handle the evaluation of the students in their classes. The interest shown and ability to work with grading procedures, student progress folders, and other aspects of student's evaluation are true indicators of teaching potential. The cumulative record for the student teaching experience is the portfolio. A copy of all observation records and all evaluations should be included in the portfolio. Examples of unit and lesson development, tests developed, photographs of bulletin boards, and evaluative and assessment measures that the student teacher has used during the semester should be included. At the end of the semester, the student teacher's portfolio will hold ample evidence of his/her performance in the classroom.

Student teachers are responsible for certain forms and reports that must be completed and returned promptly. It has been stated by the student teachers whom I was supervising that they disliked record keeping. Even though they consider it a necessary task, they felt it was an unproductive aspect of accountability (Charles, 1983). Many student teachers reported that the whole idea of record keeping was not discussed during their university work, and they were quite shocked at the variety and amount of paperwork required of a classroom teacher.

Good records are valuable to teachers in many ways. They provide information about academic instructional levels, specific strengths and weaknesses, progress that has occurred in the various subject areas, social behavior and future plans for individual students. Formats for keeping good records easily include objectives, progress forms, graphs to show progress, work samples, and individual student folders in which to keep the forms and samples (Charles, 1983).

Competency in subject matter should be expected of all student teachers. Knowledge of subject matter is reflected in areas such as effective lessons, success of students, and recognition of various levels of abilities among students. Most problems encountered during student teaching, however, have been found to be in the area of interpersonal relations rather than subject matter adequacy. Student teachers should use methods and materials that are consistent with the philosophy of the school in which they are student teaching. The student teacher's role also includes organizing noninstructional activities for students, such as assembly programs, field trips, and student clubs, and a myriad of record-keeping activities used both for assessment and administration purposes.

### **How to help the ELL student learn**

The objective of schooling is learning. Learning is separate but related to teaching. Excellent teaching can take place without any learning at all occurring, and learning can occur without any deliberate teaching taking place. It is more important to study learning than to study teaching, unless you understand that teaching is the facilitation of learning. Social learning is accomplished by example and imitation. Academic learning, on the other hand, is not as easily accomplished. A wider variety and greater depth of skills and information exist for the student in academic studies. Educators calculate the extension and depth of any subject to be covered by their classroom students in specific levels; this curricula is apportioned by the grade level or subject teacher. After the initial benchmarks are established – sometimes by state departments of education and sometimes by school districts – learning themes, annual plans, and semester, unit, and lesson plans are prepared and adapted for particular classes or grade levels.

Some stages of learning that students went through with my student teachers included attraction, interest, motivation, and possession. Students are initially attracted; this attraction causes some interest to develop; this interest causes motivation, and, if the motivation is strong enough, each student will work to possess the knowledge or skill. The most difficult work that the student teachers had been through in the first two stages: attraction and interest. They learned (through trial and error at times) that, if these were sufficiently strong, the student's motivation grew, and the student was driven to possess the knowledge and make it his or her own. During the third and fourth segment of the process, the teacher was more of a facilitator and less didactic. Student teachers learned that their own students succeeded even though one or more of the four stages had been missed. Since the motivation may have come from negative factors such as fear (of punishment, of not receiving rewards, of shame), the first two stages may be skipped

entirely. As the momentum of motivation grows, students will strive to “own” the learning – to make it theirs and to store that knowledge or skill in their memories.

Of these four stages of learning, the first two are easily accomplished with imagination and flair. It is during this stage that each student requires individual work, and his or her movement into and through the fourth stage requires intense knowledge and guidance. The knowledge of the subject matter is necessary, but knowledge of how each individual child learns is more important and comes into play at this juncture. The entire class can be attracted to and interested in a new topic; this can be a total class or a group activity, but the movement from interest into motivation is accomplished at the individual student’s pace and within the parameters of the student’s personal learning needs.

The motivation stage can be divided into two segments: initial and prolonged. It is to the teacher’s advantage to have sufficient materials, exercises, and procedures for the child to maintain the initial motivation and lock in the prolonged stage. This is the point at which variations in learning readiness and learning styles are most obvious.

## **Theories**

Many student teachers get so excited about being placed in the classroom that they ignore the theoretical rationale behind what they should be doing in the classroom. Many are looking for the “quick fix” or the “flavor of the day/month”. There is no short cut to education. I always remind them to review their notes, and we talk about these issues during our weekly seminar. Of major importance in the field of learning theory is the work of Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory, in which Piaget labeled knowledge as a process of the individual child’s interacting with what is around the child. Piaget (1972, p. 5) as cited by Thomas, (1996, p. 234) expressed this as, “All knowledge is continually in a course of development and of passing from a state of lesser knowledge to one which is more complete and effective.” Piaget cited the development from infancy through early and middle childhood and to adolescence in egocentrism versus objectivity, object permanence (conservation), symbolic functioning, and classes and relationships.

Piaget’s levels and stages of development (Thomas, 1996) have now become famous throughout education circles. They include four stages: Sensorimotor (birth to 2 years), Preoperational Thought (about 2 to 7), Concrete Operations (about 7 to 11), and Formal Operations (about 11 to 15). Student teachers should remember that these are approximations but are valuable in determining how to relate to children, what methods and materials are appropriate, and what kinds of thinking to expect of the children in their classrooms.

The behaviorism theory of B. F. Skinner is utilized by many teachers in the reinforcement of learned behaviors. In contrast to Piaget, Skinner did not see the development of children as a series of stages but instead as a “continuous, incremental sequence of specific conditioned acts” (Thomas, 1996, p. 180). The use of Skinner’s stimulus response has evolved for some teachers into the current behavior modification

practices. Some educators prefer to utilize Skinner's theory as a supplemental training technique within a broader scope of teaching and learning.

