

It is no longer enough to know just the “hows” of teaching. Behind and supporting every teaching practice is the “whys” of teaching. Through my content and methodology classes at Manchester College I have gained an enormous amount of knowledge about the best teaching practices that are based on the most significant and latest research. Through my content and methodology classes I have observed, practiced, and researched these practices to gain the understanding of what makes a good teacher.

Most things are not as simple as they appear to be and the same can be said for the profession of teaching. Society thinks that all teachers have to do is follow the answers in the book; that teaching is a job anyone can do. Having spent countless hours observing and participating in classrooms I have come to know that this is not true.

In each and every classroom there are 20 to 30 other human beings; some who have had bad mornings at home, some who haven't had breakfast or even supper the night before, some who have struggled and have given up on learning, and others who have their own reasons for wanting not to be there or who have no reason to be engaged in learning. And there are those students in every class who love school and want to be there! It is my job, as a teacher, to recognize each and every student and to use the practices I have been taught to teach them and help them grow.

I have been fortunate through some of my content and methodology classes to have the opportunity to observe teachers in their classrooms doing just this thing. There is nothing more amazing than watching a seasoned teacher as she weaves her magic and the eyes of her students light up with understanding. Those teachers who can make that happen have gotten to know their students, have gotten to know their individual learning

styles, and have used that information to teach. They have used Gardner's Multiple Intelligences, Bloom's Taxonomy, and countless other theorists to support the learning taking place in their classrooms. Not just anyone can teach! There is so much more to teaching than just opening a book and dispensing the knowledge from within it.

Through my content and methodology classes I have also learned how to put my knowledge of teaching into practice. With every lesson plan I develop I *always* check to see how many of Gardner's multiple intelligences I have engaged. When I am in a classroom I note which of the multiple intelligences the teacher is using or if any at all. It is important that I keep in mind that not all children learn the same way. Because in my content and methodology classes I have been forced to write lesson plans and think about the multiple intelligences I have found that thinking about them and using them has come almost natural to me now. It will be exciting to observe my students, figure out what type of learner they are, and then use that knowledge in the classroom to stimulate their learning.

It must be noted at this time that having my students complete worksheet after worksheet is not a best teaching practice; Gardner wouldn't have it. Worksheets and written tests have their place; just not all day long for every subject with nothing else taking place in the classroom. I have learned through my content and methodology classes that one of the best teaching practices is to get my students up out of their seats, having them moving around the classroom, and engaging one another to maximize their learning.

When writing lesson plans I also push myself to make sure I am asking the higher thinking questions as described by Bloom's Taxonomy. It is imperative that we arm

students with the ability to think beyond just the basic knowledge questions. The students of today will be forced to solve more complex world issues in the future. They must have the capacity to think wider and broader than even we do now. They must have the ability to ask themselves and others the “hard” questions. These simple teaching practices will enable my students to be better learners and citizens of the future.

There is probably as many research studies about teaching as there are diets. My content and methodology classes have given me the information I need to dissimilate what is good research and what is not. I have had to read many professionally written articles and written reflections and responses to their content. I see now the necessity in the professional development I have been encouraged to participate in during my time in the education department at Manchester College. I would definitely consider myself a life-long learner!

These teachings have also encouraged me to subscribe to professional journals to be sent directly to me. One of the electronic newsletters I receive is Wrightslaw. This is an on-line publication directed towards special educators. I have also subscribed to Scholastic’s Instructor Magazine and I receive the National Education Association’s monthly magazine NEA Today. These are publications that I read and take seriously their content because I know they are important to my profession.

When starting on my journey through the education department of Manchester College I sometimes wondered what the importance was of some of the things I was being asked to do. Now that my time is almost over I can look back and see the bigger plan. I have observed great teaching in action, I have been allowed to practice what I have been taught, and I have come away with the importance of the continuing research

ongoing in the field of teaching. It has been a great 3 ½ years and I believe I have been fully prepared for the next 15.

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