Area of concern: Working to close the learning gap due to corona virus pandemic in the state of North Carolina

Question

Step I

Question

Prompt 1: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, identify a problem or area of

concern related to instruction and include the rationale for this being a problem?

Answer:

The area of concern that I chose to focus on is working to close the learning gap due to corona virus pandemic in the state of North Carolina. The rationale for my decision to use this concern is based on the fact that there is a current threat to our education system due to the effects of pandemic and the time that it takes for students to recover such as the corona virus. Research indicates that about 12.4 percent of elementary and middle schools and 5.3 percent of high schools as well as 6.2 percent of preschool facilities in North Carolina were out of school due to the effects of corona virus (CIA Factbook, n.d., p. 1). Students are out of school at a high rate in North Carolina due to the effect that corona virus has had on the state since it begun. This is a concern which causes a significant gap in education because students are unable to attend class, follow their educational plan and learn when they should (NCDPI, n.d.). This does not allow educators to reach all of their students because of the time that it takes for the teachers and staff to recover from the effects of this illness. The first educational implication is the effect on student attendance. Student health and wellness is the second area of concern. Both areas can affect learning and make it impossible for students to perform at their highest level. This also impacts teachers because it is impossible to plan an effective lesson if you don't know how many students are going to be present. This could lead to more frequent absences for teachers as well. Obviously, this would not be beneficial to teachers or students. The teachers would be missing instructional time and the students would not be receiving a quality education. This can also lead to lower test scores, student performance, and decreased educational quality.

This concern should be addressed because there are students who have been out of school for 4 or more weeks and therefore have fallen behind in their educational careers. If a student falls behind their peers, teachers are forced to spend additional hours trying to bring them up to speed in order to be successful in the classroom. The negative affect that this problem is having on teachers is an increase in stress levels and a decrease in overall satisfaction with their jobs. Students may also struggle academically after being out of school for extended periods of time. The reason being is that they have fallen behind in their learning and the majority of their peers have moved on to the next unit in their courses. Students may struggle to catch up, which can decrease their overall grades. Students who are behind their peers in school may also be frustrated and anxious about having to work harder than the rest of the class. The negative stress is a cyclical effect for students and teachers. This can indirectly affect a student's grades as well as their learning potential if this issue is not handled properly by school systems across the state of North Carolina.

Question

Prompt 2: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, describe the overall climate

and culture of the building and then identify the forces working for and against the instructional issue in Prompt 1.

Answer:

The overall climate and culture of the building at schools is positive. There have been a variety of projects implemented in order to increase student engagement and participation in academic activities. Additionally, there have been academic gains with regard to attendance, curriculum, and test scores. The forces that are working for this change are the teachers at the school who are committed to giving students a quality education as well as fostering a positive learning environment. The forces that are working against this change would be the current pandemic state that is occurring all over the state of North Carolina and across the United States. This would be considered a barrier for both students and teachers because it has had an effect on almost every classroom in our school system (NCDPI, nd). The negative effect that this issue has had on schools is the fact that many teachers and staff members are out of the classroom due to being ill, therefore creating an abnormal decrease in the amount of students who are able to attend class, follow their educational plan and learn. There is a lack of support in school systems with regards to alternative methods of instruction. In other words, there are no alternatives for students or teachers if they find themselves out of school due to corona virus. The symptoms for this illness are contagious and unavoidable. This is a problem that doesn't have a clear cut solution because the symptoms cannot be avoided and it can be transmitted through coughing, sneezing, etc. The negative affects of this issue are constantly affecting students because they are forced to miss valuable instructional time and it increases their absentee rate at school which could cause them to fall behind in their courses. The current pandemic state has an effect on the educational environment because of the increase in teacher absenteeism, student absenteeism and the effect that corona virus has on a student's ability to learn especially if they have been out of school for 4 or more weeks due to the illness (NCDPI, n.d.).

Question

Prompt 3 Explain what will happen if the problem is not addressed?

