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Teacher Work Sample
Spring 2012

Dr. Seuss Unit
February 27-March 2

Werner Elementary, Fort Collins, CO
Mentor Teacher: Kate Haugen
Second grade
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Setting and Context

Werner Elementary School is located on the south side of Fort Collins, Colorado just east of a major intersection in town. It serves the needs of students in the Poudre School District.
Community

Poudre School District is located in Fort Collins. Approximately one hour north of Denver and 30 minutes south of Cheyenne, Wyoming. Fort Collins was founded in 1864 and has a population of approximately 143,986 people (www.fcgov.com). The town has an annual population growth of 1.4% (www.fcgov.com). Fort Collins is home to Colorado State University, which may explain the 48.2% of the population that has completed four or more years of college (www.fcgov.com). The average age of a Fort Collins resident is 29.4 years of age and the annual household income is $72,248 (www.fcgov.com). This busy city is home to “over 600 acres of parks and 30,000 acres of natural areas” as well as easy access to biking and hiking trails (www.fcgov.com).

District

Poudre School District houses 31 Elementary Schools across Fort Collins, Wellington and Timnath; 52 schools over all grade levels (www.nces.ed.gov). These 52 schools serve 26,250 students of the 35,630 individuals registered in the district under the age of 18 (www.nces.ed.gov). Poudre School District has a teacher to student ratio of 1:17.04 (www.nces.ed.gov). These 35,630 individuals under 18, can be broken down into genetic backgrounds self-selected by the families. There are 30,819 non-Hispanic/Latino students; 4,811 Hispanic/Latino students; 348 African American students; 292 Native American/Alaskan students; 713 Asian students; 25 Hawaiian/Pacific islander students and 1991 student who marked themselves as “other” (www.nces.ed.gov). There are also 1,650 ELL students (www.nces.ed.gov).

School
Werner Elementary School was founded in 1987 by Gail Werner; an educator and Principal in the district for much of her career (www.psd.k12.co.us). Werner Elementary displays and lives up to their vision which states “Werner Elementary School will provide the environment and opportunities so that each child can maximize their learning potential and achieve their highest possible level” (www.eweb.psdschools.org). The school’s mission statement focuses on accepting all diverse backgrounds and ability levels and enhancing each student’s strengths through academic development (www.eweb.psdschools.org). Werner has 462 students attending, 25 teachers and a teacher to student ratio of 1:18.41 (www.nces.ed.gov). These 462 students are broken down into the following ethnicity areas: 1 American Indian/Alaskan student; 20 Asian/Pacific Islander students; 2 African American students; 14 Hispanic students and 425 Caucasian students (www.nces.ed.gov). These students are broken down further by sex: 240 male student and 222 female students (www.nces.ed.gov).

The majority of the children attending Werner Elementary School live in the middle to upper class brackets. This well-off socio-economic status population allows for a large amount of parental involvement and support both in and out of the classroom.

Werner Elementary School serves kindergarteners up to 5th graders. The number of enrolled students in each of these grades are as follows: 75 Kindergarteners, 87 1st graders, 65 2nd graders, 90 3rd graders, 83 4th graders and 62 5th graders (www.nces.ed.gov).

Werner allows the community to impact their school in many ways. One beneficial way that I have personally experienced is allowing Colorado State University students to work as volunteers as well as complete class credit in the classrooms. Werner also welcomes parents and other family members to volunteer in the classrooms, chaperone trips and events as well as assist teachers during center times and various group activities.
Classroom: Kate Haugen’s 2nd grade

Kate Haugen has 23 students in her 2nd grade classroom. She was given the challenge of preparing a room for these students in the portable outside the school building due to there not being enough room inside the building for all of Werner’s students. She approached this challenge very well by doing her best to consolidate what she brought into the space and by making it feel as inviting as possible. She accomplished this by hanging children’s work from clotheslines inside the room as well as brightly colored posters, pictures and books. She provided different areas within the room to distinguish different zones of activity. There was a reading corner where she provided an adult sized chair and lamp lighting. There was a rainbow table toward the back of the room by the bookcases to provide space for group work. She had an area for student’s backpacks and mailboxes.

Above the mailboxes, she displayed the job list for that week as well as the monthly calendar and the lunch calendar. It was definitely a challenge to work in such a small space with so many students. There were a lot of boxes pushed into corners because there was simply not enough space for all of Kate’s books and supplies. However, children are resilient and they adapted to this space very quickly. We learned as a class that we have to respect the space that we do have and treat it well. We also learned how to respect others when they need a little space to be alone; this can be difficult to find in close quarters.

There was no sink in the room so the children would have to go inside the building to use the bathroom or wash their hands. We were provided with a water cooler for drinks of water. In terms of technology, there is a document camera in the room and a Smart Board. Kate was very good at implementing the Smart Board into the day and allowed the students to use it often. She would do the morning attendance and lunch count by having the children move their names on
the Smart Board to the lunch of their choice. That way, even if she did not use it in a lesson that day, they were able to use it first thing in the morning.

There is one student in Kate’s class with an IEP in place. This child’s IEP was created based on the opinion that she has dyslexia and that this affects her ability to write to her full potential. She is reading at a slightly lower level as well compared to her peers but her true struggle is in her writing and spelling. There are many other children in Kate’s class that seem to need to be evaluated but because the children’s parents deny the option to be evaluated, there is only one child on an IEP plan.

There is a child who is being focused on by the SST team. He has been a selective mute since Kindergarten and the team has been working with his parents to try to get him more psychological evaluations. The child’s parents believe he has problems with his vision. The SST team feels he has more of a psychological disorder. However, without permission for evaluation by the parents, this child does not have a diagnosis as of 2012.

The remainder of the children in the classroom are considered “on target”. Kate works to document all progress made by her students. She records literacy progress through DRA assessments, AR tests on the computer and observational readings. For math progress, they record documentation through daily assessments as well as unit assessments. Werner separates all children in the grade into ability level groups for math. Kate works with those at the lowest ability level. None of the children are at grade level for math in this group.

There is one child in the classroom whom was sent through the Gifted and Talented testing process by the strong request of his parents. He was cleared for the program in mathematics. However, he was not considered Gifted and Talented in any other areas of
academics. After these results were told to his parents, he was pulled out of the classroom and began home schooling.

I discussed with Kate her policies for classroom management in her class as well as across the school. In terms of behavior, the school has a Positive Behavior Support System. They have created the ROAR code standing for Respect, Own your own behavior, Attitude that’s positive, Responsibility. These ideals are taught to the children in the classroom and are rewarded through tickets they get from teachers and can submit in the office for the chance to win a prize. Kate utilizes this idea in her own classroom and has her own prize bucket. She also hands out stickers that the students may put on a sticker chart. When their chart is full, they get to draw from the prize bucket.

Kate also uses a stop light system. However, she has admitted to me that this is a technique that she implemented in the beginning of the year but has almost stopped using all together. She did not feel that it fit with this year’s students.

I also discussed with her, her overall expectations of her students. She said that her main goal for them is to show growth. However, she feels that this means different things for different students. She wants them all to grow a year’s growth, whatever that means for their own personal learning. She wants them to leave her classroom knowing they are a friend, citizen, and a student who loves school and loves to learn. She also wants them to believe in themselves. She feels that it is her job to help them develop their confidence and find who they are as a young member of this Earth.

In terms of keeping a safe school, the school has assemblies to discuss issues such as bullying. Teachers are given referral slips to administer if a child’s actions have warranted a
notice. They are expected to discuss the issue with the child, and if the action was severe enough, they will send a copy of the referral slip home and to the office.

