

## **Program Outcomes Retrospective Paper**

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Conducting extensive research, school analyses, force field analyses, exploring and applying culturally responsive approaches, developing standards-driven curriculum maps, learner-centered units, project-based learning units, school-wide lessons, professional development presentations, and assessment strategies have helped me develop professional skills and applicable knowledge that I have already infused into my first grade classroom. These experiences show that I have applied the vast knowledge that I have gained while studying at the American College of Education (ACE). I learned from ACE's diverse staff, learned with and from my peers, conducted further research to explore the new knowledge, and then applied the knowledge to my professional practice. I also explored new knowledge that has positively impacted my personal life too.

#### **Design Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Curriculum and Instruction**

All students have diverse needs and so do their families. I have always known this, but have always wondered what I could do better to support all students and their families...especially families who primarily speak other languages. Throughout my time at ACE, I have conducted a great amount of research to explore this topic and I also conducted a force field analysis that revealed that better supporting diverse families was one of the top barriers that was within the control of educators at my school. Lewis et al. (2016) explained that increasing the amount of text children have access to at home can help improve their likelihood to read and engage in literacy activities at home. Rice (2017) explained that providing families with clear detailed directions will also help families feel competent and will provide them with the tools to

help support their children at home; this will help increase equity as well as students' academic achievement.

These additional family supports will help support diversity and unity. Utilizing the backwards design principle to ensure instruction stays focused (Miller, 2020), a Universal Design for Learning framework (Boothe et al., 2020), the jigsaw method (Gonzalez, 2015), cooperative learning, problem-based learning, and gamification (Nixon, 2020) will help foster and employ an engaging multicultural curriculum that includes diverse perspectives and instructional methods. The collaboration and nurturing of independence that is embedded in these frameworks, methods, and activities will also help students develop their advocacy skills.

### **Utilize Academic Theory, Standards, and Frameworks**

Prioritizing students' values and perception of the content, tasks, and activities helped me focus on obtaining and holding my students' attention, while helping them explore the real-world relevance, foster confidence, and increase their satisfaction (Banas, 2021). This increased my students' engagement and motivation when I displayed competency of these skills by redesigning my first grade inflectional ending unit. I started with the standard RF.1.3.F which explains that students will be able to read words with inflectional endings (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2021). Then I utilized the ARCS motivational framework and other research-based academic theories, such as the universal design for learning (Boothe et al., 2020), to guide the organization of my students' inquiry-based explorations, whole-group discussions, inflectional ending self-paced study, and authentic summative cartoon writing assessment.

Exploring the ARCS motivational framework helped me reimagine and reflect upon all of the lessons that I teach.

Utilizing the universal design for learning and ARCS framework was a mindset shift for me, but the increase in students' engagement and mastery of the content was well worth the time invested (Banas, 2021). Holding students' attention and increasing their motivation is an area that I am constantly working on strengthening. The combination of these theories and frameworks provided me with the skills and knowledge that have helped me continue to improve my teaching skills.

### **Assessment Strategies and Plans**

My assessment literacy greatly increased after developing assessments and rubrics throughout my ACE experience. Assessment literacy is very important because it helps educators purposefully design a variety of accurate assessments, collect dependable data, make educated budget decisions, and effectively communicate assessment results (Sloan, 2020). I have been focusing on utilizing a variety of assessment types in my classroom such as alternative performance tests (Albay, 2021), learner-centered assessments based upon my students' interests, portfolios, and collaborative testing opportunities. I have experienced the value of collaboratively designing assessments for learning, conducting field trials on them, editing them, and carefully analyzing the data to continuously revise them (Sloan, 2020).

Backwards design principle, tables of text specifications, and curriculum maps are all tools that I have started implementing into my standards-based organization, lesson planning and assessment schedule. These tools have helped me align standards, learning objectives,

instructional choices, and assessments to improve my use of instructional time and it has helped me prioritize students' learning activities (Miller, 2020). These strategies, tools, and frameworks have helped me become a better educator but they have also helped me stay organized and better utilize my time which has also created more time for me to spend with family and friends which also helps me create balance in my personal life.

### **Analyze Student Data and Apply Research**

Throughout my time I conducted action research on first graders' intrinsic motivation. I conducted research by interviewing my school coach, utilizing ACE's library collection, and I collected quantitative and qualitative data through the use of surveys, quizzes, and observations. I identified that Red Trail Elementary School primarily utilizes extrinsic motivation but extrinsic motivation does not motivate all learners, can be short lived, and it does not always transfer to different tasks and activities (Lemos & Verissimo, 2013). Wery et al. (2013) explained that intrinsic motivation involves students' involvement, engagement, reasons, goals, and desires. I found that intrinsic motivation, goal orientation, adaptive feedback, and self-efficacy can improve students' learning (Ostrow, 2015). The data that I collected and my online research concluded that explaining and exploring purpose, providing students' with choice, and incorporating reflective feedback can help increase students' intrinsic motivation. I also explored the TARGET framework that focuses on using task, authority, recognition, grouping, evaluation, and time to increase motivation (Banas, 2021). These findings helped provide me with the knowledge and tools that I was seeking to help increase my students' engagement and

motivation. My time with my students is limited and therefore I want to focus on best utilizing our time together.