Social learning theorist Albert Banduras (Thomas, 1996) brought to educators the concepts of self-efficacy and modeling. Self-efficacy is basically the ability that an individual has to cope with his or her environment and to have the power to manage it successfully. Modeling is just that: imitating. Most children and youth model adult behavior, and that frequently causes problems. However, it is the wise student teacher who is aware that he or she is being observed by students who will probably model the behavior and attitudes that they pick up from the student teacher, particularly if they admire him or her.

The Russian psychologist Vygotsky, although from an earlier period, contributed instrumental theories on the development of thought and language in a child. One of his primary concepts is the Zone of Proximal Development (Thomas, 1996). This zone identifies the space between the actual development of the child and the potential immediate next development that can be enhanced by another's guidance. "Vygotsky saw the language environment – the culture – in which a child is raised as being crucial in determining the direction and extent of the individual's intellectual growth (Thomas, 1996, p. 287).

Another theorist that received attention from my student teachers was Urie Bronfenbrenner (Thomas, 1996), who produced an ecological theory of learning. Bronfenbrenner believes that a child's Microsystems of home, school, and peer learning influence the progressive development of the child. As a developmental psychologist, Bronfenbrenner completed cross-cultural research around the world and concluded that the environment influences the development not only of children but also of all plants and animals. Student teachers who followed Bronfenbrenner's theory found that specific changes in the school environment could bring about success where there previously had only been failure.

Humanistic theories of learning include those such as Maslow's Theory of Hierarchy of Needs, in which those more pressing physiological and safety needs must be fulfilled prior to much academic learning. Self-actualization (Thomas, 1996) represents the highest level of development, according to Maslow.

## **Learning Styles**

One of the greatest surprises that student teachers discover when they begin working with students in their assigned classrooms is that they can teach the identical content using the same materials to a classroom of students, and some of the students will understand it and others will miss it completely. The rest of the class is somewhere in between. As these new teachers review their lessons, they find that many things could have gone wrong. They find a new world is opened to them in terms of why some students learn and others do not seem to learn.

Hungry students do not learn; neither do sleepy kids. People learn differently. Since we process information differently, some students immediately understand the student teacher's lesson; some will puzzle over it for a while and then "see the light", and some will not understand it and will become bored and more difficult to interest in the next lesson.

Some educators see a relationship between the theory of multiple intelligences and the variety of learning style preferences. The student teacher should consider the multiple intelligences theory as the basic machinery that the child is working with and the theories of learning as his/her method of accessing those intelligences.

According to Armstrong (1994), Howard Gardner's multiple intelligences theory maintains that we have not just one kind of intelligence but several kinds and that the discovery of the predominate kind of intelligence that a child uses will help in determining the appropriate mechanism to fit the child's learning style. Gardner has researched the following kinds of intelligences: linguistic, logical-mathematical, spatial, bodily-kinesthetic, musical, interpersonal, intrapersonal, and his most recent, naturalistic. Armstrong indicates that a teacher can determine to some extent by a child's misbehavior where the child's intelligences lie.

In the area of learning theory, teachers and researchers are aware that students may have a preferred way of learning but can utilize a method that is not first preference. According to Drake (1998), learning styles are based on personality and can be primarily auditory, visual or kinesthetic. One student may require material to be sequential while another student can easily make intuitive leaps, just as one student can think best in a singular linear fashion, and another can see the gestalt and understand immediately.

A mistake that student teachers sometimes make is to assume that all individuals learn as they themselves do. Traditionally, we teach as we have been taught. Using that model, it is easy to see that, over a series of teachers, those who learn differently will have effectively been excluded from school altogether. One may want to look at students who are dropping out of school to determine whether one of the reasons contributing to the students' dropping out was that the predominate learning style was not one that those students could assimilate. Sometimes, it is difficult for student teachers to identify methods of teaching that are different from their own, but their success in doing so will probably mean success with more students. No one style is the correct one. A combination of styles, using them with students as appropriate, will serve the student teacher better. This will require some trial and error with teaching methods on the part of the student teacher, but it is well worth it in the long run. Current methods of teaching across the curriculum include the spectrum of also teaching across learning styles.

Drake (1998) recommends techniques that will appeal to a variety of learning styles and allow across-the-curriculum content to be covered. These techniques include story telling, graphic organizers, metaphors, reflection, questioning, researching, intuitive thinking, and the impact of emotions on learning as well as the impact of learning on the emotions.

Armstrong (1998) offers the student teacher an unexpected challenge in that he believes that every child is a genius and that the classroom is the place for awakening and nurturing that genius. The twelve qualities of genius that he believes all kids have include curiosity, playfulness, imagination, creativity, wonder, wisdom, inventiveness, vitality, sensitivity, flexibility, humor and joy. Although he does not equate these qualities with Gardner's multiple intelligences theory, he does indicate that relationships exist among the qualities and gives research in anthropology, developmental psychology, and the neurosciences to support his theory.

Jenson (1998) cites the importance of memory and recall in the learning process. If the student has learned the material that the student teacher has taught but he can not recall it, the student teacher will be puzzled more. Jenson indicates that contrary to previous opinion, the brain does not "videotape" life into memory but rather feels that the kinds of memories determine where they are stored. It is important to keep in mind that memory is a process that is still not well understood. Jenson believes that the complex experience of school can be better accomplished if we think in terms of "what kind of memory and how it can be retrieved" (p. 104). The inability of a student to retrieve information will cause a sense of failure and loss of self-image and self-confidence. It is critical that the student teacher identify such a sequence early to provide students with better learning opportunities.