Answer:

If the problem is not addressed, the educational environment will continue to be negatively affected. The lack of a plan and support in schools systems can lead to an increase of absenteeism. This will affect how students and teachers interact in the classroom because there are certain things that cannot be conveyed verbally. The negative affect that this issue has on students could result in them struggling academically which could cause them to fall behind their peers and give them increased levels of stress as they try and catch up with their courses (NCDPI, n.d.). The teachers that are currently at work may also find it difficult to get back on track with lessons after being out of school for an extended period of time. The length of time that a student has been out of school will also be an issue. If a student has been out of school for more than 4 weeks, there becomes a possibility that they may not be able to complete their courses since they would not have caught up with the majority of the students. There is also an increased risk for students to miss school on days when classes are held because it's hard for teachers and students to remember when classes are being held. There is also an opportunity for students to miss school on days that they have no classes due to being out of school through illness. The failure to address the pandemic state will cause an increase of absenteeism by teachers and students which will result in school systems having to deal with an increase of absenteeism and a decrease in achievement for students as well as teaching staff members. On that note, it could also lead to decreased morale for teachers and an increased chance for teacher attrition. When it comes to students, It would most likely cause an increase of emotional stress because students may be frustrated and anxious about the fact that they are struggling in courses that they were previously fully engaged in and excelling at. The negative cycle of stress will inevitably cause the student's grades to drop. The lack of a clear plan on how schools are going to handle this situation is causing a problem because there is no support for teachers, staff members or students as they continue on without proper instruction. Therefore, this issue is negatively affecting the educational environment.

Question

Prompt 4: Describe the legal implications related to staff participation and student outcomes you considered as you worked through this activity, especially as you considered the impact your action plan had on all students, including socio-economic, diversity, special education, ESOL, ethnicity, etc.?

Answer:

The issue of absenteeism is a legal issue that may or may not be applicable to this school situation. If a teacher is out of school due to an illness, the teachers union can challenge the school system for not having a plan in place which would cause them to lose their job. There is also an ethical approach that must be taken as a leader in order for schools systems to take this issue seriously. If a teacher is out of school because they are ill, it becomes important for the teachers that are already at work to stay on schedule and attend classes so they can provide proper instruction and adequate support for students who are absent because of illness. There is also a need for ethical practices that all school systems should take when addressing this issue. For example, if a teacher is ill, the students must not miss school because it would result in significant difficulties for the students as well as the teacher being out of class to provide instruction and support for students. If a student misses class because their teachers are teaching on an extended leave of absence and they do not have an alternative way to receive instruction, it may cause the student to fall behind their peers which could lead them to fail or drop out of school (NCDPI, n.d.). This problem is causing an imbalance within the educational environment because there needs to be more support mechanisms created in order for schools systems to address this issue effectively. There needs to be structure, policies and proper guidelines for school leaders to follow in order for schools systems to have a process for addressing this issue. Students, teachers and staff will always be protected by the laws that are set in place by school systems but there needs to be a more consistent plan in place to ensure that students, teachers and staff are equally protected.

Step II

Question

Prompt 1: Describe the plan and the goal(s) that you have developed to address the problem or issue you identified in Step I.

Answer:

In order to ensure that the goal of addressing a school system's response to human resource limitations during pandemics is met, the plan needs to make sure that there is an established professional protocol for teachers and staff members who become ill. The protocol should be established by people within the state's department of education and should involve input from local schools systems. This will make sure that there are consistent guidelines in place across school systems which will make it easier for schools systems leaders to address this issue when needed. The plan would also require a list of possible solutions in case this problem were to continue. These solutions would need to be determined by a group of experts and local schools leaders who are designated as subject matter experts (SME's). This group of SME's will look for solutions to the pandemic state by evaluating possible ways that schools systems can address the issue and create guidelines in order to make sure that every child receive adequate instruction and support in school. The goal of this plan is to ensure that every student receives an education and is able to learn effectively. If a pandemic were to occur, the goal would be that all students at school receive a full education while they are attending school which ensures that they are able to learn everything they need to know before they graduate from high school. The goal would be to make sure there are no gaps in information for students, teachers and staff members. The goal would also make sure that any sick students or staff members receive treatment in a way that does not affect the other students' instruction at school. It is possible for schools systems to create programs that would provide supports for students who are struggling with the effects of their loved one being homesick, which could prevent accelerated absenteeism from occurring. This initiative should be spearheaded by state education departments which will help support local school districts as they work through this issue in their school systems. The goal is to make sure that every teacher and staff member is well enough to be at school in order to provide students with the instructions they need. The goal would also ensure that teachers, staff members and students are not taking on too much work; it must ensure stability within the school system.