Werner has a program to help with conflict management called “The Friendship Club”. It is run by the school psychologist and if a teacher feels a child needs more coaching on how to work with others, they will go to the friendship club once a week to learn how to better interact with peers. On a smaller scale, conflict resolution is seen as something the school wants teachers and parents to help children learn to cope with and work through. Teachers are expected to walk children through their argument if necessary or simply supervise the children working out their conflict together.

Students with special needs are all treated with the care they require. SST teams are formed for any child that the teachers feel needs extra attention. PERA professionals are sent into the classrooms to work with children who are in the mainstream classroom but still require one on one attention. Special Education teachers are present in the building to assist those students who are not in the mainstream rooms. In the classroom, tools are provided to help children who require different needs. Examples of these accommodations are things such as a large sitting ball in place of a chair, sticker charts, different colored paper for vision disabilities and larger rulers, pens and calculators for those who struggle with their fine motor skills.

Overall, Werner serves a higher income population of students in the Fort Collins area. Parents are very involved in the schools as well as volunteers from the community. The school has a school-wide behavioral expectation that allows the instruction and expectations of behavior in the building to be unified and clear. This helps children understand what is expected of them and they rise to meet these expectations.
Unit Topic and Rationale

The unit I taught focused on Dr. Seuss and my lessons centered around his books and his writing as well as his view of the world as he states it in his work. I selected this topic based on the fact that Werner Elementary honors Dr. Seuss’s birthday on March 2 every year. The school takes this week to discuss his literature and expose children to the deeper meanings in many of his books. I wanted to focus on this topic for another reason as well. My overall goal for this unit was for the children to think more critically about the lessons and morals in Dr. Seuss books and to then extend that thinking into how the message applies in their own life.

I began to meet this overall objective by carefully selecting the books I wanted to include in my unit. Finding books that spark creativity is not hard when looking at Dr. Seuss. Therefore, I focused more on those that had a message I believed my students could grasp and get excited about. I chose a book for each day of the week and centered the lessons around that book. These were: “Happy Birthday to You”, “The Lorax”, “Oh, The Places You’ll Go”, “Oh, The Thinks You Will Think” and “The Butter Battle”.

I was able to fit this unit into the second grade team’s curricular map because they had already made it a part of the yearly curriculum at the start of the year. From there, my task was to design lessons that encompassed the content standards. I included standards in Mathematics 4.2-Apply transformation to numbers, shapes functional representations and data. I also used standards in Reading, Writing and Communication 1.1-Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group’s attainment of an objective. 3.1-Implement the writing process successfully to plan, revise, and edit written work. 4.2-Discriminate and justify a position using traditional lines of rhetorical argument and reasoning. 2.3-Interpret how
the structure of written English contributes to the pronunciation and meaning of complex vocabulary. By focusing on these main areas in the Literacy standards, I was able to design relevant and detailed lesson plans and implement them successfully. The lessons required the students to think critically about the book we were reading and about questions I asked them and were then asked to create pieces of work showcasing their understanding of how it relates to their lives.

We discussed relevance on many terms. Our lesson focusing on “The Lorax” had the children gain a global appreciation for their environment and reflected on what their role is on this Earth in protecting it. When reading “Oh, The Places You’ll Go” the children were asked to reflect personally about their own life. Where they have come from, adversity they have faced, important events in their lives and where they hope to be in the future. Focusing on “Happy Birthday to You” allowed the students to connect with their own classroom population with their group share. They were encouraged to give input and feedback on their classmate’s work and after learning more about one another, they became a closer group of students. “The Butter Battle” required the students to connect on many levels both globally and personally. They were asked to think about arguments they have had and how they can better resolve them. This fostered healthy discussions about global arguments and teachers were able to guide these discussions to help the children understand better ways of conflict resolution.

Overall, these lessons and the standards they met fit very appropriately into the Werner Elementary curriculum and I was able to experience a blossoming of children’s excitement for writing and reading during this week.

**Unit Standards, Goals and Objectives**
Once I decided to design the Dr. Seuss unit, I had a ton of ideas about lessons I wanted to do with my students. About half way through designing them I realized I needed to set some over-arching goals for the unit and then tie my lessons into those goals. Although many of my lessons for the unit focus on the Literacy standards, I was still teaching all other subjects throughout the week. However, these did not fall into the Dr. Seuss unit. I taught daily math, social studies and science lessons as well. I also maintained read-aloud times, transitions, and specials.

Based on the individual needs of the students in the classroom, I was aware that they would all achieve the objectives I had set for them at very different skill levels. I knew that some would achieve very high performance marks and others would struggle to complete the tasks. This is why I designed many of my lessons to be individualized and open-ended. This allowed for all students to show me what they were capable of and then I could modify my expectations based on the child’s ability level.

Below I have listed my goals and objectives only for the lessons that I implemented in this unit. As stated, many other subjects were addressed, however, the topics were not appropriately aligned with the unit I was teaching.

**Goals and Objectives**

1. **Children will be able to expand their critical and creative thinking abilities.**
   a. Children will display their critical thinking skills through their writing by using descriptive language and quality responses.
   b. Children will be able to grow from thinking materialistically to thinking critically, meaningfully and creatively.
2. **Students will be able to utilize their imagination.**
   
a. Children will be able to take a thought they have created in their imagination and put it into clearly worded and understandable writing.
   
b. Children will be able to communicate their ideas both verbally and written to their peers in a group share environment.
   
c. Children will practice their fine motor skills in designing a 3 dimensional diorama to display their thoughts.
   
d. Children will use problem-solving techniques to learn how to attach objects such as a pipe cleaner to construction paper. They will have limited supplies and the process of attaching supplies to the paper will require perseverance and problem solving abilities.

3. **Students will be able to reflect on their past experiences and predict about their futures.**
   
a. Children will be able to get a prompt and reflect on their lives to find a situation they have experienced that fits into the prompt. The questions will be meaningful such as: something that has permanently changed their life; a time they have faced adversity, etc.
   
b. Children will be able to think about where they want their lives to go when they answer the question of: where do you want to be in the future?
   
c. Students will be able to utilize supplies given to them to create a road map of their life.

4. **Students will be able to create a fictional idea and attach a description to the idea to share with peers.**
   
a. Children will be able to use their creativity to invent an idea, or a “think” and create it visually on paper.
   
b. Children will design a function for this idea and put it into rhyme in writing.
c. Children will be able to develop their public speaking skills by sharing their rhyme with the class.

d. Students will relate to the technology in the classroom by presenting their ideas to the class using the document camera to display their final product.

5. **Students will be able to appreciate their planet’s environment and develop ways to participate in protecting it.**

   a. Children will be able to discuss and write ways that they feel they can protect the environment.

   b. Children will be able to properly format a letter including all essential components: heading, date, address, body and closing.

   c. Children will be able to appropriately identify 2/3rds of a cup and fill a cup that full with soil. They will plant a seed and water it to see if they can help it to grow.

   d. Children will be able to verbalize that a plant needs water, sunlight and soil to grow.

6. **Students will be able to develop their conflict resolution skills.**

   a. Children will be able to predict in a large group setting, an ending to the book “The Butter Battle” that involves a type of conflict resolution.

   b. Children will be able to discuss appropriate and inappropriate ways to solve problems and arguments.

7. **Students will be able to work as a team to complete one task.**

   a. Students will be able to work in pairs (one kindergartener and one second grader) and decide where they would eat green eggs and ham, if they would eat them at all.

   b. Students will be able to put these thoughts into writing and illustrations.
c. Students will work on their communications skills. Second graders will work on their leadership skills.