### **What does seem to work?**

Trial and error in the classroom work fine if the student teacher is successful. If the result is failure, both time and effort have been wasted, and the student teacher may become discouraged. In addition, the students will exhibit doubt. This never helps the student teacher's self-confidence. One of the best ways to avoid this is to revise what seems to work in other classrooms and a review of current research.

The student teacher is walking into a classroom where the culture has already developed. It is not a good idea to try to change that. It is probably a good learning environment, and, as they work with the students day by day, they will become more aware of it as the culture of their classroom. After they have been there for a while and feel comfortable, they may want to add dimensions to that culture. One dimension necessary in a successful classroom is the culture of thinking (Tishman, Perkins, & Jay, 1995). This refers to the entirety of the classroom environment reflecting an appreciation for thinking in all its dimensions.

Student teachers often feel compelled to cover a great amount of material that they feel is important. They usually find that less is better and that, although it may seem important to them, the truth of the matter is the likelihood of student learning will increase if the quantity of information is decreased. This is especially true when dealing with ELLs (English language learners). A basic state of idealism common to beginning student teachers reflects a need to teach more content without being aware of the understanding by the student. Wiggins and McTighe (1998) indicate that teaching

involves the decision of what NOT to teach and that generally we want to teach more and are making a sacrifice to teach less.

As student teachers move into full time teaching, they will have the opportunity to work with individual students throughout the classroom so that, when the time comes for them to group students, they will have an understanding about which students to group together for the best learning results. This experience will also assist in the selection of students for grouping for like learning styles.

## **Planning**

Writing course goals for the year and dividing such goals into objectives for units for each grading period (six or nine weeks) gives the student teacher a readily available starting point for writing unit plans. Units do not all need to be of the same time frame; however, the total of the time for all the units should total the number of weeks available in the school year. A functional approach is to develop units that end simultaneously with the grading period. Such planning gives both the student teacher and the students a feeling of closure and relief as well as the opportunity for a fresh new start with the beginning of a new grading period and the new unit.

Each unit should be developed by setting goals for the unit and then writing the objectives to be met by the end of the unit. Daily lesson topics and objectives naturally emerge from such unit planning. The sequencing of activities to meet the unit objectives causes daily lesson plans to fit together. The planning of an effective lesson is an essential skill of teaching in the mind of the cooperating teacher. Concern always exists about the level of readiness that the student teacher has developed in the area of planning prior to reporting to the student teaching assignment. It is critical that, during the early stages of student teaching, there is extensive collaborative planning between the cooperating teacher and the student teacher. As planning skills improve, the student teacher depends less and less on the cooperating teacher, who in turn has much more confidence in the student teacher. Of course, the cooperating teacher must continuously evaluate the lesson plans of the student teacher and provide necessary guidance.

A specific lesson does not develop in a vacuum; it must fit into a sequential and relevant pattern of development. This concept is often difficult for some inexperienced teachers to realize and requires assistance from the cooperating teacher. Such items as planning classroom activities, the scope and sequence of the subject matter to be used, the units to be taught, and methods of evaluation are primarily the responsibilities of the cooperating teacher, but they are shared to a greater extent with the student teacher as the term progresses.

The university supervisor can be most helpful in the planning of instruction. Adelphi University offers a Master's Seminar that meets once a week for two hours. This is offered concurrently with student teaching, and topics such as unit and lesson planning are high priority topics for such seminars. Most plans may need some last minute revisions on the basis of the previous class. To ensure the effective organization of

teaching, plans should be ready far in advance. By using total-year planning, the student teacher has the entire picture in mind. If the need arises, the lesson plan for the day can move forward or can include alternative activities that were planned for the future.

### **The organization of the classroom**

Student teachers are usually concerned about whether or not they will develop an effective plan for classroom organization. The cooperating teacher is usually concerned with the quality of classroom organization that the student teacher will maintain. For most student teachers, the student teaching experience is the first opportunity to put together all the components of teaching experienced during their training.

Most frequently, field experiences prior to student teaching give the student only a portion of the responsibility, and, although the assignment may be well done, there may be difficulty with trying to meld the entire program for a classroom into one picture. This melding process is one of the most anxiety laden experiences for the novice teacher. Prior to developing a comprehensive and realistic feel for teaching, the student teacher must experience this synthesis of the many theories and the relatively small amount of practice experienced in the training program. While working with this synthesis, the meaning of teaching changes for the student teacher.

Well organized classrooms have rules and principles set up concerning the use of facilities, space, materials, and time. If the room is organized properly, following these same principles diminishes problems in student conduct and promotes learning.

Although the cooperating teacher can suggest, advise, and warn, only experience can bring reality to the student teacher concerning the many facets of classroom activity labeled "teaching." The value of such advice depends in part on the receptivity of the student teacher.

As the teacher divides teaching into such components as planning, delivering the lesson, evaluating, and reteaching, he or she has a vague realization that something is missing. The difficult-to-pin-down element is classroom organization, which is not a separate component of teaching but rather a pattern or matrix that falls across the entire teaching spectrum from the first day of kindergarten until graduation. Classroom organization is not something that is to be done in a classroom; it is not an end unto itself. It is, rather, an approach given to those activities involved in the learning process.

A student teacher does not "do" classroom organization. There are many actions that contribute to classroom organization including the use of the best efforts of the students, school materials and their effects, the training and background of the student teacher, resources, and current time usage contribute to classroom organization. When these resources are utilized well, the teacher is acclaimed for having good classroom organization.

