

# Final Reflection Assignment

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4900 Teaching Seminar SP24

## **1. In what ways do you feel prepared to begin your teaching career?**

When reviewing the *Ohio Standards for the Teaching Profession* list, I feel most confident in these areas:

- 1: Teachers understand student learning and development and respect the diversity of the students they teach.
- 2: Teachers know and understand the content area for which they have instructional responsibility.
- 4: Teachers plan and deliver effective instruction that advances the learning of each individual student.
- 5: Teachers create learning environments that promote high levels of learning and achievement for all students.
- 7: Teachers assume responsibility for professional growth, performance and involvement as an individual and as a member of a learning community.

I used research from Sickler-Voigt's book "*Teaching and Learning in Art Education*" (2020) as knowledge for developmental characteristics for my students at both sites. At the elementary site, I allowed my youngest students to draw and color as "unrealistic" as they wanted while also encouraging storytelling through their artwork. I also created space for material exploration — an example would be providing an entire class dedicated to learning and engaging with clay before the final project work the following week. For my older elementary students, I used a real-world issue like plastic pollution as a catalyst for artmaking and using art as a form of activism for a cause we believe in.

At my middle school site, I focused on projects that allowed for community building, collaboration, and self-reflection as this is a time when students are going through many physical and emotional changes during puberty and self discovery. I also created career exploration lessons in architecture, graphic design, and animation and relevant concept discussions like pop culture, copyrights, and how artwork gets into museums.

At both sites, I was sure to include multicultural perspectives as general practice, but also included artists who represented the same cultures and ethnicities of my students. And there was also an expectation that each student would achieve the lesson objectives in the least restrictive way, which meant using universal design to be inclusive — examples would be creating lots of scaffolded visual and language support to include ELL students, guidance from Intervention Specialists to support my IEP students, and advanced technique options to challenge my gifted students.

I also take responsibility for professional growth, doing lots of research through books and training on assessment, student engagement, and ways to improve my teaching.

## **2. Explain how you will address your biggest challenge.**

My biggest challenges based on my CFAST assessment is using varied assessments to ensure student learning and connecting more with teaching staff and local community.

By the end of my student teaching at the middle school, I was beginning to feel like I was getting better with using varied, documented assessments — like worksheets, exit slips, peer discussions, gallery walks, and self-reflections — instead of relying only on observation and one-on-one progress discussions like I did at the elementary site. I still think I can learn more assessment tools, and the Washoe County School District's *Instructional Strategies List* (2017) is going to be very helpful with this. I also purchased a couple books on this topic that I plan to read this summer.

I also want to have more engagement with parents and the community when I am a licensed teacher at a school. I have plans to use introduction/updates videos and monthly newsletters to parents, and be an active participant in school activities. I also will investigate how my students can engage within the community, especially in parks nearby and with organizations/businesses that would support displaying their artwork. I still dream of creating a plastic bottle cap mural at my school and creating it as a school community event.

## **3. How has this experience shifted your thinking about the work of art educators and their role in schools and communities?**

I was initially concerned that I would be lonely as (possibly) the only art teacher in a building, but now seeing how much teachers can work together, socially mingle, and support each other at both

the elementary and middle school levels, I am not worried about that anymore. I see the team work effort that goes into education and student support among school staff and parents, which reminds me of my previous career as a designer on marketing teams, and I am reminded of how much I enjoy collaboration.

I also liked seeing how even when students come into the art classroom with residual feelings from their home room the art room can help them reset. The art room can be a magical place where those big emotions can fade away or be put into art. It is also the place where imaginations can thrive and students can feel free to express all sorts of ideas without worry of logic or the “correct” answer. The acceptance of sharing of ideas in the art classroom is a gift to all students.

#### **4. What was your most fulfilling experience at each placement?**

In general, seeing students take my unit ideas and give such unique perspectives and create their artwork felt magical. I was giddy most of the time. Also building relationships with my students felt so rewarding. Seeing their excitement when I was in the building and classroom and experiencing their sadness when my time was done touched my heart so deeply. It reinforced the importance of teachers to students. I chaperoned the fifth grade field trip to the Columbus Art Museum about a month after I finished teaching there (it was my spring break week) and the students cheered when they saw me. So much excitement and hugs. I felt like a superstar.

To point out specific experiences, at my elementary site would be one during the 4th/5th grade weaving lesson. I had one student in particular who doesn't believe in himself much. He kept telling me that weaving was too hard and he wasn't ever going to get it. I took the time at each walk around the room to reteach him the weaving technique, only to find he made no progress when I would return. On the third and final day of weaving, he said it was pointless to even try, and I encouraged him again, mentioning that the weaving wasn't the challenge for him, but it was actually his love of socializing during class. He didn't believe me, so I challenged him to finish one row without talking and I would come back around. I didn't make it around the room before he came right over to me to show me he had completed six rows!! I was so amazed and he was so excited. I told him I knew he could do it and that's why I didn't give up. It was a beautiful moment.

A highlight at my middle school site was supporting my student Sam who has an IEP and an autism diagnosis. Sam was such a ray of sunshine everyday he would walk into class and always had a

wonderfully insightful comment to share with me. When the students began a group project, Sam was very concerned and wanted to work alone. Mrs. Tobin and I worked with the IEP team to support Sam and I talked with Sam to help encourage and support him how he needed. I also talked with Sam's group members to support their team work. Sam had some tough days, but he also had some fantastic days, and I was sure to tell him how proud I was of him for not giving up. I will never forget the smile on his face.

## References

- Sickler-Voigt, D. C. (2020). Artistic Development: Early Childhood Through Adolescence. In *Teaching and learning in art education: Cultivating students' potential from Pre-K through high school* (pp. 83–101). essay, Routledge.
- Washoe County School District. (2017). Student Learning Objectives Instructional Strategies List. Reno, NV.