Below you will find a chart explaining how each of the above goals and objectives fit into the Colorado Department of Education Second grade standards for Literacy, Mathematic, Science and Technology.

**Goals and Objectives as They Relate to Standards**

**Goal 1:** Students will be able to expand their critical and creative thinking abilities.

*Standard: Literacy 1.1 Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group’s attainment of an objective.*

**Goal 2:** Students will be able to utilize their imagination.

*Standard: Literacy 1.1 Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group’s attainment of an objective.*

**Goal 3:** Students will be able to reflect on their past experiences and predict about their future.

*Standard: Literacy 3.2 Implement the writing process successfully to plan, revise and edit written work.*

**Goal 4:** Students will be able to create a fictional idea and attach a description to the idea to share with peers.
Standards: Literacy 4.2 Discriminate and justify a position using traditional lines of rhetorical argument and reasoning.

Literacy 2.3 Interpret how the structure of written English contributes to the pronunciation and meaning of complex vocabulary.

Goal 5: Students will be able to appreciate their planet’s environment and develop ways to participate in protecting it.

Standards: Literacy 3.1 Implement the writing process successfully to plan, revise, and edit written work.

Mathematics 4.1 Apply transformation to numbers, shapes, functional representations and data.

Science 2.1 Explain and illustrate with examples how living systems interact with the biotic and abiotic environment.

Goal 6: Students will be able to develop their conflict resolution skills.

Standard: Literacy 1.2 Demonstrate skill in inferential and evaluative learning.

Literacy 4.2 Demonstrate and justify a position using traditional lines of rhetorical argument and reasoning.

Goal 7: Students will be able to work as a team to create a task.

Standard: Literacy 1.1 Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group’s attainment of an objective.

**Assessment Tools (Pre-, Post, and Instructional)**
Kate’s classroom does a lot of different types of assessments strategies and utilizes many different assessment tools and approaches when deciding how effective a unit has been. Kate does a lot of daily assessments by using the Smart Board and putting up one or two questions and asking the kids to answer them. She then would ask them to give their answers to check in and see if they are grasping what she wanted them to or if she needed to review more in depth. She would also do a quick “think, pair, share” and as the kids would tell their neighbor the answer to whatever question was posed, she would go around the room and listen to see how they were understanding and articulating their ideas.

Kate also uses assessments that are more formal. One of these is the DRA assessment for literacy. I was able to administer these assessments in past placements and gain some experience in how to grade this type of assessment. She also uses the school wide computerized assessment tool for literacy called the AR (accelerated reader) assessment. They are tests that the students can chose to take after they have finished reading a book. They enter in the book title and the computer presents them with a comprehensive assessment of the story. Then they are given a score based in percentages.

For my unit, I completed both a pre and post assessments for the overall unit. I asked the children to address a journal prompt both before the unit began and afterwards to assess if their opinions and critical thinking skills were more developed after the unit.

I also completed assessment methods throughout the unit at the end of each lesson. I used many different assessment strategies including: peer discussions in a whole group setting; think, pair, shares; reflection and grading of their end products; having their peers review their work and give their opinions on the end results of the product; assessing their work based on a written
rubric and through asking them to present their products in verbal presentation in front of the group.

The lessons I designed all have their own unique assessments as well as their own focus objectives. However, they all focus on my goal of having them develop their critical and creative thinking skills through being challenges to think about the deeper messages in Dr. Seuss’s writing. His books are fun and creative and clever in rhyme. However, they are also very thought provoking if the readers is asked to think about the deeper messages in the book. This is the underlying goal of all of my lessons without making it overly clear to the students that this is what my goal is. The reason I have individual goals and this one is because I want to see what the children truly learned and turned into a skill they will chose to utilize in the lessons instead of using it only because they know I want them to. If they have to really think about their critical and creative thinking than I do not believe they really got a deeper skill set from my lessons. However, if they do this without knowing that they are doing it, I will know my unit was successful.

**Instruction and Management Plan**

I decided upon the organization of my unit based on a few factors. One, was the idea that I should plan certain lessons such as the read-a-thon on the day of Dr. Seuss’s birthday to honor his life. Other factors included the desire to start with an abstract lesson to assess where they will start without a week’s worth of lessons involving critical thinking skills. That is why I began after my pre assessment with the “Thinks you can think” lesson.

I picked a book per day because I had to balance my time between literacy lessons and all the other subject matter needing to be covered. I also picked to do one book per day because I wanted the students to be able to focus on one idea per day.
All of my lessons focus on different objectives. However, there was one underlying goal between them all: develop their critical and creative thinking skills. To add to this, I wanted the children to not be very aware that this is the overall goal because that allowed for me to truly assess their newly developed skills. However, the children were told about the goal in the very beginning as well as they had the daily lesson objectives stated clearly for them each day.

Since my unit focused on mainly literacy components, I found ways to integrate numeracy as well as technology. In one of my lessons, I included standards addressing fractions. In other lessons I will use the document camera, Smart Board and the children will be required to use these as well. I also consider any supplies that we use in our lessons as a more traditional form of technology.

I will also be implementing different teaching strategies throughout my unit. I will be completing direct instruction, which I feel is necessary to give instruction for a lesson. I will be making and displaying examples for each activity to give them a benchmark. I will tell the children before each lesson that my examples are basic. I will tell them that I expect them to exceed my example so that they do not simply mimic what I have made. I will be expecting them to discuss as a group and in pairs as a type of teaching strategy. It will also keep them engaged. A third instructional strategy I used was through the use of asking questions. I believe the children will learn and answer their own questions through answering my questions of them.

Below you will find the lessons I implemented during my Dr. Seuss unit.

February 27, 2012

Grade Level:  Second grade  
Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communicating  
Unit: Dr. Seuss  
Content Standard: 1.1 Discussions contribute and expand on the ideas of self and others.  
Essential Questions: What is the most important thing to do to ensure people understand a presentation?  
Understandings: The use of precise language is important when communicating with others to clearly express an idea.  
Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Good communicators choose their words carefully.
Activity Name: Pre Assessment

Immediate Objectives: Students should be able to address the prompt given, in a journal that will show their critical thinking skills before the unit begins.

Format: Individual

Materials: Children's journals, pencil, prompt types on the document camera.

Procedure: Step 1: Ask the children to take out their journals when they come in in the morning.
Step 2: Put the following prompt on the board: You are asked to fill a box with five of your most meaningful possessions or memories. What do you fill it with and why?
Step 3: Allow 20 minutes for this prompt to be written.
Step 4: Collect the journals and review them. I am looking to see if their answers are more materialistic such as "my Wii" or have they put more of a creative, deeper answer down?

To simplify: Discuss the children's ideas aloud with them but do not give too much prompting. I want to see what they answer on their own.
For David: encourage him to write as much as he can. However, if he will not write, scribe for him, anything he will tell you.

To extend: Again, I want to see what they are capable of. This prompt should allow them to extend the lesson for themselves.

Management Strategies: Put a timer up on the Smart Board for the 20 minutes so that they will be able to see how much time is left in the activity. Give warnings at the 5 minutes, 2 minutes and 1 minute marks.

Method of Assessment: Pre assessment- I am looking for the quality of their answers. I want to see deep and meaningful responses. I have created a rubric that allows me to grade their work based on the following criteria: thoughtful responses, creative thinking and following the prompt.
Reflection: The timer was something that went well. It helped the kids keep track of their time. All of the children presented with my predicted assumption of what I would find in their journal entrees. I got a variety of answers such as "my Wii" "my dog" "my bike" "my hair brush" and similar comments. These were the results I was hoping to have so that I can see just how much growth they make in their deeper thinking skills. Next time I would give them a second prompt to work on when they finished to keep from unused time.