The attitude that forms the basis for effective classroom organization is not one in which the teacher-to-be likes himself or herself, likes people in general, and enjoys working with students in a helping relationship. The teacher who loves subject matter and does not like students will be a poor teacher and may have many organizational problems. A friendly and helping attitude exerts positive forces in the classroom. A positive action on the part of the beginning teacher is more likely to produce a positive action on the part of the students in the classroom.

The appearance of the classroom gives an indication about the extent to which the teacher cares for the environment in which the class operates. It is evident that no two classes are alike. Each one has its own environment (Eby, 2001). The academic processes involve those tangible actions in the classroom through which students encourage or discourage each other. The development of internal motivation can be considered a product of effective classroom organization. The teacher who can successfully develop internal motivation within students has fewer classroom organization problems. This, again, reflects the basic attitude of the teacher whose class is responding.

## **Classroom Management**

Classroom management is uppermost in the minds of many student teachers. Some have heard horror stories and have seen examples of poor as well as good management techniques during their own schooling and during previous field experiences. They are correct when assuming that effective teaching can seldom take place without effective classroom management.

This begins with the student teacher's positive attitude and varies from individual to individual. Frequently, student teachers attempt to model after their cooperating teacher or some other idealized teacher, and they discover painfully that what works for one usually does not work for all. My student teachers asked me: "What rules do you have for running a classroom?" and "Where do I find the answer to fill my bag of teaching tricks?" Many of them mistakenly use a list of rules in lieu of an attitude. This does not imply that the use of rules in classroom control is inappropriate; rules are necessary.

As student teachers realize that the development of appropriate classroom management must first of all be an internal matter holistically seen, they are on their way to developing into competent professionals. Piecemeal rules may last a few weeks or occasionally a school year, but anxiety is always lurking in the beginner's mind that something is missing. When it is realized that the missing element is to teaching as the foundation is to a building, steps are usually retraced, and new beginnings are made with the help of fellow teachers or instructors.

Although we may not like to admit this, much of the misconduct exhibited by students in the classroom is caused by inappropriate behavior of the teacher. This possibility should be considered, and behavior should be reviewed. After student teachers

reflect on their own classroom behavior, it is advantageous for them to look at various models. They should develop their own discipline plan, which will be determined by their own philosophy and personality. All disciplining skills emanate from the teacher. A teacher, whether or not he or she is experienced or new, must be confident and maintain positive attitudes toward students before he or she can be an effective disciplinarian. A disciplined classroom is a well ordered, systematic setting in which all who enter can sense the outcome of the planning without necessarily seeing the minute details of management.

Student teachers can also profit by reviewing the developmental characteristics of the students assigned to them. Are the students typical or atypical? What are the specific causes of noted behavior problems?

Student conduct is related to rules. A few specific rules are usually appreciated by both students and teachers. Few classrooms can operate successfully in a situation where there is no control. No behavior management system is 100% effective for every teacher. We can not eliminate all misconduct no matter how hard we try; we can only minimize the causes and occurrences.

Some teachers believe that punishment is negatively correlated to learning. Misbehaviors usually spread if punishment continues. Very little can be accomplished by threats. However, effective use of praise for good conduct is important. We live in a “rewards” system; everyone wants to feel worthy, important and rewarded.

Use all human resources possible to help solve the behavior problems. This includes guidance personnel, district office personnel, the principal, supervisors, parents, and probably most important of all, the students themselves. A positive attitude and enthusiasm are important ingredients for teachers to have in establishing positive classroom management. Bad days will probably occur, but one would hope that these days are few and far between if the proper preparations are made.

## **Teacher Competencies**

Most teacher competencies are lists of teacher abilities that revolve around the planning, implementation, and evaluation of student learning situations. These competencies are based on a knowledge of student development, learning capacities, and cultural, economic, and personality factors. Teacher competencies can be implemented through whole group instruction, small group instruction, one-on-one teaching, team teaching, and other group configurations. Interdisciplinary curriculum models adopted by some schools now require team teaching across curriculum areas, and the student teacher should readily get as much experience as possible with such techniques if the opportunities are available in their schools.

The Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) has ten principles relating to the knowledge, disposition, and performance that new teachers should possess and be able to use (Huntington College Education Department, 1997).

1. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) that he or she teaches and can create learning experiences that make these aspects of subject matter meaningful for students.
2. The teacher understands how children learn and develop, and can provide learning opportunities that support their intellectual, social, and personal development.
3. The teacher understands how students differ in their approaches to learning and creates instructional opportunities that are adapted to diverse learners.
4. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.
5. The teacher uses an understanding of individual and group motivation and behavior to create a learning environment that encourages positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.
6. The teacher uses knowledge of effective verbal, nonverbal and media communication techniques to foster active inquiry, collaboration, and supportive interaction in the classroom.
7. The teacher plans instruction based on knowledge of subject matter, students, the community, and curriculum goals.
8. The teacher understands and uses formal and informal assessment strategies to evaluate and ensure the continuous intellectual, social, and physical development of the learner.
9. The teacher is a reflective practitioner who continually evaluates the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (students, parents, and other professionals in the learning community) and who actively seeks out opportunities to grow professionally.
10. The teacher fosters relationships with school colleagues, parents, and agencies in the larger community to support students' learning and well-being.

The principles can be subdivided into standards that can be related to the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) standards. Sometimes, in training programs, beginning teachers initially concentrate too heavily on teaching skills. It may be more helpful for these teachers to first become familiar with learner characteristics and motivation. Given such knowledge and a strong content background, students learning to be teachers may find that fitting their techniques to specific learning needs is relatively easy.

