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This portfolio contains work from my spring 2009 Practicum class and my field experience at Mount Caesar Elementary School in the first grade. This portfolio includes work from the beginning, middle, and end of the semester, allowing me to reflect on my professional and personal growth as a future Special Educator.

CEC Standards and The Role Model

I am first introducing my portfolio by discussing the CEC Standards and The Role Model and what these mean to me. I first included work from the beginning of the year and then included, What I want to be when I grow up? Seeing the difference from what I wrote in the beginning of the year verse at the end of semester shows professional and personal growth throughout my Practicum experience.

I have included the CEC Standards Self Assessment Chart to demonstrate my understandings of these standards as I first began Practicum. I also included The Role Model graphic organizer that I filled out at the beginning of the semester. Then I include my First Steps essay. As I reread through these I can see how I have already changed my views and grew as a future Special Educator.

Being in the field has given me many opportunities to apply these standards that I have learned to “real-life” situations. In the First Steps essay, I talk about how I wanted to gain a basic understand of all the students’ individual strengths and weaknesses. After being in the field I realized this could be difficult because there were many students in the classroom. However, this helped me reflect on what observational skills I have gained throughout this experience. I feel I have gained skills such as, understanding what I am looking for while observing students and then how to analyze the information I have

gathered to form an understanding of the student as a reader, writer, mathematician, and/or member of the school community as well as understanding her or his strengths and weaknesses in these areas.

Another observation I have made that demonstrates my professional competence is my knowledge in the different types of assessments, both formal and informal. In the First Steps essay I discuss my want to learn more about assessment and the different types used. Then in the What do I want to be when I grow up? essay, I state that my level or knowledge of both informal and formal assessment has grown from Practicum, the field experience, and my Special Education Assessment class.

My knowledge of collecting and analyzing data has grown tremendously, which I further discuss in the What do I want to be when I grow up? essay. Breaking a concept down into skill clusters helps organize what a teacher is looking for when assessing a student in reading, writing, or mathematics. I have grown to realize the importance of breaking everything down into steps. This keeps the process organized and helped me follow through to create an effective IEP. These examples demonstrate how I have grown professionally and how my understanding of the CEC Standards and The Role Model has developed throughout this experience.

Journals

I also included my journals in my portfolio because everyday I observe, experience, and learn something different in my field experience. This demonstrated growth of my knowledge in various settings and situations. The journals are a great way to show how I have reflected each day being in the field and how I have grown as a future special educator. My journals demonstrate how much my comfort level grew with working with the students and staff. Also, there were many times when the Practicum class and the field experience coincided with each other. I would learn a new concept in class and then applied it to my field experience. This is also demonstrated with in my journals.

Lesson Plans

Lesson plans demonstrate how my instructional skills have grown throughout the semester. Other skills that I have gained and feel more comfortable with are writing objectives. My competence level of writing and understanding objectives is demonstrated throughout my lesson plans. Another aspect of my lesson plans that demonstrates professional growth is my procedures and breaking the lesson down into steps, for example, I-Do it, W'ou-do it, We-do it, and You-Do it. I have gained the instructional skills of modeling the expectations, showing examples, then giving the students the opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the concept in a way that I can observe and assess the students.

Observation Reflections

Next, I have included my Observation Reflections from the lessons that I was observed in. These reflections demonstrate my thinking throughout this experience, showing growth by discussing my responsiveness to feedback. These observation reflections have demonstrated my professional growth in various settings. These reflections demonstrate how I have grown to adapt in different educational settings, for example, one-on-one, small group, and whole class instruction. I have also demonstrated how my comfort level in the classroom setting has increased. As well as how I have used my energetic personality to create a positive atmosphere where the students are engaged and eager to participate.

IEP

I have also included my IEP, which was an important part of my learning process throughout my Practicum experience. Developing this IEP helped me break the process down into feasible steps where I could effectively create a specific plan for the student that I worked with. The steps within the IEP demonstrate my understanding of the student as a reader and member of her school community. These steps also demonstrate my understanding of how a meaningful IEP is developed for a specific individual.

The first step was creating the KWH, where I organized my observations into skill clusters and posed questions that I would later answer from collecting and analyzing data. The KWH helped me stay on task and organized throughout the whole process. I constantly would refer back to the KWH chart looking at each skill cluster and seeing which questions I had not answered yet. It helped me organized my data by showing me which skill clusters I had collected data for and which ones I had not. It also helped me use the most effective assessment tools to gather the data. The KWH helped me understand what I was looking for and how I could find it. The KWH helped me follow through with the whole process of developing a well-organized meaningful IEP because it was the bases of the whole IEP process.

After collecting all my data the Profile and PLOP part of the IEP demonstrate how I effectively analyzed the gathered data to form an overview of whom the student is as a reader. The Profile and PLOP display my data collecting and analyzing skills that I have developed from Practicum. I have taken what I have learned about developing an IEP and applied it to my field experience, collected data from a student that I would with in various setting.

One of the key parts of the IEP, the goals and objectives, demonstrate how I have applied what I have learned about creating effective goals and objectives. I collected data from a student that I worked with. I then analyzed the data that I collected. This experience allowed me to apply what I learned in Practicum to a real-life situation. I think it is very interesting that some of the data I collected and some of the objectives and goals that I wrote could possibly be real aspects of this student's IEP. Working with a student and using the skills I developed from Practicum, help me understand the "why;" why we break each area down into skills clusters and why we chart data. Also the "how," for example, how I take information and analyze the data to give a real overview and understanding of this student as a reader. The documentation, teaching approaches, and modifications also demonstrate how I utilized what I learned in Practicum and how I applied it to a student in a real-life school setting.

Goals for Student Teaching

While student teaching next semester, I want to apply what I learned and what I experienced during Practicum and in the field. I want to take my knowledge and experience to the next level. While student teaching, I will have many opportunities to apply what I have learned to developing lesson plans, teaching, working with students one-on-one, small groups, and whole class instruction. My main goal for student teaching and to try new things and learn as much as possible using the background knowledge I have gained from Practicum and Methods.

I feel that I have developed a great background on writing objectives. I also have an excellent understanding what objectives include and what their purpose is. This skill will help me with developing lesson plans and writing IEPs. I have become more aware of what I am teaching, how I am teaching it, and why I am teaching it. With writing goals and objectives, I have also become more competent in understanding each student as an individual. While student teaching, I want to use tools such as, the KWH chart, skill cluster, and collecting and analyzing data using charts. I have become appreciative of how helpful these tools really are because these tools break everything down into comprehensible material. As a result these tools help you understand each student better as a reading, writer, mathematician, and member of his or her school community.

My comfort level in the classroom setting has also increase, which I want to utilize during Student Teaching. I feel more comfortable stepping outside my comfort zone. I want to push myself and be push to try new things because through my Practicum and Methods experience I have realized if I step out of my comfort zone, I gain new knowledge which is beneficial for me in the long run. Therefore, another goal of mine

will be to step out of my comfort zone once again, whether that is teaching subjects I have never taught before, trying a new project with the students, or fitting the outside into the curriculum more. I want to challenge myself to think outside of the box while keeping the students' needs in mind.