February 27, 2012

Grade Level: Second                      Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communicating
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: Standard 4.2- Discriminate and justify a position using traditional lines of rhetorical argument and reasoning.
2.3 Interpret how the structure of written English contributes to the pronunciation and meaning of complex vocabulary.
Essential Questions: Consider this reasoning from the point of view of someone new. What would be your opinion?
Understandings: Questions are essential to analyze and evaluate the quality of thinking.
Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Understand that for thinking to improve, it is necessary to ask critical questions.

be able to use creative and descriptive language in their writing. They will also be expected to attempt to make their writing rhyme to mimic the work of Dr. Seuss.

Format: Whole Group

Materials: The book "Oh the thinks you’ll think", paper with half lines and a space for illustrations, crayons and pencils.

Procedure: Step 1: From 8:50-9:20am read "Oh the thinks you’ll think" out loud. 9:20 Language workshop kids leave.
Step 2: 9:20-9:50 Discuss what they will be making. Talk about what we read in the story. What were Dr. Seuss's "thinks" like? What made his writing very descriptive? Ask them for some examples of descriptive adjectives and write them on the board for spelling help.
Step 3: Pass out lined papers and tell the students that they have until 9:50 but that they will be allowed much more time later in the day. They are to start with an idea sheet. A rough draft if they finish their ideas. They will be asked to create a "think". A think can be anything their imaginations can create. They will illustrate their thinks and write a rhyme to go along with it. They must have at least two-three sentences minimum of rhyme.
After this they will be asked to write anything else about their think. What does it do? Why is this important? Etc.
Show your example.
Step 4: From 10:30-11am Allow the students to write their “thinks”.
Step 5: From 11-11:45 Allow the students to present and share their thinks to the class. They will be required to use the document camera to do this.
Step 6: If there is extra time they will need to continue any unfinished work from the previous week.

To simplify: If this activity is too advanced I will start by just talking with the student about any creative ideas he has. Or any questions the student has about anything. This conversation may spark some creative ideas and from there the student should be able to write their thoughts down.
For David: Encourage the writing process before the rhyming process if he struggles to understand this concept. I want him to write anything compared to nothing (which is typical).

To extend: If this activity is too easy, I will ask them to expand their “think”. What does it do? Did creating this new “think” spark any questions or curiosities? If so, I will help the student find resources that can help them get their questions answered.
For Sam: Encourage her to work at expanding her rhyming more than a few sentences. She usually stops when she thinks she has done enough. Ask her to expand even further.

Management Strategies: Give out the final paper for the kids to write on after checking their rough drafts.

Method of Assessment: I will be able to see their writing and if the students were able to write a descriptive and creative idea I will know that they were able to understand the activity. I want to see an attempt at rhyming as well as a presentation of their idea using the document camera.

Reflection: The sharing process went very well. The children were asked to use the document camera to share their rhymes and explain their illustrations. They were required to adjust the focus of the camera and use the technology appropriately. They were all very focused on their work and they put in time and effort to create their products. Next time, I would want to send the works into the school to display them instead of only displaying them in the classroom. I feel this would instill more pride in the work for the students.
February 28, 2012

Grade Level: Second  
Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communication

Unit: Dr. Seuss

Content Standard: 3.2 Implement the writing process successfully to plan, revise, and edit written work.

Essential Questions: Why is it important to writers to know who will be reading their work?

Understandings: Writers use their own experiences in their writing to make connections.

Writers reread and revise while drafting.

Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Organize ideas using a variety of pictures, graphic organizers or lists.

**Activity Name:** Oh, The Places We’ll Go

**Immediate Objectives:** Students should be able to write about their past, where they are currently in life and about where they want to be in the future. They should be able to think more deeply about experiences in their lives and put this into their road map.
Format: Whole Group

Materials: Black and yellow construction paper, scissors, white paper and pencils or markers and glue.

Step 2: Discuss the main points of the book, what is the moral? What did he want you to learn?
Step 3: Show your example
Step 4: Allow for some time to have them go through a rough draft.
Step 5: Allow them time to complete the final papers and putting their roads together.

To simplify: If this activity is to complicated I will refer them to my example and ask them to verbalize their ideas first and then they should more easily be able to develop these ideas into writing.
For David: Allow him to work at his own pace. Only ask for one piece of the map at a time so that he does not become overwhelmed. He should only write on his final draft because he will not complete the assignment if he must copy from a rough draft.

To extend: If the activity is too easy I will have them think more about the lessons the events they are writing about taught them. How were they affected?
For Sam: How can she expand her creative thinking into the map itself? Her writing will be very detailed. Challenge her to expand her ability into the artistic realm.

Management Strategies: Make sure that there are plenty of materials such as scissors and glue to allow all children to have enough time to work without waiting for supplies.

Method of Assessment: I will see if the children were able to recall information as well as complete a future prediction for their future and to put this into words. I will see if they were able to think critically about the questions instead of giving basic answers. I will also have them complete a peer assessment by showing their work to their neighbor and they will be asked to discuss their thoughts on the events their peer chose to write about. This will cause them to reflect on their own work as well as the work of their peers.

Reflection: This was one of my most successful lessons. The children really impressed me and the other teachers in the second grade team with their end products. One student decided to create a speed bump on her road near the question that asked about a time she had faced adversity. Another student created a forked road. This was when I started to see a deeper level of thinking in the students. The discussions we had before beginning the activity and after reading the book was wonderful. I was able to hear their thoughts about all the hidden meanings in the book. Next time, I would let them display their work sooner. I did display them inside the school but not until the following week due to a lack of space.
Activity Name: Your Birthday In Katroo

Grade Level: Second                  Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communication
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: 1.1 Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.
Essential Questions: Why is it important to use precise vocabulary in communication? How do people connect new words to things that are important to them? What is the most important thing to do to ensure people understand a presentation.
Understandings: Good communicators choose their words carefully.
Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Discussions contribute and expand on the ideas of self and others.
Immediate Objectives: Students will be able to create a scene in their dioramas both 2D and 3D that is similar to the concepts expressed in the book. They will also be able to design their own world and describe their birthday scene in writing using many adjectives.

Format: Whole Group

Materials: Construction paper, pipe cleaners, pom poms, glue, scissors, markers, sequins and yarn.

Procedure: Step 1: Read the book “Happy Birthday to You” aloud.
Step 2: Discuss the main points of the book. What makes them, them? Discuss the importance of adjectives. Complete adjective examples with them on the board.
Step 3: Show your example and explain how to cut the paper. Remind them that they need to draw before they glue.
Step 4: Allow for some time to have them go through a rough draft. Check for many adjectives in their writing.
Step 5: Allow them time to complete their final diorama and if there is time, allow them to display them on their desks and give time for a walk-around share.

To simplify: If this activity is too complicated I will refer them to my example and ask them to verbalize their ideas first and then they should more easily be able to develop these ideas into writing. I will discuss adjectives with them and have them create some of their own.
For David: he will not want to write very much since this is his least favorite subject. He tends to speak less during writing activities so sit with him and discuss a world about Zooegoop (his hamster, and best friend). This should get him more excited to design the writing and drawings.

To extend: If the activity is too easy I will have them attempt to rhyme their writing as well since we worked on rhyming on Monday.
For Sam: she will want to discuss more than what the prompt is asking. Make sure to concentrate her focus when she shows you her rough draft. That way, you will be able to help her stay focused.

Management Strategies: Only put out a certain amount of supplies so that they children do not use more than they need. That way, if a child really does need more of a material, you can get it for them.

