

Portfolio Completion - *Reflection Three*

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Reflection Topic:

Differentiated Instruction

Standards:

TWO: The pre-service teacher understands how students learn and develop, and provides learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.

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FIVE: The pre-service teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.

I am capable of scaffolding my students in fine tuning their strengths and reducing their weaknesses for thorough expression of their ideas. As students grow they learn differently and each student has his or her own defining characteristics that set him or her apart. They are not all sheep that need to be herded but rather individuals that need to be equipped with tools to live and carve out their own niches with. Students need to not only learn the academic subjects but need to gain social skills and be instilled with responsibility, accountability, respect, and a general understanding of many topics from which they can focus their lives for success. Students can be compared to desserts, layers of butter, pastry, flour, egg, water and frosting all mixed at different times and prepared differently complement each other in the finished product. A baker, or teacher, needs to have a bag of tricks or kitchen full of tools that will make for a smooth process and flawless execution of multiple, sequential steps.

My classroom will be a diverse community of learners and my instruction will reflect that, my teaching will always be fine tuned to reach each student the best way I can.

As Gardner, although often beat to death, developed; multiple intelligences which every student has, enabled them to each learn primarily through a particular route. He detailed nine intelligences: *verbal/linguistic, logical/mathematical, visual/spatial, musical/rhythmical, bodily/kinesthetic, naturalist, intrapersonal, interpersonal* and *existential*. It is sometimes often which students fit into which categories, these students are often stereotyped in later years as geeks, hippies, lone-wolves and gossip-hounds etc... These characteristics will determine not just how they live but how they interact or do not interact with peers, which social cliques and groups they fit into and the relationships they maintain with peers and adults.

[Bonesteel_Gardner.pdf](#) As described in my diagram, each intelligence can be boiled down to something much simpler:

Verbal/Linguistic	=	Word Smart
Logical/Mathematical	=	Logic Smart
Visual/Spatial	=	Picture Smart
Musical/Rhythmic	=	Music Smart
Bodily/Kinesthetic	=	Body Smart
Naturalist	=	Green Smart
Intrapersonal	=	Self Smart
Interpersonal	=	People Smart
Existential	=	World Smart

My boss's sixteen month old son came into our office recently and I sat from my desk, watching him play with the water cooler which for any child is thrilling. He then moved on to the coffee supplies, stirrers, mints and other items that were smaller and tactile. He learned what they did, what they did not do, how [bad] they tasted and how they scattered everywhere when he threw

them in the air. He would not have learned any of the above had I stood above him and explained each item's purpose in the waiting area. I make an obvious point, different learners, different lessons, and different learning styles. Knowing these, and learning about my students will make me a much stronger, much more successful educator.

...A teacher is the architect of a civically responsible adult, equipping him/her with the tools needed to be an intelligent, active member of society...

Individuals who are better express and understand through words and language.

verbal/linguistic learners understand through words
Logical/mathematical things that are concrete, that

are black and white like numbers. Those who are *visual/special* learners can understand things through almost a map in their minds laying out what they have to process and their relative location in regards to it. *Musical/rhythmic* learners absorb things by putting them to beats or patterns almost as a form of memorization. *Bodily/kinesthetic* learners like my boss's son, needed to touch, feel and grip an idea, concept or thing to understand its value and purpose. *Naturalists'* analyze an item or idea's place in the world in relation to it. *Intrapersonal* learners are independent thinkers, those who focus on something alone, with their own knowledge opposite from *interpersonal* learners who learn best in groups teaching each other. The last, *existential* learners will best learn something through pondering any and all questions regarding its realities, possibilities and contemporary probabilities.

