

Natalie Aschenbrenner  
11-30-05

### Content and Methodology Reflection

At Manchester College I have successfully completed the courses to acquire a bachelor of science as an Early and Middle Childhood Generalist and Mild Interventions major. The content and methodology of these courses prepared me to be a well rounded teacher who uses research-based practices to teach for the success of every child.

To set the foundation for my major I took Introduction to Teaching, Introduction to Early Childhood, Child Development, Educational Psychology, and Foundations of Exceptional Learners. In these courses, I learned of major theorists and their contributions such as Jean Piaget's theory of cognitive development, Howard Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, Benjamin Bloom's taxonomy of the cognitive domain, Lawrence Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning, and Lev Vygotsky's zone of proximal development. Learning these theories taught me to view each student as a unique child whose cognitive, moral, and physical development depends on his or her background, health, social experiences, and economic status. Also, these introductory courses taught me significant state and national laws like IDEA and Public Law 504. In addition, I was provided opportunities to observe educational settings so I could decide which educational fields I wanted to concentrate my studies in. Having had these fundamental courses, I discovered my desire to add mild interventions to my elementary major.

Once I had completed the basic education courses, I began taking elementary content courses including Elementary Arts and Crafts, Essential Skills in Music, Teaching Fundamental Movement Activities, and Creative Dramatics. These courses exposed me to and prepared me for the variety of subjects that may be required of

elementary teachers to teach. From the courses I learned how to construct lessons and curriculums which are developmentally appropriate in art, music, gym, and drama. I developed my personal view which maintains these subjects are important for building students' individual strengths, skills, and learning styles. Unfortunately, today's society is taking them out of education due to limited funding; however, with my background I will be able to include them through intercurricular lessons. My favorite course was Creative Dramatics because it taught me numerous drama activities involving art, music, and movement along with the core subjects. Creative dramatics has become one of my favorite teaching techniques because it engages students' imaginations and stimulates their enthusiasm. For example, students can act out scenes from a book and add music, art, and movement to enhance their performance.

In conjunction with art, music, and gym I took methods courses that enriched and enhanced my ability to teach math, science, social studies, language, and reading.

Math for Elementary Teachers I, II, and III introduced me to new age math and the constructivist approach. Now I know the importance of developing students' deeper mathematical understanding before teaching algorithms and problem solving strategies. In order for students to be engaged in mathematics, they have to experience math making sense. Mathematical ideas and applications must be connected to students' background knowledge so that they can gain a solid understanding. Mathematics should never be taught as a bunch of isolated concepts and procedures. To help students exploration in mathematic I learned a variety of methods that include manipulatives and models. Resources like unifix cubes, base ten frames and blocks, quiet counters, attribute blocks, bean sticks, and abacuses were presented to me along with demonstrations of their uses.

Also within Math for Elementary Teachers courses I participated in discussions on controversial issues such as calculator usage, timed tests, and drilling and rote work. These discussions broadened my perspective of advantages and disadvantages such issues can have on students.

As in Math for Elementary Teachers in Science and Social Studies Methods I learned to teach using a constructivist approach. Similar to math and all other subjects, students need to be able to assimilate new knowledge to prior schemes. In addition, I learned how to construct lessons using the 5E and Learned Discovery formats. A 5E lesson plan helps teachers to include student engagement, exploration, explanation, elaboration, and evaluation. Learned Discovery is almost identical to the 5E format only is less detailed. To jazz up my lessons I was taught a variety of paper folding methods for students to use for taking and organizing notes. These paper folding projects could be used in all subjects. During this class I also was informed of and provided with a variety of resources for teaching science and social studies. For an example, in groups we made year long social studies curriculums for each grade. These curriculums were compiled from every group and copied by the teacher. She then gave them to us for our future reference.

In my Literacy Block and Corrective Reading class, I learned all about balanced literacy. Balance literacy teaches reading and writing as hand-in-hand subjects. I learned fluent readers make fluent writers. Also, I gained an complete knowledge of the stages in reading and writing and how to evaluate a student's stage of performance. I learned to use this information along with continuous observation of students' individual weaknesses and strengths to differentiate lessons. Now I am capable of picking types of

literature to fit specific interests, themes, and reading levels. I know how to decide if a book is appropriate for a student or an activity.

In reference to my Mild Interventions Major, I have been professionally trained to help students with mild disabilities by completing the mild intervention courses:

Strategies for Instruction, Assessment and Implementation, and Learners with Mild Disabilities. These courses prepared me to hold case conferences, construct individual education plans, diagnose disabilities, create behavior intervention plans, and adapt lessons for student instruction. The content of these classes equipped me with the knowledge to successfully pass the PRAXIS II special needs content test. Having had these courses I feel ready to teach special needs students in a general classroom, resource room, or special needs isolated room.

Reflecting on my education at Manchester College I can confidently say I am well prepared to go into the field of elementary and special education. The classes I completed were for the most part well instructed and planned. If I were to add any courses to our curriculum I would add a computer course to enhance our skills in modern technology. I would not eliminate any courses; however, I would suggest for instructors to teach more content and give less busy work. Thanks to the faculty of education at Manchester College I am ready to begin my career in the field of education.