Method of Assessment: I will see if the children were able to complete a 3D diorama and include many adjectives in their writing. I will be comparing their answers in the beginning of the lesson when we discuss what an adjective is to their final result. These will be the
pre and post assessments to assess whether or not they are able to think abstractly about the idea of creating their own world, as well as describe it using strong vocabulary.

Reflection: This activity was one that the kids really enjoyed. They produced decent products and spent a lot of time on them. However, next time I would do this lesson in two stages. I would do the writing in one part and then once I felt confident they were as good as they can make them, I would allow them to create the 3D aspect of the activity.

March 1, 2012

Grade Level: Second      Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communication
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: Literacy 3.1 Implement the writing process successfully to plan, revise, and edit written work.
Mathematics 4.2 Apply transformation to numbers, shapes, functional representations and data.
Science 2.1 Explain and illustrate with examples how living systems interact with the biotic and abiotic environment.
Essential Questions: How do planning frames help writers as they write a story? What are the basic needs for plants and animals?
Understandings: Use knowledge of structure and other crafts of various forms of communication to learn and share information.
Activity Name: My Promise to Mother Nature

Immediate Objectives: Students will be able to achieve three different objectives. One, they will be able to write a properly formatted letter describing how they promise to help the Earth. Two, they will be able to plant a seed in their potted cups applying fractions to decide how much soil to use. Three, they should be able to describe verbally that their seeds will need soil, sunlight and water to grow.

Format: Whole Group


Procedure: Step 1: Read the book “The Lorax” aloud.
Step 2: Discuss what happened in the book. Ask them (before reading the last page) what they think the word “unless” means in the story. Have them make predictions about what the boy will do. What can they do to help?
9:20am Language Workshop kids leave
Step 3: Show your example and discuss parts of a letter: Dear____, a date, Sincerely, etc.
Step 4: Allow for some time to have them go through a rough draft.
Step 5: Once they have a well-formulated rough draft allow them to write their final copy and stress the importance of neat handwriting. Stop them around 10:30.
Step 6: Show by example how they are going to plant their seeds. This should take about ten minutes (about 10:50 including example time). Dismiss one table team at a time. Give all the other students an activity sheet to complete while they wait to be called. Ask them to fill their cup with soil 2/3rds of the way full. Observe if they complete this task or if they require scaffolding. If they require help, break the cup into 3 pieces and show them what 2 of those 3 would look like.
Step 7: At 10:50/11am put in the 1st episode of Fort Collins history and pass out note taking packet. This can bring them to lunch but if it goes quickly, work on the Fort Collins packet as a class.
To simplify: If this activity it too complicated I will have them discuss their ideas with me first to get them thinking. The children in this classroom seem to respond positively if you allow them to verbalize their feelings before asking them to put them onto paper.
For David: He will not want to follow such strict guidelines of writing the letter. Focus on having him write the content and then help him scribe the headings if necessary. Ask him to tell you what to write.

To extend: If this activity is too easy, I will have them add examples into their writing to say things such as when they will start their ideas to help the Earth and how they are going to involve their families.
For Sam: Ask her to challenge her thinking beyond the ideas that come to her easily. What else can she think about to help the environment?

Management Strategies: Pull only one to three students away at a time to plant so that I do not get overwhelmed by too many children all at once in a small area in the back of the room.

Method of Assessment: I will be able to read their letters and see if their format is correct and if they wrote about the prompt. I also will ask them if they can show me 2/3rds on the pot. Then I will ask them to fill it to 2/3rds full. This will be my pre and post assessment to assess if the understand the math concept of a fraction representing 2/3rds. They will also be able to verbalize that plants need water, sunlight and soil to grow.

Reflection: This activity showed room for improvement. Next time, I would want to review the parts of a letter better. I should have had my example up on the document camera instead of just showing it during my explanation of the assignment. However, the planting went very smoothly. I was able to easily see which students did and didn't understand the concept of 2/3rds fractions. Almost all of the children except four guessed about where 2/3rds would be. This allowed me to understand that they need more fraction review in their math classes. They were all able to tell me what their plants will need to live.

March 2, 2012

Grade Level: Second Grade Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communication
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: 1.2 Demonstrate skill in inferential and evaluative learning.
4.2 Demonstrate and justify a position using traditional lines of rhetorical argument and reasoning.
Essential Questions: Consider this reading from the point of view of someone new. What would be your opinion?
What does it mean to be fair minded?
Do people learn more from talking or listening?
Understandings: Communicators check their personal thinking to ensure other points of view are considered fairly.
**Activity Name:** The Butter Battle

**Immediate Objectives:** Children should be able to work together and think critically about how to solve an argument. They should also be able to relate to one of the book’s characters and gain a new point of view for perspective taking skills to be developing.

**Format:** Whole Group

**Materials:** The book “The Butter Battle”, six jars/Tupperware, heavy whipping cream, bread, many varieties of Dr. Seuss books, pillows and blankets (kids can bring from home).

**Procedure:**

Step 1: Talk about conflict resolution. What are good ways of resolving conflict? What are some ways that do not work as well?

Step 2: Read the book “The Butter Battle”.

Step 3: Discuss how they think the battle will end. What can the characters in the book do to solve their arguments? The book ends on a cliffhanger so it will be up to the students to predict the outcome of the story.

Step 4: Send the kids to their table teams and pass out the containers and whipping cream. Set the timer for one minute and have the first child shake the container as hard as they can. When the minute is up reset the timer and have them pass to the next student. The first team to make the liquid turn to butter “wins”.

Step 5: Pass out a piece of bread and allow the kids to butter their bread.

Step 6: Allow them to find a spot in the room and curl up with books they brought or that are in the classroom. They may eat their toast while we have a Dr. Seuss read-a-thon to honor his birthday.

**To simplify:** If the children are struggling to understand the idea of solving a conflict, have their peers give their ideas. Then come back to the students who were struggling and ask them again. If they are still confused, run through a role-play example with students to give kids a visual example.

For David: Encourage him to discuss his ideas with his peers.
To extend: Ask the students to think about a time that they have had a disagreement with a friend. How did they handle it? Now picture that they are one of the book characters. How are you going to solve this argument? For Sam: Ask her to facilitate and mediate conversation with her peers. This will allow her to participate in a leadership role.

Management Strategies: Discuss my expectations of them very clearly in the beginning of the lesson. Set the consequence that if they are not responsible with the materials while making butter, they will be done with the activity. This should keep them engaged but appropriately.

Method of Assessment: The pre assessment will be to discuss their ideas of conflict resolution before reading the story. The post assessment will be to discuss after the story in a group about what they think now. I am looking for thoughtful and realistic ideas about conflict resolution strategies.

Reflection: The students took very well to this lesson. They had very good conflict resolution skills as well as took the butter battle very seriously. They had fun with it but they were respectful of the tools we used. The best part of the lesson was that while they were shaking the butter, I ended up hearing them discuss the book's possible ending. Because it ends on a cliffhanger, they were able to use their imaginations to debate with one another about how they thought the characters would resolve their argument. Next time, I may try to implement a literacy aspect to further this discussion.

March 2, 2012

Grade Level: Second Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communication
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: 1.1 Collaborate effectively as group members or leaders who listen actively and respectfully pose thoughtful questions, acknowledge the ideas of others, and contribute ideas to further the group's attainment of an objective.
Essential Questions: Why is it important to use precise vocabulary in communication? How do people connect new words to things that are important to them? What is the most important thing to do to ensure people understand a presentation.
Understandings: Good communicators choose their words carefully.
Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Discussions contribute and expand on the ideas of self and others.