### **Positive, Safe, and Secure Student-Centered Learning Environments**

Utilizing Positive Behavioral Support Systems help promote students' success by focusing on the success of all students (Knoff, 2005). Setting clear and high behavioral expectations, using developmentally appropriate consequences, and making sure that all families have access to the behavioral matrix also helps secure consistency and accountability throughout the whole school (U.S. Department of Education, 2014). Creating student-centered learning activities such as purposeful collaborative activities can also increase community involvement, relationships, and students' engagement (Hands, 2014). Staying well organized (Skiba et al., 2016) and building positive relationships (Minahan, 2019) help produce a positive learning environment too. Throughout my years of teaching experience, I too have found that utilizing welcoming and warm communication, sincerely listening to students, and showing them that I truly care about them has helped build positive relationships.

I frequently reflect back and have gathered classroom relationship related data (data related to my positive interactions with my students' families and their behavioral data that I have collected with their point sheets) to analyze how positive relationships have helped decrease negative behaviors. I have found that positive student relationships are so important, but positive relationships with students' families are equally as important. Elish-Piper (2020) explained that building positive working relationships with children's families can help increase involvement, partnerships, communication, and students' academic performance.

## **Leadership**

Interpersonal communication, relationship building, student engagement, and educational technology are a few of my strengths and they are what I am truly passionate about...both professionally and personally. Throughout my ACE experience along with my teaching experience, I have identified that learning is what I enjoy and education is what I am passionate about. I love learning through professional learning networks, professional development, collaboration with other professionals, communication with experts, and continuous research. I am eager to continue learning even after I conclude my master's program. I have already signed up for some optional professional development that my district has offered and am eager to continue expanding my knowledge base.

I have consumed a lot of beneficial information; now, my goal is to begin contributing to the knowledge base. Throughout my experience at ACE I have created multiple professional development resources, now I am eager to identify who is interested in these topics and would benefit from the content. I am also eager to work with my school to analyze data to identify district needs, conduct research to help improve these areas, and then share the research-based information with my coworkers and students to help address these needs. I am excited to see what my professional future has in store for me as I continue to step out of my comfort zone and help lead other educators as they seek additional tools to help better serve their students.

## **Apply Research-Based Instructional Strategies**

I thought I had many tools in my teaching toolbox but then I began conducting more research at ACE and realized the gaps in my knowledge. My experience at ACE has helped me

close the gaps and expand my knowledge so that I can better serve my students; especially the school-wide literacy lesson plan that I created in my literacy course. There are many strategies that interested me during my studies throughout this course and that I have already begun implementing into diverse content areas within our classroom. Tywmon (2021) explained that content areas (such as reading and writing) should be taught together to help foster connections and should be driven by purpose. Therefore, I have begun implementing more interdisciplinary lessons. Bintz (2011) explained the value of using inquiry based approaches to engage students and help them deepen their knowledge. Therefore, I am more purposeful with the questions that I ask and the way I present students' content. Wheatley et al. (2015) explained that meaningful assessments and feedback help motivate, engage, encourage, and foster self-regulated learning; so, I have also begun focusing more on reflecting upon my assessment literacy to ensure that the assessments I use are purposeful, effective, and foster learning.

### **Conclusion**

Throughout my experiences at ACE I have personally developed much more efficient time management skills. Learning how to better manage my time has shown me that I truly can accomplish anything I set my mind to as long as I continually reflect on my purpose, remember my mission, and accept help along the way. Personally I have also utilized some of the reach that I have studied. I have conducted force field analysis to help my husband and I reflect on the pros and cons of him making a major career change. I have used the knowledge I have learned about fostering intrinsic motivation to benefit my personal learning to increase my engagement in my faith studies, college studies, and my health/yoga studies.



Professionally I have gained so much knowledge, new skills, and new understandings. I have personally utilized this information in my own classroom and have also shared relevant research-based knowledge with my school grade level team as well as district grade level team. This new knowledge has also inspired me to continue learning and contributing to the education field knowledge base by continuing to share this information with other educational professionals, my practicum pre-service teachers, and I am eager to collaborate with my first student teacher this spring to continue sharing the knowledge with them. Therefore, not only have I been able to better my teaching skills but I have also shared this information with others to help them reap the benefits too.

Overall my knowledge, competency, and leadership skills have all tremendously grown since my enrollment at ACE. The journey has been very rewarding, helped me increase my perseverance stamina by continuing the journey even when I encountered personal and professional hardships, and I have made many meaningful connections with educators from all over which has also helped me gain diverse insights. I am very grateful for my time at ACE and am eager to continue applying the knowledge I have learned to improve my teaching skills in order to better improve my students' learning experiences.

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