

Practicum Capstone Paper

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For the duration of my diversity practicum I had the opportunity to teach math to summer school students on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in McIntosh, South Dakota. The summer school program is not designed to tutor or help students achieve a passing grade from the previous school year. The goal of the program is to provide education, games, food, activities, and guidance over summer break. I also had the opportunity to coach grades 3rd through 8th basketball and volleyball camps. I intend to cover some of my duties I had as a summer school teacher, the experiences I took away, and how this practicum has taught me skills I could not have learned in a classroom.

Throughout my practicum I worked with students from kindergarten to 8th grade. About half of the students were Native American students and the other half were white. There also was an even number of boys and girls that participated in the program. Around 35 to 40 students attended the program last summer. After spending a couple days with the students, I noticed many of the students needed the extra time dedicated to their education while others were simply there for the social atmosphere. Therefore, I saw this time during the summer school program to really connect with all the students. It was my goal to understand how I can help students who come from different diversities. “As our world becomes more diverse and interconnected we become more disconnected” (Treuer, 2016, 3:16).

The summer school program took place in the McIntosh High School. Therefore, during class time students gathered into different classrooms depending on their age. Math, Reading, and Computers were the three subjects taught. Students could utilize the quiet classrooms to concentrate and review content that was taught during the school year. Arts, crafts and lunch all took place in the large cafeteria. Here students were able to talk among each other and create

neat projects during art time. We also had access to the gym where recess and the camps took place. During my math classes I had access to internet, math worksheets, lab supplies, and a marker board. I had copious amounts of resources to incorporate into my classroom.

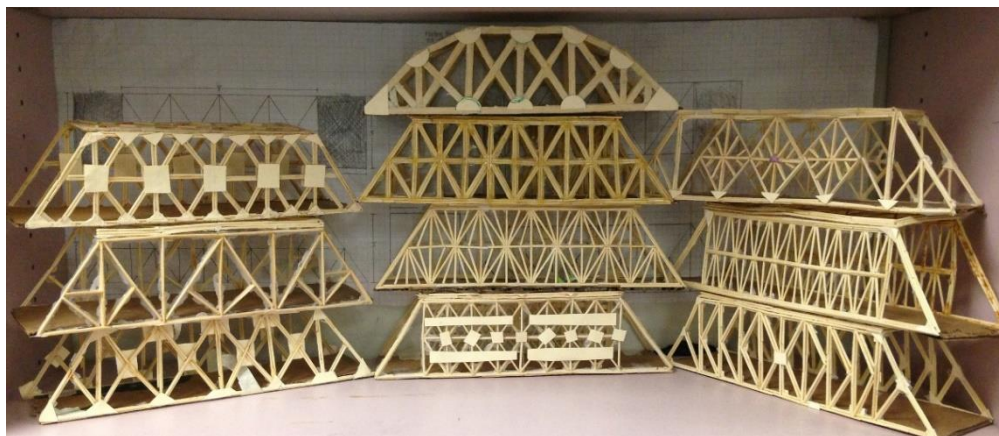
In the summer school program there are three general education teachers including me. One supervisor her name is Brenda Kraft, and a few high school students who are aids to the teachers and provide additional help with instructions. Because we were well staffed there is plenty of help to provide instruction to the students. Students are also divided into classes by age, therefore as the teacher I can base my classroom instructions and directions off the students' ability.

In my classroom I taught math to K-8th students. I had to prepare for many different age levels and change my teaching style to meet the needs of the different grades. In one class I had kindergarteners through third grade. Some students knew how to multiply and divide while others were challenged with writing their name. This was very difficult for me to teach a lesson because everyone was on such a different level. It also was difficult to answer all the questions by myself. I learned it's important to be patient with every student and respect that they are trying their best. "Teaching is difficult, but like anything worth the pain and frustration involved. It can bring untold benefits" (Nieto, 2013, p. 138). In addition to teaching math I also taught a few science lessons. I prepared a lab on osmosis and diffusion using an egg to show the effects. Students were given an egg to investigate the effects of osmosis. Before the lab I explained the science behind each step. These pictures describe the different steps in the osmosis and diffusion lab I conducted with the students. The first egg was untouched. The second egg sat in a vinegar

solution for twenty-four hours, and the third egg was saturated in a corn syrup bath overnight. All the students got a kick out of the experiment and they loved playing with their slimy egg.