Activity Name: Green Eggs and Ham Book Buddies
Immediate Objectives: Students should be able to discuss, write and illustrate where and when they would, or would not eat green eggs and ham.

Format: Whole Group/Book Buddies

Procedure: Step 1: Remind the kindergarteners that it is Dr. Seuss week and Dr. Seuss's birthday.
Step 2: Play Tim Tebow's reading of Green Eggs and Ham from YouTube.
Step 3: Give students paper and markers. Allow them the rest of the time to say if they would eat green eggs and ham or not. If they would, where would they eat them? If not, why not? Kindergarteners can illustrate and 2nd graders can write.
Step 4: If they finish early they may grab a Dr. Seuss book and read together.

To simplify: If this is too difficult I will encourage the 2nd graders to try to help their kindergartener think up creative ideas.
For David: Monitor he and his partner closely to help with the language difficulty they will have if he choses not to talk.

To extend: If this is too simple, I will challenge them to try to make their explanation rhyme.
For Sam: Put her near a team pair that may struggle so that she can assist them. This gives her another chance to explore a leadership role.

Management Strategies: Inform both Kate and the kindergarten teacher about the goals of this assignment so that they are in the loop about how best to guide the children in the activity. Also, be sure to check with the kindergarten teacher that she has created her partner pairs for that week ahead of trying to divide the kids up into their pairs.

Method of Assessment: I will be able to tell whether or not they understood the assignment if they were able to answer the prompt in their writing and to match their illustrations to it.

Reflection: This was a very fun activity. The second grade and kindergartners worked very well together. I believe it helped that they were used to book buddies since they do it once a month. They became very engaged when we put on the YouTube clip. They all knew who Tim Tebow was and that made it exciting for them. Next time, I would try to make more documentation while observing their interactions. I would like to implement the clipboard behavioral suggestion given to me by Jody Drager. This would have been a great lesson to do this in and then I could have tested the behavioral technique.
March 2, 2012

Activity Name: Post Assessment

Immediate Objectives: Students should be able to address the prompt given, in a journal that will show their critical thinking skills before the unit begins.

Format: Individual

Materials: Children’s journals, pencil, prompt types on the document camera.

Procedure: Step 1: Ask the children to take out their journals when they come in in the morning.
Step 2: Put the following prompt on the board: You are asked to fill a box with five of your most meaningful possessions or memories. What do you fill it with and why?
Step 3: Allow 20 minutes for this prompt to be written.
Step 4: Collect the journals and review them. I am looking to see if their answers are more materialistic such as “my Wii” or have they put more of a creative, deeper answer down? Have they expanded from the first journal entry with this prompt?
Step 5: Review with them, their answers from the first time they saw this prompt to now. What changed in their thinking/answers? This is a whole group activity so they will hear the thoughts of their classmates.

Grade Level: Second grade
Curricular Domain: Reading, Writing and Communicating
Unit: Dr. Seuss
Content Standard: 1.1 Discussions contribute and expand on the ideas of self and others.
Essential Questions: What is the most important thing to do to ensure people understand a presentation?
Understandings: The use of precise language is important when communicating with others to clearly express an idea.
Knowledge/skills (Evidence Outcomes): Good communicators choose their words carefully.
To simplify: Discuss the children's ideas aloud with them but do not give too much prompting. I want to see what they answer on their own.

For David: Scribe for him if necessary but encourage him to write.

To extend: Again, I want to see what they are capable of. This prompt should allow them to extend the lesson for themselves.

Management Strategies: Put a timer up on the Smart Board counting down the 20 minutes. This way the children will be familiar with the idea of the timer (since Kate does this) and they will know how much time is left to complete their thoughts. Also, give them warnings at the 5 minutes, 2 minutes and 1 minute marks.

Method of Assessment: Post assessment- I am looking for the quality of their answers to include more of a critical thinking skill. I want to see if the lessons we have been completing throughout the week have helped them expand the way they think about their world and their life. I want to see that their thought process has deepened throughout the week and after completing lessons and having discussions about Dr. Seuss's work. I will grade their work based on the same rubric as the pre assessment.

Reflections: The post assessment was very successful. After a week's worth of lessons being asked to think deeply, creatively, and to search for more meaningful answers, the students showed much more thoughtful responses when asked the prompt for the second time. I did preface the assignment by telling them that they could say the same answers as they did the first time I asked them to write about it. A few students did repeat a few of the same things. However, every student responded with more of a critical view on the prompt. One answer consisted of the following answer: “I would put my family in the box, it could be a really big box, I would put my whole house in it so no one would be homesick”. The children's more thoughtful answers meant that my lessons were effective. I found that most children also wrote more the second time around.

Assessment Data and Analysis
For my Dr. Seuss unit, I designed a rubric to assess and grade the students on their work for the pre and post assessment lessons. I designed the rubric on a number scale to allow for clear comparisons to be made among students for my data. The rubric addressed the target objective of
the unit: for children to develop more extensively, their critical and creative thinking skills.

Below you will find a copy of the rubric I used to grade the children’s work:

Pre and Post Assessment Rubric

1. Child was able to address the prompt appropriately and stay on point in their answer _____
2. Child demonstrated the use of creative thinking skills in their responses based on the depth and meaning written in their answer _____
3. Child’s work showed clear effort to use critical thinking skills to address the prompt through use of descriptive language and modified answers from the pre assessment based in terms of rational for their reasons _____
4. Child justified their reasoning for their answers in their journal entry _____

1- did not attempt  2- basic skills (below grade level ability) 3- developing skills (at grade level but lacking in necessary details) 4- expected skills (grade level) 5- advanced skills

I have created visuals to display the results of the rubric grading for both the pre and post assessments. Overall, the class showed great improvement. The growth of ability in the week was very impressive. The X-axis represents the rubric score given from 1-5. The Y-axis represents the number of children who received each score. The charts are broken down by question. Pre and post assessment scores are differentiated by color in each graph.

Rubric Question 1 Results (Appendix 1)

Question: Child was able to address the prompt appropriately and stay on point in their answer.
The individual results for this question were: Pre assessment: zero children scored a 1, 1 child scored a 2, 12 children scored a 3, 5 children scored a 4 and 4 children scored a 5. Post assessment: zero children scored a 1, 1 child scored a 2, 3 children scored a 3, 15 children scored a 4 and 4 children scored a 5.

As a class, the majority shifted from a score of a 3 to a score of a 4 showing improvement overall. Although a 4 is considered to be grade level expectations, they still showed growth in the way that they were not showing ability at grade level in the pre assessment.

Rubric Question 2 Results (Appendix 2)

Question: Child demonstrated the use of creative thinking skills in their response based on the depth and meaning written in their answer. I am looking for rational behind their answers. I do not consider a materialistic answer creative thinking unless well reasoned.
The individual results for this question were: Pre assessment: zero children scored a 1, 3 children scored a 2, 19 children scored a 3, 1 child scored a 4, and zero children scored a 5. Post assessment: zero children scored a 1, zero children scored a 2, 6 children scored a 3, 11 children scored a 4 and 6 children scored a 5.

Overall, the class showed the most growth moving from a majority scoring a 3 to either a 4 or a 5 in the post assessment.

Rubric Question 3 Results (Appendix 3)

Question: Child’s work showed clear effort to use critical thinking skills to address the prompt through use of descriptive language and modified their answers from the pre assessment based in terms of rational for their reasons.
The individual results for this question were: pre assessment: zero children scored a 1, 12 children scored a 2, 6 children scored a 3, 5 children scored a 4 and zero children scored a 5. Post assessment: zero children scored a 1, 1 child scored a 2, 5 children scored a 3, 10 children scored a 4 and 7 children scored a 5.

