Jessica Todd

SCED 462

Validated Practices Project

**Topic:**

My first rotation of student teaching took place in Harford County Maryland at Magnolia Middle School. The population of the school is relatively small compared other schools throughout the county. Currently at Magnolia the student population is 710 students. At the middle school I worked with a seventh grade social studies class where the students ranged in age from twelve to thirteen. The students at times can be a challenge, however being the age that they are it was expected. For this project I chose one class to focus on.

Overall my students performances in all classes varies. The class that I chose to focus on is my period one class. The class is made up of nine Caucasian students, two African American students, and two multi-racial students. There are eight girls and five boys in the class. On their sixth grade reading MSA in April of 2012, all of the students either scored proficient or advanced. This is evident on the score chart that is provided. In the class there are two boys who receive special education services. The first, student A is allotted extra time on tests and assignments, if given graphic organizers and other accommodations that apply to math such as a calculator. The second student, student B is given all of the same accommodations as student A however student B also receives services through CSP (classroom support program). This is used a support system for students when they are extremely off task or when they need extra time for assignments. CSP has many other uses however for this student in particular; this is how student B accessed them.

All of the information in the previous paragraph impacted how I planned my class and what readings I chose for the class. One thing that I planned for was using a graphic organizer for the students to take notes on while reading or for taking notes throughout the class. I felt as though all of my students could benefit from the organizer. While I planned I took their age into consideration and tried to find a way to relate the material to their lives in any way possible. By doing this, my hope was to hold their attention during the lesson, and giving the students something to relate the material with. Besides taking their age and accommodations into consideration, I also took their reading abilities into consideration when planning lessons and choosing texts for students to read. For the literacy based lesson the reading about Hammurabi’s Code had a Flesch-Kinkaid score of 8.2. For this reading I had the students read in their small groups. The readings that I choose for this class are either on grade level or the next grade level up. The reading activities would vary depending on the grade level of the reading. When planning the lesson I had to take into account their reading level in order to determine how long each activity would take. While planning the reading activity, I had to make sure that they would be able to either read this by themselves or as a small group, if they would struggle with any terms, and how long would it take the students to read the text. The students reading scores played a major part in planning and choosing readings for the class.

**Curriculum Learning Goals and Objectives**

**National Council for Social Studies Standards**

1. Culture

6. Power, Authority, and Governance

**Maryland State Curriculum Goals**

S6.1.1.1- Students will acquire and apply new vocabulary through investigating, listening, independent reading, and discussing a variety of print and non print sources

S6.1.3.1- Students will identify and use knowledge of organizational structures such as chronological order, cause/effect, main ideas, details, description, similarities/differences and problem/solution to gain meaning.

H6.2.1.1**-** Students will describe the characteristics of a civilization such as social hierarchy, government, writing system, specialization in an area of trade, and the establishment of cities.

**Harford County Curriculum Goal**  
7.3 Students will demonstrate an understanding of the historical development of rile of law by analyzing and evaluating the impact of the Code of Hammurabi on ancient and modern society.

**Objectives for the three lesson plans**

-Students will discuss Sumer as a civilization in order to identify the government, religion, and social class system of the society.

-Students will define polytheism and scribe.

-Students will analyze the Akkadian Empire in order to describe their system of government and major contributions to society.

-Students will examine Hammurabi's Code in order to compare the code to the laws in the USA.

-Students will examine the Phoenician alphabet in order to relate it to the English alphabet.

-Students will describe the major contributions of the Hittite Empire.

The objectives listed above and the lesson plans fit into the Harford country curriculum because the students looked at laws from Hammurabi’s Code and compared it to laws found in the United States. The lessons meet the Maryland curriculum goals because they described characteristics of a civilization such as religion, government, and social hierarchy for several civilizations in Mesopotamia. The lessons go along with the curriculum because the unit we were in was Emerging Ancient Civilizations. According to the curriculum guide in Harford county the students should learn Mesopotamia first, which is what I did. I followed the guide to determine what order the different societies should be taught. Finally, the lesson plans and objectives align with the national standards listed about because lessons one and two involve the students learning cultural aspects of civilizations and lesson three involved the students studying governance in a society with Hammurabi’s Code. All of this can be seen on the alignment chart. Overall, the objectives and lesson plans align with the county, state, and national standards.

**Assessment Plan**

The pre and post assessment that I created for my students had eight questions, seven multiple choice which were one point each, and one short answer question which was two points. Each lesson in the three lesson plan series related to at least one of the pre and post assessment questions. All of the questions dealt with a topic that was covered during one of the lesson plans. During my lessons I stressed the topics that I knew were on the post assessment. When I informally and formally assessed my students, I was stressing the important information the students would need in order to not only do well on the post assessment, but also to do well throughout the unit. I used oral questions with students answering on dry erase whiteboards to assess their knowledge at the end of the lessons. Assessing while the lesson was in progress cam through their guided notes, individual and group work, and questions being asked.