One student I had seemed to be particularly far beyond his years. He was smart, musically talented, good with numbers and the kind of student I knew I could always count on to have the answer if the rest of the class stared at me blankly. He was well-behaved and always committed to excellence, he seemed to be capable of learning any way I taught, until however I noticed he was much more independent than his peers. He had a much easier time relating to adults, his father,

myself, some of the other faculty and staff. Although he had friends, a group of girls and boys who he performed in a band with, he didn't socialize with them like other students would every chance they got; gym, between classes, in the hallways etc... He was much more cynical and much more of a realist than his peers. During one period a fellow classmate mentioned the star of the MTV reality series, "Jersey Shore," Snookie. The students laughed and commented about how "ridiculous" she was or how "funny" she was, while this young man, under his breath commented at the ignorance of my society. Inside my own head I congratulated him as the show is nothing a group of impressionable seventh graders should be watching no less something they are looking up to. On the outside, I looked at him, he looked at me and we both nodded in agreement. He knew I was not choosing to highlight it as to explain it may have been not only controversial but above the understanding of his peers, but he knew I agreed with what he said. This young man is an intrapersonal learner; he is intellectually above others in his age group and knows that he is. He understands overarching concepts that his peers will not grasp for years and works better when he is left to his own devices, almost not having to "bother" with his immature classmates. He is an excellent student and gets along with his peers, he does not resent them and isn't a social outcast, he is simply independent and succeeds best that way. This skill will undoubtedly lead to a life of success in this capitalist, man-eat-man society. Getting to know all of my student allowed me to see which fit into each intelligence and better meet their needs as their teacher.

I have had the opportunity to teach various lessons in styles that fit into all of the categories. One history lesson which was not only great for the musical/rhythmic students but interesting for the entire class in general was a song analysis. Billy Joel's "We Didn't Start the Fire" is a classic tune that takes the listener through time covering monumental events over several decades. The students listened to the song twice and were then asked on the third run through (which I slowed down and took pauses throughout), to take notes on everything they recognized. The students were given either a recording of the song or the website where they could access it at home over the weekend and upon returning Monday, had to submit a copy of the assignment sheet detailing two particular facts they knew a lot about or were especially interested in.

[WeDidntStartTheFire.pdf](#) They then wrote papers on the subjects and got to present whichever historical elements they covered. The students were excited and enthusiastic about not only listening to music during social studies class but doing something less traditional. It gave me the opportunity to allow them creativity and flexibility while still circling the content around valuable historical information.

Students who learn best through bodily/kinesthetic means or those who are body smart, tend to understand and retain more when there are hands-on activities involved. They enjoy movement, being able to walk around, touch things, and stretch their legs a bit. In social studies although this is not always possible I am a huge advocate for stretch breaks. Stretch breaks can allow students the opportunity to move around without necessarily interrupting the education process. This list of various stretch breaks are some that I have used in classes, they are non-invasive and do not take too much time away from the material at hand. [STRETCHBREAKS](#) I frequently would bring my students snacks and candy to class - it does get expensive but I find that candy accumulates after each holiday so I would simply save it up or buy it on clearance. The students loved that I was giving them a treat and felt the need to earn those treats. Extrinsic rewards such as that, although not as important as intrinsic value, make the days go a little smoother and give the students something different to look forward to. One stretch-break I like to use is to have the students all stand up and form a circle boy, girl, boy girl. They each have to state one fact they learned from the material we covered the day before and students go around the circle, anyone who doesn't have something to contribute steps back (out of the circle), until we have names everything we covered. Those left in the inner circle get a homework-free pass for that evening.

Some require planning and preparations as actual assignments while others simply change the energy in the room by doing something small. One I was a big fan of was a rapid fire review game, I would usually complete it the day before a test (I only give tests on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday). All of the students begin seated on top of their desks, I start at one end of the room with a hat full of slips of paper, each paper contains a question, the student draws the question, I read it and if he or she answers incorrectly he or she has to sit down and it goes to the

next person until someone answers correctly. The last two students seated on top of their desks receive bonus points on the test. I can usually get through several rounds in one class period, the students remain entertained and paying attention as they might get the same question if their classmates get it wrong and I rotate around the room giving everyone an even opportunity to win.