Overall this question showed the most improvement as a class. The majority of scores pre assessment were a 2 and post assessment, most of the class was scoring at an expected level or an advanced level.

Rubric Question 4 Results (Appendix 4)

Question: Children justified their reasoning in their journal entry.
The individual results for this question were: pre assessment: zero children scored a 1, 8 children scored a 2, 9 children scored a 3, 6 children scored a 4 and zero children scored a 5. Post assessment: zero children scored a 1, 5 children scored a 2, 9 children scored a 3, 5 children scored a 4 and 4 children scored a 5.

Overall, this question had the least fluctuation in scores. However, the class as a whole did improve their scores by 3 children.

Across the board, based on my rubric assessments, this unit was very successful in obtaining its’ objective. All four rubric areas showed improvement throughout the classroom. Another important note to make is that no child moved down a score from their pre assessment to the post assessment. The data shows that not only did students improve, but also they improved in specific ways. The unit we addressed throughout the week developed more of their creative, critical and explanatory thinking skills. The post assessment results showed more intelligent comments, more outside the box thinking, and less materialistic answers that were not clarified with reasons why they would chose those things to put in their box.
Evidence supporting my findings are found below in commentary from the children.

Pre assessment: “I would put in the box, my Wii games to play on the Wii. Also my pokemon cards and some fruit roll ups.”

“I would put food in it because I would get hungry. I would put my favorite toys in it and games”

“I would put pictures of my family because then if I missed them, I could look at the pictures. I would also put my favorite books and my friendship bracelet kit in the box.”

Post assessment: “I would put many things in the box. I would put my dog in the box because she is old and may die soon. I would take my best friend Claire so we could play together and my Mommy and Daddy.”

“I would take Zooegoop. She would play and eat the box”

“I would take my football so I could play catch with anyone I was with. I would take money incase I needed to buy things”.

The difference between these statements from pre to post assessment is more detailed writing in the way that for that child, they grew in their response. Whether that meant writing more than a word or two (as was the case for the child writing the 5th statement shown) or if they suddenly thought more about the possibilities of the box. They changed it to be a box that could fit their friends, pets and family inside. This was perhaps the biggest change I saw in their answers. The box was suddenly whatever size they needed it to be to fit important things in. This meant that the thinking went beyond their material possessions or food (it was near snack time).

The fact that the box size changed in many of their heads showed me that the Dr. Seuss books had an impact on their thinking. In his books, Dr. Seuss used his imagination to create
people, creatures, buildings, cars and more. After a week of reading, discussing and creating activities around these books and his ideas, the children showed an adaptation of their thinking and displayed it in their writing.

A strength to my assessment plan was that it was in a short period of time so I can assume reasonably that their growth in ability is related to my unit and not just overall academic development. Another strength was that it is a creative assignment. Therefore, the children were allowed to use their imagination to make their case. I believe these types of lessons always create more student engagement.

A weakness to my assessment plan is that the children had seen the prompt before. Even though they were told that they could use the same answers again, there is still the fact that they were given time in the week to think about it, simply because they had been exposed to it.

Overall, I believe that the data supports a successful lesson plan and unit. The data shows class as well as individual improvement and the objectives were met.

**Student Teaching Experience Reflection**

When I began my first day of student teaching at Werner Elementary School I was feeling many different emotions. I was excited to meet the students and to be in the environment I am most looking forward to working in; happy to be getting a chance to show myself what I am really capable of in a classroom; nervous to meet all the staff members as well as curious if I would fit in with them; and a little overwhelmed by the work load I knew I had ahead of me. On my last day I felt very sad that this wonderful experience was over. I was feeling so comfortable in my role as lead teacher and I felt like I belonged in the school. To have the experience end so quickly was disappointing, and left me wanting more. I wanted to explore more with the students, learn more from my mentor teacher, and really, just loved my job and did not want it to
end. I felt touched by all the hand-made cards and hugs I received. Having to leave all the people I met in the nine weeks definitely brought out a few tears on the car ride home. Lastly, I felt confident in my teaching abilities and solid in my beliefs about education. Most of all, I felt ready and excited to have my own classroom.

Classroom Management

One of my biggest goals for my student teaching experience was to become more effective at classroom management. I have been in many school settings before and I have seen good classroom management styles and chaotic ones. I have seen firsthand how much more learning can occur in a classroom with a teacher who can provide structure and organization to her teaching style and how much harder it can be to facilitate good learning if there is not this structure in the class. After seeing how important this component is to a classroom, I made it a goal with my mentor teacher Kate to feel more comfortable with my ability to run a classroom.

Kate and I have slightly different management styles but our beliefs about teaching aligned well. Therefore, I was able to observe her way of managing her classroom and take from it what I felt comfortable with and she was very supportive of having me explore my own style, which allowed me to express my own ideas as well.

Having been in many practicum and employment settings before, I was familiar with some of the general “attention getters” that many teachers use. Some examples I came in having already experienced were “1-2-3, eyes on me” then the children echo “1-2, eyes on you”. Another was “if you can hear me clap three times… if you can hear me clap five times…” and so on until you have the children’s attention. I had also seen modeled for me when a teacher dismisses children from a whole group activity by naming things they are wearing, “you may go sit down if you are wearing red”.

However, over my time at Werner, I learned more techniques that really helped me grow in my ability to manage my classroom. Some of these were spoken. One example was when I implemented the “wait and see” technique. This would be used when we were at read aloud and the kids got too wild during a book. I would stop reading and just put the book down in my lap and wait for their reactions. Usually, the children paying attention to the story would remind the others to be quiet.

I also became very good at being able to stop at the end of a sentence while reading, say a child’s name that needed refocusing, give them direction, and continue with the book. One time I used this successfully went as follows: two boys were playing with the books that were leaned against the wall instead of listening to the story. I warned them once by simply saying their names. When they continued to play a few minutes later I stopped reading, and said “Joe and Carl, when I am reading my expectation of you is that you are sitting crisscross and listening. If you cannot focus while sitting near the books I expect you to move your bodies”. Then I went back to reading. The boys needed no further warnings.

Some of the techniques I started to master were unspoken. One big thing I have taken away from the experience was finding my “teacher presence” in the room. I am now able to “feel” when I am starting to lose the children’s attention and I shift gears. I have stopped for movement breaks in the middle of a lesson, I have made jokes to get them re-engaged and more. I have found the fine line between friend, and friendly teacher and I have found both my teacher voice and my teacher looks. All things that seem small and simple to think about, but I really learned how to use them all appropriately to keep a structured and fun classroom environment.
Throughout my time at Werner, I definitely found my “teacher presence” in the classroom. I feel confident that I reached my goal of becoming more effective at managing a classroom and I feel very capable of having my own classroom.

**Planning and Implementing Lessons**

I was able to complete an entire unit on Dr. Seuss during my time in the classroom. In addition to this unit, I also implemented a lot of daily lessons on whatever topic Kate was covering that week. I had implemented lesson plans in the past but it was always one at a time and I was only in the classroom for a few hours a week. Once I decided what my unit was going to focus on, the actual lesson planning came relatively easy to me since I had had a lot of practice planning lessons in the past. I enjoyed getting to think about what I wanted the students to take away from my lesson and since it was Dr. Seuss, I was able to really tap into their creativity.

