

Content and Methodology:

The Beginning Steps

Lauren Bailey

Corrective Reading

Professor Schilling

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Four years ago I decided I wanted to make a difference in the lives of children. I knew that I had a gift when I worked with children. My mother often told me that I reminded her of my grandmother, who was a life-long kindergarten teacher. This was a life altering decision for me. It would form the basis of my career and my future life goals. I chose to come to Manchester College because I saw the practical opportunities afforded to the teaching majors. I had high hopes that my experience in college will build upon the years of teaching experience I already possessed. Throughout my time at Manchester College I took several courses about fundamental teaching knowledge, special education, and teaching methods. Each semester, my education classes asked me to spend at least twenty hours in a classroom. I already had the natural instincts a teacher needs, but these opportunities gave me the background knowledge I needed to succeed as a teacher in the field of education.

The first education course I took was Introduction to Teaching. Since I took this class during January term, my class was able to observe at an elementary school for half of the day in Fort Wayne and then attend our college class for the other half of the day. Even though I was gone every day in January from sunrise to sunset, the benefits paid off in end. In this experience I saw first hand how socio-economic status effects a child's education. Several students in this class received breakfast and lunch at school each day, not knowing whether or not they would be able to eat when they got home at night. The teacher also provided several students with supplies and sacks throughout the school year with money out of her own pocket. Although this teacher really connected with the students socially, I never really saw aspects of her teaching techniques that I wanted to take with me into my teaching career. It seemed like this teacher was just trying to fill the hours of the day with activities instead of content area teaching. I took this opportunity to make note of the things that I wanted to make sure I did as a teacher in my own

classroom. Then during my college class I learned how to put together lesson plans that would meet the needs of a diverse learning classroom. This really helped in my future classes because I already knew the basics of lesson planning. I wish every education major would be able to have this same opportunity. The elementary school experience and the college class really helped me grow as a first year education major.

When I arrived at Manchester College I was just going to be an elementary school teacher. During my first year, my advisor pushed me to add three more classes to my schedule so I could be more marketable as a special education teacher. In my first special education class I felt like I had been thrown into the deep end of the pool to sink. I tried desperately to learn all of the new educational terminology. I survived the class, but I was still terrified about teaching special education. The next semester I had to take a class for all teaching majors called Exceptional Children. This professor really made his love for teaching children with exceptionalities come alive for me. He showed the class how our knowledge of teaching children with exceptionalities could be used to enhance the education of every child in our classrooms, not just those children with exceptionalities. During that class I created an honor's project where I observed seven lessons across several grade levels during a day at an elementary school. This was one of the best opportunities I had to see exceptionalities being used every day in the classroom. Often in my college classes we were given opportunities to observe classrooms, but we were never given a specific learning objective. In this particular assignment I was given a specific learning objective, and I was able to complete my observations in the course of a school day. Through this opportunity I learned first hand how teachers use adaptations in their classrooms. At this point in my education classes at Manchester College, I realized that I was becoming a special educator, not because it would make more marketable, but because I was making myself more

useful as a teacher for the children in my classroom. Through my special education courses I have been able to extend my knowledge of classroom adaptations, enrichments, behaviors, assessments, and learning styles.

The courses I took during my senior year education methods block really helped me to put into practice the ideas about teaching I had learned in the previous semesters. During this semester I was able to develop a lot of items that I would be able use in my future classroom including a website, a classroom management plan, a social studies unit, and a reading assessment plan. I was also able to create several lessons on a variety of topics. I was able to present one of my science lessons to a local elementary school classroom. I found this incredibly helpful because I was actually able to see how the students reacted to the lesson my group had created. I wish the education department would give us more opportunities to present lessons to local elementary school classrooms. This was only the third lesson I had presented to a real classroom of students. I know it takes a lot more coordination on the part of the professor, as well as the college students, to present lessons to a real classroom of students. But, I think the extra effort is worth the benefits. Often as education majors we present lessons to our college classes. This is always a great experience, but no matter how hard they try, college students will never provide the reaction a typical group of elementary school students would provide during a lesson. During this semester I was also able to observe several times in my student teaching placement. This opportunity allowed me to become comfortable with the classes I would be teaching in the spring, to get to know the students, and to get to know the teaching routines of the classroom.

Throughout my time at Manchester College I have also participated in a wide variety of extra-curricular activities that have influenced my teaching career. While these are not part of

the methodology and content offered by Manchester College, they have still played an integral part of my teaching preparation. I have been able to observe several other teachers, attend a multitude of workshops, tutor various students on a variety of subjects, work at a daycare, speak to several teachers about their teaching careers, and work at an adult education center teaching students how to speak English. These extra aspects, along with my content and methodology courses, have made my teaching career at Manchester College complete.

My content methodology courses, along with my extra-curricular activities have helped me build a foundation for my future success as an educator. Numerous children will come in and out of my classroom in the next thirty years. They will have different needs, wants, backgrounds, desires, knowledge, and support. Over the years, the popular teaching methods will wax and wane like the moon. But, one detail will remain constant. The reason I teach will be to make a difference in the lives of children. Manchester College has given me the background knowledge I need to succeed in this venture. Now, I am ready for the journey.