Tyler (Madaus & Stufflebeam, 1989, p. 200) proposed a logical system of curriculum and instruction development. His rationale for such development has four major points:

1. clarification of purpose
2. selection of learning experiences
3. organization of these experiences
4. assessment of progress

Tyler further suggested that a study of the learner be done. Hunter (1976) has indicated that the most important factor for teachers is promoting learning in their students. Her book "*Teach More – Faster*" should be prescribed reading for every student who is becoming a teacher. Much of what Hunter has written in her other books is immediately useful for the student teacher.

A good plan for success in student teaching is for the student teacher to begin classroom teaching in an area of strength with competencies that are better developed than other areas. This lends confidence so that as the student teacher moves into those less developed competencies, she or he develops more self confidence and performs at a higher level. The primary competencies of teaching are planning, implementing, instructing, and evaluating. Beginning with setting objectives and establishing how those objectives are to be met, the student teacher can plan the most effective activities and materials to help students reach those objectives.

### **Student Teaching Communication**

Communication is one of the most important elements in the success of the student teaching experience. It is a tool to be used in the delivery of instruction and in the development of associations with all the various parties involved in the student teaching experience: the cooperating teacher, the university professor, the students, the school administration and staff, other faculty, parents and school patrons.

Clarity of expression is highly relevant during student teaching. To be articulate in communication usually reflects a high quality of thinking, and, because thinking is a major tool of the classroom teacher, communication is a reflection of the kinds of thinking the professional is capable of doing.

It is critical for the student teacher to understand the difference between the mechanics of communication and the content of communication. The mechanics may be nearly perfect but if the content is flawed or inappropriate, the student teacher may appear in a bad light. Likewise, if the content is good, but the mechanics are incorrect, this will reflect on the student teacher's preparation.

Communication can be divided into listening, speaking, reading and writing. During the student teaching assignment, all four of these areas of communication take on added meaning. The spoken work will be the student teacher's most used communication tool although listening skills should be especially developed and utilized during this assignment. The writing that the student teacher does will be viewed by students, the cooperating teacher, the university supervisor, the school administrator and parents; it must be correct and diplomatic. Reading skills used by the student teacher can save time and greatly assist with materials acquisition, lesson planning, and general professional development.

Because the student teacher is attempting to adapt to a school setting, everything related to that school setting should be read carefully. The daily bulletin board usually

located adjacent to the faculty mailboxes in the administrative office, notices from that office that are routinely delivered to the classroom, the bulletin board in the teacher's lounge, and notices from the district central office are all important for the student teacher to read carefully. Being a beginner in the school business means that the student teacher should stay current with what is being published in the daily newspaper relative to schools in the areas and to all reports of school board meetings and activities. Maintaining an awareness of what is happening to students, faculty and staff through reading the newspaper provides conversation topics with those individuals.

Writing is another major form of communication for the student teacher. Additional writing tasks that usually occur during the student teaching assignment are writing letters of application, writing letters of requests for materials and composing resumes. In such materials, the allowable margin of error is zero. Materials with misspelled words or errors in grammar can cause applications to be rejected.

The chalkboard/white board and smart board are two of the major methods of written communication with students. The cooperating teachers have usually had years of experience to perfect such board writing; comparatively, the student teacher's writing on the board sometimes falls short. This can be remedied by a lot of practice before or after school when no students are in the classroom. One of the things that university supervisors want to see demonstrated is the ability of the student teacher to write legibly on the board.

Writing for overhead transparencies requires concentrated effort. It is important for the student teacher to observe how other teachers manage to stand beside the projector and avoid standing in front of the projected image on the screen. Handwriting numbers and symbols must be readable. It is helpful for the student teacher to keep in mind that such writing is meant to be read, not just to be written.

The importance of the spoken word in learning can not be overemphasized. The voice is an accurate indicator of the anxiety the student teacher may be experiencing, and although the students may not be aware of such clues, the cooperating teacher will notice them. Getting involved in the classroom activity early in the assignment and maintaining a comfortable relationship with the students and the cooperating teacher contribute to a more pleasant speaking voice for the student teacher. It is important for the student teacher to realize that the manner in which he or she speaks conveys more than the words themselves. Vocal articulation is a most important competency for any teacher. Although teachers use their voices in different modes, for example, drama coach, band director, and physical education teacher, clarity of meaning is basic to all. As the student teacher is observing other teachers during the early part of the assignment, being aware of how well various teachers articulate helps the student teacher to develop further personal articulation. To perfect vocal qualities in the classroom such as tone, degree of harshness and volume requires practice.

By listening to what students are saying; the student teacher can better plan instruction, determine where problems lie and accurately manage better classroom

control. The listening equivalent to having eyes in the back of the head is having ears of the heart: to hear what people are *trying* to say in addition to hearing *what* they are saying. It is especially important to listen to parents. Student teachers must be careful to avoid falling into the trap of believing that they have the answers parents need if the parents would just listen! It is the student teacher who should listen. Frequently, in listening to parents, what we hear is what we are listening for, not what the parents are really trying to say.

Any discussion of communication would be incomplete without a mention of body language. The student teacher should be made aware of how body language such as eye contact and facial expressions indicate to students such things as control, sincerity to others when they are speaking, and levels of intensity to listeners. Posture, volume, and tone say as much as the words that are chosen to convey the oral message.

### **Material availability**

Today's economic problems also exist within the classrooms. Budgetary priorities and other economic factors result in classrooms that need additional materials and supplies. Each teacher is faced with the necessity of developing curricular materials to supplement those provided by the school. Materials developed by the student teacher are the primary source of teaching materials.

