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Content/Methodology
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Throughout the four years I have attended Manchester, I have been immersed in intriguing and challenging content and method classes. They were intriguing because they taught important information about education from a variety of perspectives. They challenged me to step outside the box, think about the information, and then form an educated opinion. I feel confident and well-versed when discussing most educational issues. I came to Manchester eager to learn how to teach children. My eagerness has been filled by the classes I have taken and the information I have learned. Ultimately I have formulated well-rounded views of my job as an educator, learned how to put the techniques I have been taught into use, and created knowledgeable opinions about what will benefit children.

When I decided I wanted to be a teacher, I had a narrow view of what it takes to be an influential educator. Fortunately my first education class, Introduction to Teaching, allowed me to observe in a school for three weeks. Through this I saw that teaching was not a series of unrelated steps, as I had previously thought, but a continuum of information intricately connected together. The responsibilities of a teacher reach far beyond educating. Teachers have the opportunity to empower students. They can excite students about learning, give them valuable information, and then use engaging activities that allow them to gain the most from their education.

There are many theories on how to teach effectively. Educational Psychology gave me insight into some of the most supported theories. Maslow believes that students have a hierarchy of needs, and until these needs are met most students cannot be

successful in school. During a week long placement at Fairfield Elementary, I saw a teacher who successfully carried out this theory. Her students were underprivileged and lacked support therefore rather than a teacher they needed a supporter. She showed the students that she cared about them and their education. Consequently, the students took more pride in their own education and succeeded. I was also taught about Piaget who believes in different stages of development. Educational Psychology taught about the stages and what a student is capable of in each stage; Child Development reviewed those stages and then allowed me to view them through a case study. Learning that students have certain capabilities during different stages taught me to think of a child's abilities when asking something of them.

Special education courses went more in depth when discussing abilities and how I can expand on their strengths in order to compensate for weaknesses. First I was taught the basics of disabilities such as how they are diagnosed, various symptoms, and results. Next, I learned how I can accommodate and modify lessons for these students. Again I had the chance to observe and saw how a special educator interacted with general educators to give students the support they need to succeed. Lastly I had a chance to speak with professionals on testing students in order to label them. The class taught me how students are tested and how the tests can help special educators see where students need support.

Support needs to take place early in a child's life. In Literacy Block I was given an abundant amount of useful materials on emergent literacy. Reading and writing are crucial to survival and success in a person's life. That is why emergent literacy is so important. This class taught the process of emergent literacy and showed theories and

practices there were effective. I was then able to go and use the information I had obtained by working with pre-school students and using emergent literacy activities. This opportunity allowed me to receive the information I needed about emergent literacy and then let me see it work first hand when I was able to implement it.

Fortunately the content classes have shown me a wide variety of effective teaching strategies. I have also been able to observe in many different settings and see these strategies in action. I now know there are many ways to teach children, but this is not my only job. I have to meet the needs of my students and show them that I value their education so they will do the same. I believe that teaching is a noble profession and that I have the power to influence and change the lives of our youth. I feel these classes have empowered me and given me the confidence and knowledge I need to be a teacher.

Learning the dynamics of teaching was the first part of my education here at Manchester. Then I was taught methods for teaching the subject areas. I greatly benefited from Social Studies and Science Methods because I learned relevant ways to teach those subjects. I was able to participate in labs and judge the positive and negative aspects from a teachers stand point. Many teachers today say there is not enough time for social studies and science. I was taught how I can incorporate these subjects into a busy schedule with effective and engaging lessons. This was related to the thematic unit assigned in Early Childhood Curriculum and Methods. Through making this unit I saw how easy it was to pick one topic and incorporate all subject areas. I now feel units can benefit students in many ways, one of which is making connections through all subjects. Unfortunately this is the only part of this class I found relevant to my career. Students could profit more from this class if it was rewritten to focus on the thematic unit. There

was not enough time to get together as a group and write lessons on top of the other assignments that proved meaningless.

Regrettably there were more insignificant assignments that were time consuming. The tutoring assignment in Corrective Reading was not well planned. Methods block requires week long observations, days spent in student teaching placements, and a multitude of assignments. Sporadically students are able to tutor a child but are left feeling that they do not make a difference. This assignment should not be a part of methods block due to time constraints. I have felt like a guinea pig for many trial assignments. A professional website is an excellent resource for students but should not be thrown at them their senior year. I have been diligent in getting work done to the best of my ability. I know teaching is time consuming and not easy, but I would have felt that the stress and intensity of methods block were valuable if every assignment and requirement were relevant to my career.

Classroom Management provided ideas and theories about how to run an effective classroom. Writing a discipline plan helped me think about the different dynamics of running a classroom and how I would handle situations. I also made a time filler bank which I feel will be useful during transition times to avoid down time which causes misbehavior. I learned how to deal with misbehavior through positive reinforcement. I feel confident working with behavior problems and students with different needs. Math for Teachers also offered different strategies for teaching a difficult subject. The strategies are easily taught and can accompany manipulatives which can make a lesson more active.

Active lessons are important because I now feel that students learn best when engaged. They need to be excited about learning and then challenged with inspiring lessons. Hands on lessons can be used in every subject area which all children should be taught. Interdisciplinary planning can be used to make sure every subject is included in the school day. Reading, writing, and math are emphasized because of standardized tests. However, health, science, and social studies are equally important and can even be incorporated into the previous three subjects. The teaching of lifelong guidelines should accompany academics. Students spend the majority of their day with teachers and it is our responsibility to model and teach positive life skills. They need to learn to be good citizens, to be responsible and to value education. Starting at very young ages children mimic people. Therefore, I believe the most effective teaching strategy is modeling. Behaviors can be modeled as well as concepts being taught. Children should also be taught through interdisciplinary planning. Connecting the subjects can help students with their memory. Unfortunately not all students learn the same and making connections will not be the solution for each student. Therefore differentiation should be used in order to meet the needs of every student. Each class has students with different abilities. Differentiating lessons can help meet the needs of every student by challenging each student equally.

Challenging each student and providing them with the best education is my duty. There are many dynamics to teaching which reach beyond simply teaching subjects. I have been fortunate enough to be a part of an education program that realizes this. My education classes have delved into important issues in education and taught me not only what and how to teach but also why it is important to be a teacher. I will be forever

grateful for the education I have received. It is because of my education that I will go into the teaching profession confident and ready to give students the education they deserve. I have been afforded many opportunities to observe and participate in different classrooms. Just as younger students need active lessons, I was able to be an active learner. Even though I feel as though some of the requirements were not relevant to my career, I know that each professor had the intention of bettering me as a teacher. Knowing I had professors who truly cared about me as an individual and wanted to provide me with the tools to be an effective teacher allows me to graduate knowing I received the best possible education. I can now confidently pass that education on to our youth.