[USHSGame](#) The questions are similar to the ones they will get on the test, which they would have also received in the accompanying study guide. The study guides are given out days in advance (usually before the weekend) so students have plenty of time to review, ask me any questions or get any clarification on subject matter. [USHS12StudyGuide](#) Study guides, whether simple or complex, give the students a little more confidence and direction. I have occasionally used outlines that simply list themes that might be covered for essays for example or listing off five essay questions and telling the students in advance they will have to choose two of them to write up in-depth. [EssayQuestions](#)

I enjoy offering my student additional opportunities to shine or put in extra effort. These extra credit assignments are usually demanding, one for instance is an independent reading project where students are asked to read a historical non-fiction piece and apply it to a modern-day social, economic or political issue. Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* was one student's book, he correlated it to a documentary, Morgan Spurlock's "Super Size Me" and how our food industry is today. This gave him extra point on top of his entire semester grade. He put in a lot of work and was able to focus on something that interested him but was applicable to social studies. He critically analyzed both the book and the documentary, presented his opinions to his peers and was able to think outside-the-box to find something new and interesting. I also have compiled a list of over thirty different potential projects that would engage critical thinking, asking students to put themselves into the shoes of a particular historical character and live his or her life through an important event. One such project might be for a female student to imagine herself as a suffragist, fighting the good fight, going against men in powerful positions for equality and going against generations of stereotyping - the student would have to include facts and do quite a bit of research to make it a strong historical paper.

Both intrapersonal learners and interpersonal learners, or those who are self smart and those who are people smart are nearly always incorporated into standard classroom activities. A majority of the work most students do it independent, where they are taking notes, taking tests, starting homework or answering questions on worksheets using only their own brain power and possibly a textbook. There is almost always time set aside for sharing with a partner or working in a group of some sort as well. One activity my students found very interesting was an explorer team assignment. They worked on this assignment for two days where they learned the material then taught it to the rest of the class. The classroom was broken up into six groups, each group was assigned to a specific explorer's crew and every crew member was a valuable asset to the voyage. Ponce De Leon, Verrazano, Hudson and the like, were explorers, each explorer had a first mate (group leader), a map keeper (documenter), a navigation expert (resident historian). The students had to travel the course that the explorer took, detail his experiences, finds and logs then teach each to the rest of the class. [EXPLORERTICKETS](#) They were learning through teaching each other versus me teaching them, they were excited, creative and hoping to be able to do every lesson this way in the future.

For my naturalist students, or green smart pupils, as far a field trips go, social studies ones tend to be structured around locations such as Arlington National Cemetery or the Gettysburg battlefield where students spend hours outside walking through monuments, viewing national treasures and glimpsing into our nation's history.



Students, although they would never admit it, love structure. They crave it and occasionally it is effective to simply do a power point, [POWERPOINT](#) and provide an accompanying guided note sheet [REVIEWSHEET](#) or have them take notes. Then I would provide follow-up questions for home work to have them review afterwards. [HOMEWORKSHEET](#)

Depending on the institution's technology, there are many other teaching tools such as utilizing as *Epson Elmo or modern-day overhead projector*. *SmartBoards* are also great to have access to as lessons can be efficient and essentially completely computerized. Both of these are great, not necessary but great. Students can see material covered in the less tradition green chalk board or white paper style but in a form that they are more accustomed to, just as how texting and computers are engrained into their generation already.

Essentially, everyone has a specific route he/she needs to take to absorb and retain information. Some people are better at understanding through other people, others through physically touching and feeling things. Some can understand an idea by looking at the idea's relation to the bigger picture or the rest of the world, while others can understand something through setting it to music.



Either way, all of these learning methods need to be connected through prior knowledge and like a light switch, turning it on. As described by Jeremy Roschelle in “Learning in Interactive Environments: Prior Knowledge and New Experience¹,” long-term understanding comes primarily from prior knowledge and secondarily from new materials and content presented. If as

¹ <http://www.exploratorium.edu/IFI/resources/museumeducation/priorknowledge.html>

a teacher I can find out how each of my students learns best, unlock their self-motivation, and engage their interest in a subject I can get them to discuss freely it and their other ideas. That life application coupled with the facts I am presenting them with, and the tools to learn more if they have that hunger will guarantee academic excellence.