One of the first places student teachers can look for supplementary materials is the school library or media center. They should check textbooks, teaching kits, games, trade books, films, picture files, tape recordings, slides, maps, globes, charts, models, and lists of community resources. A major materials resource is the Internet. Web-based materials are available through online computers and can be utilized by the student teacher or by the classroom students on assignment. *The Cyber educator: The Internet and World Wide Web for K-12 Education* (Bissell, Manring, & Rowland, 1999) covers many areas of educational sources that will be useful to the student teacher. It includes resources on educational psychology, methods and subject area resources, student diversity and exceptionalities, measurement and evaluation, classroom and school websites, and research. This information takes the user directly to the site for printing and materials needed.

An additional source of technological materials for curriculum use is a commercial initiative entitled "*Cable in the Classroom.*" This is a service free to schools and provides more than 500 hours of commercial-free educational materials each month. Use of "*Cable in the Classroom*" is usually a school district decision made in cooperation with the local cable TV company.

Some books may be outdated but can be quite beneficial for additional reading, for making games, and for use in learning centers. Teachers sometimes trade books with other teachers; this helps in locating books at different reading levels.

Additional equipment to be utilized are the computers in the classroom that can be used for word processing, drill and practice, research, gathering information from the Internet for projects and papers, and creative writing. Other equipment such as graphing calculator in the math class may be utilized.

Student teachers should consider the possibility of enriching the classroom with resource people from the community. If carefully selected, individuals can be found who have specialized knowledge that will fit with the current instruction. Bringing in appropriate examples from the community can do much in promoting positive public relations. The resource people proved to be an added asset to the “real life” interests of students.

Attractively arranged bulletin boards can do a great deal in both elementary and secondary classrooms to improve the atmosphere of the classroom. Displays of student work and teacher-made bulletin boards all have their place.

Field trips can be valuable learning resources. Certain points should be understood:

1. A successful field trip requires a great deal of planning, a major element of which is the inclusion of a sufficient number of reliable, experienced chaperones.
2. The school policies concerning field trips should be studied. Check with the principal concerning legal responsibilities involved, the need for medical authorization slips, and available insurance.
3. Parental consent for your students for trips is imperative.
4. Students should know the purpose of the field trip and be involved in the planning.
5. Thorough arrangements for transportation should be made.
6. Trips should be well supervised with careful planning for the movement of students to and from school.
7. Beneficial evaluation and follow-up techniques should be included in the planning.

### **Instructional Evaluation and Conclusion**

The development of student portfolios is becoming more frequently used and can be an excellent reflection of the classroom student’s progress. As materials are designed for use in a student’s portfolio, a rubric should be designed for each task indicating the degree of accuracy shown on that task.

Benchmarking is a valuable tool in assessment. A benchmark is a point of reference against which any improvement can be measured. This concept is an important one to consider in planning lesson materials to avoid redundancy and to be able to measure achievement.

Assessment tools come in several shapes. They can be standardized, criterion-referenced (based on the criteria), norm referenced (based on the overall group), self

designed, or commercially printed. A variety of types of assessment will assure the most accurate evaluation of a student's progress. Assessment by observation has some inherent dangers in that one observer may miss seeing what another observer may see. To guard against such problems, it is advisable to use two observers for any observational assessment.

In addition to knowing whether the assessment is valid and reliable, the student teacher must question whether or not it will show that the students have learned what he or she was trying to teach them. If this does not occur, the assessment is of no value. This is the key to planning the assessment as the student teacher plans the objectives of the lesson or thematic unit.

Among problems that the student teacher must anticipate are those of evaluating for individual personal and cultural differences. Maintaining a classroom standard, evaluating special needs students who have been mainstreamed, dealing with students who have other teachers who use different evaluation techniques, and being able to work with parents in explaining the grades that students eventually take home are critical skills for the student teacher to develop.

Adequate record keeping is a must. There is no substitute for documentation. The student teacher must be able to explain at any time just what the classroom achievement status is for any one of the students, both to the cooperating teacher or principal and to parents and students. It is imperative to keep records up to date.

Parent conferences are a method of reporting to parents. They are usually scheduled before or after school. Some schools provide PTA meeting times or other parent-teacher contact. Care must be given to make special arrangements with those parents who cannot get to the school during school hours. Conferences with parents can be rewarding and enlightening to student teachers. Usually such conferences are held at the request of either the parents or the students' teacher based on an academic or behavior problems. Whatever type of reporting to parents is chosen, reports should be kept positive and objective. Care must be used so that reports are realistic. If reports are glowing, parents will be surprised if the grades are poor.

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## Appendix A

## **Philosophical statements:**

### **Why I want to teach: (fall of 2007 and spring 2008)**

- to make a difference
- to help children feel confident
- to help others make their dreams come true
- to conduct research
- to appreciate other cultures
- to work with foreigners
- to help immigrant children transition to American schooling

## **Appendix B**

### **Student Journals fall 2007 (fifteen week three credit master seminar course)**

#### **1) Things I have done well this week that helped students learn:**

- Fun activities
- Changed seating arrangement
- Rephrase explanations (many teachers don't do this)
- Playing games
- Be creative with lesson planning
- The benefit of using visuals in an ell classroom
- How working with students on a one to one basis helps so much!
- Having a good rapport with students
- Make the room print rich
- Sometimes it's ok to translate
- Forcing myself to speak slower
- Keeping the students on task at all times
- Differentiating instruction
- Show students that teachers really do care
- "I can't believe I'm going to get paid for this!"
- Connecting curriculum to students' personal lives (for volcanoes, I brought in a picture of me in Costa Rica standing in front of different volcanoes)
- "How do I listen to students' stories while accomplishing my teaching goals?"
- Act quickly and adapt to change
- Help students develop ownership to activities
- Keeping track of how many times you call on a student
- Learning that a lesson is always "in progress"
- Reflecting
- True use of critical thinking skills (using clues/information to solve a problem)