The student teaching experience was very beneficial in the way that I was able to experience teaching lessons back to back including transitions and needing to watch the clock to see if they needed to go to lunch or specials. This was the most valuable aspect of getting to implement lessons. I had many days where I would look up at the clock and realize how late it had gotten and we would need to pause our work and transition to specials or recess. Kate made me feel better about this happening when she told me that she still does that at times and it usually means all the kids are really engaged. After reflecting on this issue, I realized I may need to set alarms for myself as a new teacher to get into the routine of transitioning.

**Paperwork, Meetings, Parents and Assessment**

I had always heard of how many hours teachers put in off the clock, but this was never more of a reality for me than during my student teaching. I learned how to time manage very
well over the nine weeks I was teaching and Kate really helped me remember to keep balance in my life. I started very ambitious in the way of taking home close to a dozen textbooks that Kate had with full intention of reading through them. Kate began to joke that I would walk sideways because of how heavy my bag was. It was after about two weeks of not having enough time to review all the books that I learned to prioritize. This became a personal goal of mine; to work on creating a balance between my work life and my personal life. I learned to look at books during my lunch hour or when the kids were silent reading. I would also grade papers during these times so that I had less to take home with me. I spent a lot of time grading papers. It made me question how much homework I will want to send home as a teacher and it made me also think about which homework assignments were valuable and which were just filler.

Once I got a good handle on my time management, I learned to take home the things that I enjoyed like lesson planning and keeping the less desirable tasks such as grading at work. This helped me keep a balance between my work and personal life.

I was very new to going to meetings with staff and parents. I was able to experience an SST meeting about a student in Kate’s class. It involved Kate, her SST team including: five other teachers, a school therapist, a language specialist and myself, as well as the child’s parents (only his mother was able to attend the meeting). I participated mostly as an observer in the meeting. However, I was able to give my advice at one point when his mother asked how my interactions with him had been. I was able to see that they use data programs to record his daily progress as well as all of Kate’s daily observations of him and his behavior. This was very good to see how data can be used for individual students instead of as a whole class or school.

I have been lucky enough to hold positions in my past where I have worked with parents on a daily basis. Because of this experience, I felt comfortable talking with parents. I was able to
experience a parent who was very upset with a situation involving her child. She came in without warning Kate and wanted to discuss why her child was not in the Gifted and Talented program. It became a very tense meeting because she was very frustrated and I could tell Kate was working to keep calm. This had been an issue between this family and the school for months and the amount of conversations about it only increased. I stepped in at one point because I had administered the Gifted and Talented assessment to him and she decided I was not qualified to do this. I explained that the woman in charge of the assessments had said it was fine because I was simply supervising him, not helping him. However, when this did not satisfy her I began to validate how she was feeling and I asked what she would like to see happen. After she answered Kate and I talked with her about how we would help make this plan happen. This interaction was very beneficial to witness because it gave me a chance to use what I have learned in my classes about dealing with parents and put it into practice.

Overall, my parent interactions were very positive. They were all very welcoming and appreciative of the time I was spending with their child. I believe I allowed for the to feel comfortable with me when I sent out a letter to parents before I began explaining who I am and why I was in the room. I told them a little about my background. After sending out the letter, when parents would come into the room to volunteer, I would introduce myself and they would say “oh yeah, I read your letter”.

I was very impressed by the large amount of volunteers that Kate was able to have help in her classroom. I learned that I want to have as much parental involvement as possible; especially as a new teacher. When I talked with other teachers, I was able to take away that if a teacher is well organized, parent volunteers can be easily managed.
Assessment was one area that I learned a lot. I had not had very much experience implementing assessment before my student teaching. I had learned about it in my classes but I learned that it is very different to learn about it and to implement it. I spent a lot of time discussing different assessment techniques with Kate and she helped me formulate the different assessments I ended up using during my unit.

**Self-Reflection/Teaching Philosophy Reflection**

I approached my student teaching feeling pretty confident in my teaching philosophy. However, I knew that I had/have a lot to learn and so I kept an open mind in learning new opinions on education. After observing not only Kate’s teaching styles but also those of many of her colleagues, I developed my own teaching style and took valuable pieces from each teacher I came into contact with. I believe that teachers need to teach to the “why” and “how” questions. Through my experience with this class, I saw their level of excitement and engagement rise the more they felt they understood why they were learning it. It was also important for me to teach to their interests as much as possible. This included differentiating my lessons to fit the needs and interests of all the students.

I believe that children will excel in school if they feel safe. This means feeling safe physically, but also mentally, emotionally, and socially. I wanted my students to feel safe to make mistakes and ask questions without the fear of ridicule from their peers or adults in the room. I wanted my students to feel that I care about them and their successes. I also believe in teaching to the whole child; not just who they are as a student. In order to do this, I took the time to learn about each child’s family and friends and after school activities and anything else that
the child valued. This way, I had a bigger appreciation for who the child is and what their life is like outside of school. I believe this made a difference in the level of comfort and trust the students had in me, and that allowed me to be a more effective educator.

**Successes and Challenges**

Looking at my student teaching experience as a whole, there were many more successes than challenges. I learned even more than I was expecting to learn over those short nine weeks. One very important success for me was in relation to one particular child. He was a selective mute since he got to Colorado in Kindergarten. He would say little to no words to peers or teachers unless very encouraged. My goal on my first day for the nine weeks I would have to work with him, was to get him to speak to me. On my second day, I met my goal. I tried to establish trust my first day and just talked to him, not expecting or soliciting a reply. On the second day I asked him a few questions about his pet, a topic I expected he would feel safe discussing. I was right about that. He did not say much, but he did respond. Throughout the next weeks he began to respond more but still not initiating much conversation. In my third week he came up to me and wanted to tell me about his weekend. It was such an amazing moment to see this happen for the first time with this child in the last three years. He only continued to grow in comfort. He developed friendships and began to initiate conversation with other teachers as well. This is my biggest success through my time student teaching because I know I had something to do with this child blossoming in his life and that was so rewarding.

Other successes included my Dr. Seuss lesson plans. I was so pleased with the quality of the work that the children completed during this unit. However, one lesson I was very pleased with was actually a math lesson. Werner splits up the grades for math into ability level groups. Kate and I worked with the lower level ability children. There were a lot of special needs children in this group (13 out of 16) and this made teaching to them more of a challenge.
However, that is the kind of challenge I love! I had my goal for myself during the lesson which was to set my expectations of them up front and to have them tell me what they think I expect of them to keep them engaged in that process. Once we named things such as listening to the speaker and trying their best, I could see the change in their attitudes. They were engaged, responsive and having fun. We did stop to take a movement break but I would rather take 60 seconds to get up and move than to lose them with 20 minutes left in the lesson. I was so proud of the students and of myself and we only continued to work well together for the remainder of my time there.

With any new position, comes new learning and challenges. I learned of a few things that I would do differently if I could do this process again. One of these would be, trying to attend more meetings. I wish that I had seen more different types of meetings that happen in a school. I was able to attend a staff meeting, an SST meeting, an impromptu parent conference as well as weekly team meetings. These were highly beneficial and I learned a great deal from them. I wish I saw more of these or meetings with a different subject matter to get a better grasp on what happens in a school.

Something else I would do differently, would be to design more homework. I designed some and it was a useful process to learn how to take what is important for the kids and also allow them some time to be kids. However, I used a lot of Kate’s homework assignments. If I could repeat this process I would have created more of my own to gain more experience in that field as well.

Overall, my student teaching was an amazing, fun, positive, and enriching experience. I learned a lot about myself as a teacher, as well as learned how to find my teacher presence. I learned how to operate as a member of a building and how to collaborate with my teammates. I
found things that I will change in my own classroom and I found things that I love and want in my own room someday. I have appreciated getting to participate in this program and I cannot wait to have my own students.

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