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Reflection on Content and Methodology  
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While searching for the “perfect college,” I knew that I wanted to be an elementary school teacher. Therefore, it was imperative that I found an institution that strongly valued and supported their education program. I wanted to make sure that I would have numerous opportunities working in various classrooms, and gain experience and knowledge from skilled mentors. Most importantly, I was looking for professors that were confident about molding a strong group of future educators. Manchester College’s content and methodology courses have contained all of those characteristics and more. In the course of my content and methodology classes, I have grown more confident as a result of the vast knowledge and experiences that have been offered to me at Manchester.

From my first education class, Introduction to Teaching, to my final group of methods classes, I have become very confident in the knowledge of information I have gained. Arriving at my Introduction to Teaching class I embodied an extremely limited amount of general teaching knowledge. Such as, I had no idea how Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences was related with teaching; and as much as I hate to admit this, I had no idea that a school’s curriculum was based off the state standards. Consequently, my first couple of education courses laid the foundation for my basic educational knowledge. I was introduced to not only the state standards and Gardner, but how both of those affect lesson planning, how objectives communicate what students are to gain from specific lessons, and the importance of implementing engaging lessons. As I continued to progress through my education courses, I learned the importance of differentiation, numerous theorists that helped shape education today, and many other tools that were
essential to my success in this program. Now I feel more than comfortable carrying on a conversation including teacher jargon with professional educators.

Through my education classes, I also feel I have gained a great amount of classroom experience. Every class that I have taken has required some sort of field experience, such as observing different teaching styles and teaching a group of preschoolers. This has provided me with the opportunity to try various concepts or techniques that we have learned in class in a real teaching situation. For example, in my Corrective Reading Methods class, we are assigned to complete an individual tutoring project. Working with a struggling reader enables me to apply concepts and methods that we have studied throughout our reading courses. By using running records, individual reading inventories, and games I have been able to focus and build on my student’s strengths, while also being aware of his weaknesses. It is one thing to pass a test covering teaching material, but actually working with kids in an educational setting is extremely beneficial to our development as teachers.

As I have progressed through the various levels of education classes, I have gotten much more excited about being a teacher. It seems like we are constantly learning new techniques or methods that are advantageous to a child’s intellectual growth. With that idea in mind, I am particularly eager to begin working in a school and applying those procedures. Literacy Block especially, has reminded me of all the proverbial cards that educators hold. Teachers have the opportunity to make learning engaging, positive, exciting, challenging, and most importantly valuable. I feel fortunate and willing to take on that challenge.
Having engaged myself in countless field experiences and observations leads me to believe that theory and practice are highly correlated in the classroom. While it is wonderful for a student to understand various theories, it is absolutely crucial for them to practice them in an actual classroom setting. This allows future educators to gain first-hand experience by actively using the process itself, while monitoring and reflecting upon its outcomes. This enables an individual to make a conjecture about the theory based on their own experiences and how it worked for them. It also can be used for future reference when working with a student who may benefit from that theory, or when discussing a related topic. The perfect example of this phenomenon is derived from a personal experience in Literacy Block. The class spent a good deal of the semester studying emergent literacy, phonemic awareness, concepts of print, and ways to implement those ideas when working with children. Each student was able to apply those theories and ideas through working with a specific group of preschoolers. This was an exceptionally positive experience for the preschool students, as well as our Literacy Block class. We were allowed to formulate lessons based on the needs of our preschoolers as educators. I feel that I could not have received a more rewarding education. The amount of personal growth over that time period was tremendous, which leads me to wonder how much I will learn during my student teaching experience.

I feel confident about student teaching due to the information I have gained from the wide variety of classes that pertain to my content and methodology studies. Most of those content and methodology classes have contributed a different subject or lesson of importance that should definitely be taught to children and youth today. For example, throughout my Social Studies and Science Methods class, my professor has shown the
utmost enthusiasm and excitement for those subjects. Sadly, social studies and science are often overlooked, and put on the back burner. By leaving those two subjects out, I feel as if we, as educators, are not doing our job. Another class that strongly advocates the importance of its content is Literacy Block. Helping children learn to read is a very important building block for children to succeed in life. It is essential for teachers to convey the importance of reading and all of the wonderful opportunities it entails.

Finally, Mathematics for Elementary Teachers has provided me with a plethora of helpful tips and activities to support learning math. Each of those activities also involves different tools or manipulatives that help explain various concepts. This provides the students with hands on learning experiences that promote full understanding. The inclusion of all of those subjects and more, most certainly work towards a well rounded education. If educators are not providing a well rounded, positive learning environment, then we are doing our students an extreme injustice.

It is extremely difficult to determine exactly how the next generation should be taught without having to previously adapt a curriculum. However, it is crucial to a child’s personal growth to be surrounded by an engaging, positive, stimulating, fully inclusive educational program. It is important for educators to take chances with their teaching methods and step out of the box. If I have been taught anything, it is that children are not going to be excited about learning if they are just sitting in rows listening to a teacher lecture. As children work through problem solving strategies to prove a hypothesis, or act out an exciting story they will be able to make connections to those learning experiences for the rest of their lives. It is through the feeling that children get after
living through those learning opportunities that spark their love and desire to further their knowledge.

As I near graduation and reflect upon the past three and a half years of education that I have received, I have much to celebrate. I was lucky enough to find an institution that strongly valued and supported their education program, and a group of professors that were confident about molding strong group of future educators. Through lectures, hands on activities, field experiences, projects, and lesson planning I have gathered a great sum of professional knowledge that will continue to grow as I begin to teach. Manchester has provided me with an outstanding education that enables me to feel exceptionally confident about educating the futures youth.