Piaget was the father of understanding child development - he was the first to see a child, not as a small adult but as it's own unique form that grew, developed and learned in particular ways. Through hours and hours of one-on-one observations of children, he came up with many ground-breaking theories about the way in which children interact and develop. [TIME Child Psychologist Jean Piaget.pdf](#) I think it is easy as an adult to forget that we were all once children. That we all disliked school at one point or another, and that our student's interested are not similar to our own. For a student, his or her world revolves around their social lives, school comes second. They have not chosen the career field of social studies, or math, science and English for that matter. They are rather being forced to attend and I think that if I continually try and remember what it was like, what I felt like, the good and not-so-good experiences I had that will make me a better instructor. If I can adjust my mindset to come down to their level I can see what they are seeing and better explain it, that is what Piaget did when he broke new ground - that is what a good teacher will hold as a constant. One thing that Piaget noted was how children learn through each other. Students love becoming specialists in one or more subjects and being able to show their classmates. That is why peer tutoring is also so successful, and why elementary schools have upperclassmen come down to the lower grades to match up with a reading buddy, as almost a mentor program. Like with my explorer project, each team was able to teach the other. When a child comes home learning a new word, occasionally a "bad" word and the parents blame "the school bus" it is usually because those students are exposed to other older children and pick up on new, different or naughty things that they haven't otherwise heard at home or in class.

This will be valuable to me as a teacher when I am understand which stage each of my students is in within his/her life. Some will undoubtedly be further ahead socially than others while even boys and girls might be at slightly different intellectual stages. Many of this will also have varied

depending on where he/she came from and what he/she has experienced. Knowing these molders of education’s groundbreaking areas of expertise will fine tune my ability to adapt my lessons and individual goals.

Bloom, another father of education developed a “*Taxonomy*” or a classification of levels of intellectual behavior related to learning, in 1956. The Taxonomy outlines six levels within the cognitive domain: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. In the form of a pyramid, these skills area arranged from lowest to highest in their engagement of higher order thinking skills. There is a revised pyramid as well, this one lays out a more modern concept of the skills needed to learn. [BloomsTaxonomies.pdf](#) I find that firstly, making sure the students know the difference between all of these verbs is essential, usually students do not know the difference between analysis or synthesis for example. Then I can use each when asking them to write an essay or answer a particular question in a specific way. Understanding this myself can help me prioritize how I teach my students the material and what I expect them to retain. Some details, as Roschelle also describes, have more importance and value than others, just as teaching student the food pyramid and how they need more vegetables than sweets.

One of the biggest failures in a classroom can be that it is not engaging. If students are not engaged they cannot be expected to find self-motivation, to work hard or to want to learn. Students’ brains have to work and to work hard, constantly. Stimulation of the mind comes from not only challenging but different and “real” displays of information. Students as well, need to have opportunities to shine. There are many ways to achieve this, I want to know my students and meet all of their expectations as I hope they meet and exceed mine and their own.

Standard 2	Major components	How I have met the standard
<i>The pre-service teacher understands how students learn and develop, and provides learning opportunities that support the intellectual, social, and personal development of all students.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods in which students learn 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gardner’s Multiple Intelligences theory • Institutes stretch breaks into the classroom regularly.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get's to know each student and how he/she learns best.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Instructional strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Using games, study guides and essays. • Some various strategies I highlighted were traditional power points, teaching each other, note sheets & homework review. • The instruction of musical, physical and group lessons.
Standard 5		
<i>The pre-service teacher uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage students' development of critical thinking, problem solving, and performance skills.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Differentiated instruction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The frequent use of <i>Epson Elmo & SmartBoard</i> lessons. • Gardner's Multiple Intelligences theory • Bloom's Taxonomy (old & new)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging Critical Thinking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frequently assigns out-of-the-box assignments. • Organizes students into mini-teams. • Student-teaching-student instruction. • Independent reading projects and extra credit opportunities.