- Incorporating technology in the classroom

## **2) Thoughts I have had this week:**

- How fast time goes
- Are ESL teachers always pulled in different directions?
- Will I feel as comfortable with middle school as I do with elementary?
- Getting used to my new placement
- Stress of student teaching and graduate school
- “Am I ready to be a full fledged teacher?”
- “I don’t like being in the faculty room.”
- “My student’s education is in my hands”
- “How can I keep the kids focused and interested in my lessons?”
- “My creativity is starting to bloom”
- “I thought I chose the wrong profession”
- Time management problems
- Prefer teaching high school rather than elementary
- “I will eat lunch in my own room when I get a job”
- Change my register when I speak to children
- “It takes time to perfect your style”
- “The scheduling process is frustrating”
- “ESL teachers are the last people to make schedules”
- “When will ESL start?” (September 12, 2007)
- “Is it a normal practice to read NYSESLAT scores out loud in front of the other students?”
- Following mentor teacher’s classroom policies and enforcing his/her rules
- Teaching to somebody else’s style, not mine
- I see a lot of what my Adelphi professors told us not to do!!
- “Which is worse: having a bad evaluation from your university professor or having a bad one from your mentor teacher?”
- “Throughout the day, it feels like my students and I are learning from each other”
- “I exposed my students to pumpkin pie (many of them had never tasted this before. It’s nice to create memorable experiences for my students.”
- “How can a teacher control a student when detentions and suspensions do not pose a threat?”
- Student teaching is stressful

## **3) Feelings I have had this week:**

- Feeling nervous about my new experience
- Feeling overwhelmed
- Rollercoaster ride of emotions
- Stress

- Feeling disappointed in myself
- Feeling sad that I'm leaving
- Feelings of displacement
- My head was spinning
- A rewarding feeling
- FEAR!!!!
- Feeling alive after being observed by my university supervisor
- Hearing of war stories between mainstream teachers and ELL teachers
- How to handle the resentment that some mainstream teachers have towards esl teachers
- Pacing charts offer no flexibility
- Translating documents is time consuming. It's not part of our jobs.
- Mentor teachers wanting us to base our plans on McGraw Hill reading series.
- Adelphi University should start screening mentor teachers (October 22- October 26, 2007)

#### **4) One important thing I learned this week:**

- Pull out is more effective than push in.
- Learn the names of the students from the first day
- Things don't always go as planned (fire drills)
- Try different ways of teaching until the students understand the concept
- Knowing when to let go, don't worry about the little things
- Let students have some independence
- Give things a chance (thinking about not working with a certain age group and the enjoying the experience)
- Although hectic and stressful, student teaching helped me prepare for my teaching career
- In order to do this job well, I need a good night's sleep (being tired affects my teaching)
- Being catty with other teachers is a waste of time
- "No two classes are the same. A lesson that's a huge success in one class can be mediocre in another."
- Think before you speak
- A teacher must know his/her students
- "Kids are sponges!! They remember everything you say and everything everyone else has told them."
- Don't read every piece of scripted material
- Reflect on everything you do in order to become a better teacher
- ESL is not only teaching English, it has specific content material also
- Pick and choose battles
- Communicate with other school staff members to obtain as much information about the students as possible
- Wait time is very important for newcomer ESL students

- “Quality of the lesson is more important than the quantity.” (Dr. Buttaro was right!”)
- Classroom management in high school is different than classroom management in elementary school
- Have eyes in the back of your head at all times

**5) Things I want to remember to do in the future to help students:**

- Creativity is important
- Make sure students understand before moving on
- Be patient
- Don't take things personally
- Use visuals
- Students need to feel supported, secure and comfortable, many of these young kids endure hardships to come to the USA
- Material should be language level appropriate and interesting
- Choose high interest topics for lessons
- Learn who my students are, how they learn best
- There are plenty of opportunities to teach mini lessons
- Expect anything and assume nothing
- Take time to answer students' questions
- Make my lessons engaging

**6) Things my university supervisor should know:**

- Student teaching is tougher than I thought
- Being nervous about interviewing for a teaching position
- “Thank you for all your help!”
- You have been very supportive, helpful and motivational force during this entire experience
- Poco a poco (little by little)
- My lack of confidence has a lot to do with my nervousness
- I am thinking about my second observation already
- “I am extra nervous about the students asking me a question I may not have the answer to.”
- “I enjoyed my student teaching experience.”
- I learned what to do and what not to do
- I have never been so exhausted in my life
- Teaching is not for wimps
- I really enjoy working with high school students
- The interview seminar was very informative
- “Thank you for your guidance and support throughout my student teaching experience”

- “I am thankful I had a supervisor who was willing to listen to the good, the bad and the ugly.”
- “The beginning of the semester was rough for me and your support and advice were incredibly helpful.”