Students who participated in the summer school program had many outside opportunities to attend other than simply school. Last summer students were able to attend a Farmer's Union Camp that took place in town. Students were educated on the purpose, history, and trips they could attend through the program. They were engaged in games and were provided a lunch. Students also participated in a 4-H project day put on by the local 4-H clubs. Here students can make many different decorative projects, play games, and enjoy snacks as they bond with other community kids. Another activity that took place was the competition of building balsa bridges. Students used balsa wood to assemble a bridge that could with stand the most weight. Students had to come up with their own design using the amount of wood that was dispersed equally among groups. Each bridge had to meet specific requirements and the entire group had to participate. Some bridges held up to 180 lbs. of weight. Below is a picture of some generic balsa wood bridges.



As I mentioned earlier my sister and I organized a community wide basketball and volleyball camp for kids from grades 3rd to 8th. It was our jobs to teach fundamental skills of both sports, play games, and provide a fun competitive environment. Each camp was two days long. In the mornings, Lauren (my sister) and I taught two ball dribbling drills, layups, and jump shots. Toward the afternoon we incorporated speed games, relays, and 4 on 4 scrimmages. Volleyball was a little more challenging to teach because of the proper technique involved. I have a strong passion for sports, so I was really excited to teach the students and help them improve athletically. After each summer school day which usually ended about 1:00 pm, the summer school staff and I would take the students to the local pool for an hour before the buses came to take them home. My job when students attended outside activities is to supervise them and help in any way I can. This is a picture of the students who attended the basketball camp my sister and I organized. This was one of the “funny” pictures we took.



The standards that connected best with my practicum experiences would have to be the InTASC Core Teaching Standards including: Standard #10: Collaboration and Standard #9: Reflection and Continuous Growth. I learned quickly that with the collaboration of teachers,

staff, bus drivers, and cooks, we were all able to make the summer school program a success. Everyone had a job and a purpose, and it takes everyone to make it beneficial for the students. I also developed meaningful relationships with my coworkers. The environment was very laid back because after all it was “summer” school. Referring to the standard of reflection and continuous growth was also very important to me. I used this standard a lot when I taught my students new math concepts or when I taught them a new basketball move. I evaluated how well they understood the content by grading their papers and watching how they applied their new moves on the basketball court. I also watched how the students grew with their new-found knowledge. I have already started thinking of new ways I can build on their previous knowledge as I teach them this summer.

Overall, I had such a great experience with the summer school program this last year that I am going back this year to teach and coach the whole month of June and July. Working at the summer school program gave me hands on teaching skills that I would not have been able to learn in the classroom. Working with students of different ages, race, economic wealth, and backgrounds gave me a step ahead in working with students of diversity in my future classroom. During my time of teaching, and coaching I always thought to myself, “I’m getting paid to play basketball with these kids and do cool science experiments” when really it never felt like a job to begin with. All the outside camps, organizations, and coworkers really made my experience worthwhile. In my future classroom I now know the importance of being patient with students because we may not know what they are dealing with at home. I learned that I really enjoy working with kids and that it is very important to teach to each individual student. Everyone learns differently, and it is also important to engage and interest the students from the beginning. I love the idea of making the content relevant to the students and finding new ways to make

boring lessons exciting. "...teaching is knowing how to create an environment to foster humanity, to foster human relationships, the content will be easier to transmit" (Nieto, 2013, p. 34). After being in the field it brings me comfort that I have chosen the right career for me.

References

Nieto, Sonia (2013). *Finding Joy in Teaching Students of Diverse Backgrounds*; Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Treuer, A. (2012). *Everything you wanted to know about Indians but were afraid to ask*. Saint Paul, MN: Borealis Books