The student’s performance on the pre assessment did not change my instructional plans much. In my class I had a few students who did surprisingly well, since this information was completely new to them. The students barely knew or completely had no prior knowledge of the information that was found on the pre assessment. A majority of my students performed poorly on the pre assessment which was expected because as I said before the information was new to them. The class average on the pre assessment was a 52%. As I said before the pre assessment scores did not affect my instructional plans because I knew going into the lesson planning stage that there was a big chance the students would not know anything, therefore I had already planned to start from scratch with them. In the first lesson I started with one region and then built on from there. All and all through assessments and class discussion the students were able to meet each lessons objectives.

**Instruction:**

My lessons followed a chronological order based on the Harford county curriculum guide. On day one the students had a developmental lesson about civilizations in Mesopotamia. On days before this the class learned the geography of Mesopotamia. The class started with a drill, then we moved into guided notes using the PowerPoint After discussing the civilization Sumer, we then completed a worksheet “Writing in Sumer” as a whole class. The reading was completed as whole class activity. Once this was completed and discussed we finished the guided notes by discussing the Akkadian Empire. On day two the students worked in small groups to compare Phoenicia to the Hittite Empire. As it was stated this was done in small groups. Towards the end of class students were given the opportunity to look at the Phoenician alphabet. Students were asked to make predictions about what it might look like, then once it was on the screen, we as a whole class compared it to the English alphabet. Day three was my literacy based lesson. Students were given a short reading that my mentor and I developed, so the students could read about Hammurabi’s Code. Before students began to read I primed vocabulary by using the vocabulary card technique. Students were asked to draw a cross then write the vocabulary word in the upper left box. In the upper right box the students wrote in a class developed definition of the word, then wrote examples of the vocabulary word in the lower left box then non-examples in the lower right box. This process was completed for the terms civil law and criminal law. Once this was completed students read in small groups then answered questions about the reading. The last question was a chart to compare laws from Hammurabi’s Code to laws here in the United States. I found the chart a good way to relate their lives or something they know about to the material they were learning in class. This lesson ended with the post assessment. The priming of the vocabulary words and the reading led to content learning because the criminal and civil laws are both found in Hammurabi’s Code, so in order to understand Hammurabi’s Code they needed to know what those two terms meant.

Throughout this lesson series I had to take into account students reading levels. The readings I used on days one and two were from the seventh grade curriculum. My two struggling readers sit at different tables; however their tables have strong readers to help them as well as myself rotating around the room. The reading developed for day three was an eighth grade reading level. The students seemed to have no trouble getting the information they needed to complete the assignment. In this particular class there is a lot of small group work to help the students who struggle with reading. All and all throughout the lesson series I tended to check on my struggling readers more and asked them questions to make sure they were getting the information they needed.

My students seemed to respond well to the lesson series. I incorporated a lot of group work for students because that’s when my period one class seems to work best. Although at times it seemed like chaos, it was controlled and the students really seemed to learn the information which can be proved by looking at their post assessment scores. I believe the students like to learn from each other instead of listening to short lecture, or completing silent, independent work. As my lesson series continued I started to plan more group work as oppose to teacher centered lessons. Overall, the students seemed to respond well to the lesson series and I did not have to change my lessons much except to add more group work.

**Analysis, Reflection, and Self Evaluation:**

My students seemed to understand the information that was learned through these lessons. During informal assessments almost all students wanted to participate. As it can be seen on the pre/post assessment chart, all of the students had a positive increase in score except for one student; however they performed well on the pre assessment. I was not worried about this student because they performed well during the lessons. The average score for the assessment went from a 52% to a 80%. My lowest score on the post assessment was a 44%, however this students was absent for two of the three lessons. In the future to help this student I would have them come to me to get the missing notes instead of them going to another student. If I did that then I would know without a doubt they have the necessary information.

I believe that a lot my strategies were effective. Strategies such as group work and using graphic organizers worked for this class because then they had someone else to help them and they knew from the organizer what information I wanted them to have. Although the vocabulary card activity seemed to go well to prime vocabulary, I am not sure how effective it would be in the long run. In the future I may try a concept map or another student based vocabulary technique. As I said it seemed to go well but in the future I am not sure if I would take the same route.

While completing this lesson series I made two goals for my professional learning.

1. Be willing to change plans at the drop of a hat
2. Always take my low readers into account even if there is only two of them in the whole class.

I chose these two goals because sometimes you may plan something and you start the lesson and you know immediately something is not going to work, so you have to be ready to change at any given time. The second goal is to remind me that there may always be that one student that struggles and may need help and sometimes it may take you and their peers to help. All and all this project helped me realize my strengths and weaknesses as a teacher.