## **Appendix B**

### **Student journals spring 2008 (fifteen week three credit master seminar course)**

#### **1) Things I have done this week that helped students learn:**

- Monitored student progress by rotating around the room
- Made a 3-D word wall
- Used different voices to depict opposing characters during the read aloud
- Added art work to help students express writing
- Get to know students’ backgrounds
- Study students’ strengths and weaknesses
- Using the overhead projector
- Use a variety of learning styles (visual, auditory and kinesthetic)
- Having students do short presentations on their native country (build up their self esteem)
- Get away from the textbook
- Lowering students’ affective filter
- Taking the students on a field trip (Bronx zoo)
- Teaching the kids about the cycle of a butterfly with live caterpillars
- Writing a letter to a character in the book

#### **2) Thoughts I have had this week**

- Work and dedication required in the teaching profession is largely misjudged
- Not everyone can be a teacher
- Frustrated by lack of time
- Disbelief over how much time is spent on testing and not on learning
- Allow students creative freedom with their writing
- How much progress students make when their parents are active participants in their education
- Lucky to be paired with a cooperating teacher who allows me creative freedom
- Continuing my education in Spanish so I can achieve bilingual proficiency in order to be a greater asset to my students
- A lot of preparation goes into making effective lesson planning
- I feel more comfortable teaching things I have researched and mastered than a concept that is new to me
- I am learning and developing new teaching skills
- How can I better utilize the diversity of my students? The wealth of cultures is a powerful teaching tool

- My students have many hardships. I don't want to overwhelm them yet I don't want to underwhelm them either.
- "I have 34 students. How do I teach so many people? How can I have a personal relationship with all of them?"
- As an educator, my job is not only to teach English but also to initiate thoughtful discussions on important issues facing our country.
- Teaching writing is tough
- Being an ESL teacher means that I am a "bridge builder" among students of different cultures. Knowing other languages and cultures makes someone a better ESL teacher
- "I am tired of state tests. You could see how tired the students are. Some of them have blank faces as they look at the tests."
- "How do I teach and manage the classroom?"
- "Why do administrators and other content area teachers treat us like their step children?"
- Mummifying an apple for the unit on Egypt
- Writing names and hidden messages in hieroglyphics
- I don't always need a quiz to assess my students' learning

### **3) Feelings I have had this week:**

- Brain overload
- Exhaustion
- Attachment to children
- Out of my element
- Impressed by students
- Nervous about hunting for a job
- Surprised that a smaller class was harder to manage
- Regretful that we did not have student teaching for a full year to help enhance our experience
- Satisfaction during teaching
- "A student thanked me (this is why I want to teach). No matter how tired I get, if someone appreciates my teaching, I feel happy."
- "I formed a bond with the students and it's hard to let go."
- "I feel like I'm abandoning them."
- Many newcomer students are SIFE
- "I feel like I was born to teach."

### **4) One important thing I learned this week:**

- Planning and having additional work prepared if students finish the activity early
- Reward students
- You can't always accomplish each objective. Time does run out.
- Adjust the lesson to meet the needs of the students
- Make sure to include every student in the lesson

- Discontinue activities that do not yield positive results
- Do everything in your power to keep students from slipping through the cracks
- Never stop expanding your knowledge
- Theory and practice are two different things
- Professional development keeps teachers updated
- Find the balance between harder exercises and some fun filled activities
- Having a good rapport with students
- Teaching is tough
- Be clear and precise when giving instructions. Never assume students know what to do.
- ESL teachers have a lot of paperwork
- Constantly repeat information
- Patience
- Realia helps students remember
- Include educational games
- Teach students to believe in themselves
- Group work is effective in ESL
- Combine ESL and content areas
- Lower students' affective filters
- Advocate for students' rights
- Give wait time when asking questions
- Students prefer open-ended questions for assessment instead of multiple choice
- "Never give up!!"
- "Sometimes you learn more than the students do."
- Technology is important and necessary (smartboard, power point presentations, etc.)

**5) Things I want to do in the future to help students learn:**

- Make lessons practical
- Keep students guessing
- Be less predictable
- Use hands on material
- Incorporate students' interest to and in their learning
- Challenge the students
- "Come prepared with a plan 'B'".
- Bring visual aids to bring reading to life
- "Laugh !!! Smile!!!"
- Take time to talk to your students on a personal level before overwhelming them academically
- If the teacher is organized, the students will be organized
- "How can we test students if we don't teach them much?"
- "Don't become apathetic after many years of teaching."

- Respect students. Don't embarrass them.
- Make lessons meaningful to students.
- Cultural presentations should be part of every class
- Email conversations
- Games motivate students to learn.
- Be patient (what may seem easy for us is difficult for the students)
- Review what was previously taught
- Treat students with dignity and respect
- Help students feel they are valued members of society
- Start doing more arts and crafts

**6) Things my university supervisor should know:**

- I appreciate your critique about being conscious about the use of idioms in the classroom
- I incorporated more wait time and I found that it gives students more time to collect their thoughts and ideas
- I feel nervous and anxious about moving on
- I am preparing for your visit and hope to have improved
- ESL population in Long Beach is dwindling due to the high cost of living
- I am trying to think outside the box and appeal to the students
- I appreciate the time you have taken to mentor us
- "Thank you for continuing to support us as educators and eventual colleagues."
- "I feel I have greatly improved from the first day I set foot in the classroom and there are many people I have to thank especially you."
- "Thank you for sharing your experience with us and inviting your former students to share their experiences as well."
- "Having such an active professor as you are, I became more active in looking for and attending professional development courses, workshops, conferences. This semester I have become a TESOL member, attended the TESOL convention and I also attended the ABE conference. These were all very good experiences."
- "This semester is almost over and I would like to thank you for being so knowledgeable, creative, cooperative and supportive. I have learned a lot from you and your course."
- "I am graduating in May 2008 but if I had to take more courses, I would love to have them under your supervision. Thank you!"
- I learned that quality is more important than quantity
- My mentor teacher should retire soon. She has been teaching for over 28 years and the students need a fresh brain
- "I thank God for having you as a supervisor!"
- "It was really beneficial having you come into the classroom and observe me."
- "I have learned things about myself as a teacher and things that I do in my classroom that I never knew before. Thank you for this experience and helpful feedback."

- This has been a very sad week for me because one of my student was deported together with his family
- I try to include all the important skills in learning a new language (listening, speaking, reading and writing)
- Thank you for your unconditional help.
- You have made me more professional and creative.