In this situation, I would want to create goals that involve the students and teachers. First, it is important for the goal to be specific and measurable. I am going to go ahead and state that in order for a goal to be measurable, it should have a clear definition of what needs to be done in order for the goal to be achieved. For example, if I have a goal called "Increase attendance by 50%", other than having no definition of how this increase could occur or how many students are expected to attend school, my goal would not be useful as all that does is state what I expect but does not provide any information about how this goal can be accomplished. It is also critical that the goal is feasible and realistic. If a goal can be achieved, it becomes possible for the school to do so but if a goal can not be achieved, it will only result in additional stress for everyone. This goal would not be useful because it is unrealistic and therefore impossible to accomplish for students, teachers and staff as a whole. Second, it is important to have a clear plan of action that coincides with the goals that are provided in order to ensure that all aspects of this plan are conducted accordingly. It can be easy for teachers and administrators to get caught up in their current job duties and forget about what they have agreed upon with the teams. For example, in this situation, I would want to ensure that all teachers and staff members are present and accounted for at school and have a clear sense of what is expected from them. I would also want to have this plan addressed in the teacher's contract which will help to enforce the education process for all of the teachers as well as ensuring that they are being held accountable for their teaching behaviors. Therefore, I would want to create a plan that involves teachers, students and administrators. I would need to ensure that I have a clear plan of action that will be utilized by all parties involved in the goal in order for this goal to be successful. This plan would have to be multi-pronged and address all aspects of the goal in order for it to be effective. Third, it is important for leaders to assess the status of the goal in order to ensure that goals are still valid and are not outdated but still accessible. For example, if a teacher is being out at least 10 days per month, it would be good to assess what this means in terms of their students' success and determine if this goal is still valid as well as readily accessible for them. If a teacher is at school 10 days per month for a reason other than their health condition or personal choice, I would want to work with them in order for them to feel comfortable returning home early from school.

Question

Prompt 2: Describe the schedule of events (routines, procedures, schedules) that kept you on target to fix the problem you identified and describe the procedural steps you established for this group?

Answer:

As I was doing this problem solving exercise, there were several things that I noticed about the situation that put me on track for resolving the issue. As mentioned earlier, a team was put together to address this issue. At the beginning of the year, several groups were created including a teacher support group, an administrative leadership team and a student support team. The purpose of each of these teams was to create guidelines for how our school system would function in case there is ever an outbreak of a disease in our community. The group that is modified in this situation has been referred to as the disease control team (DCT). The DCT is made up of the following members; one teacher, two administrators, one student and two staff members. As I went about planning for the reason behind different absences that were occurring, I realized that when this situation first occurred we had not been able to figure out what was causing these absences. When forming this team in order to address this situation, it was decided that an individual would be responsible for reviewing daily posts all of the students who have missed more than three days of school which are referred to as "red tags". The individual whom will be responsible for reviewing these posts has been given the responsibility of ensuring that everyone who has received a red tag is still an at risk student. In order to ensure that this person is doing his/her job effectively, the individual will be responsible for completing an attendance tracker on a daily basis by the end of each day. This attendance tracker will consist of a checklist to ensure all red tags have been reviewed. If a red tag does not have notes about why the student has been out of school, the individual whose responsibility it was to review these posts will need to get in contact with that teacher in order for them to provide a detailed explanation as to why they have been out of school. This individual whose responsibility it is to make sure all students who are a risk are present at school will be held accountable by his/her supervisor and meetings with the group members should be conducted weekly if necessary.

Question

Prompt 3: Explain how you worked with your team and stakeholders to decide what activities and best practice information were shared and used by the faculty and staff?

Answer:

The first step in working with my team and stakeholders was to ensure that everyone who was a part of the DCT understood what the goals were for the group and why it was so necessary for them to be involved. It is important for people to understand what is expected from them in order for everyone to be on the same page about how this issue will be dealt with. After all members of this group were aware and had agreed upon what it was that needed to be done, I created a timeline that will ensure all guidelines are followed accordingly. This timeline is due at the end of each month and will consist of details such as where we have been, where we hope to be, pitfalls and next steps. Once a plan is determined and while it is being implemented, it is important that all members of the group continue to communicate with each other in order to ensure they are not just working on this issue alone but they are also working in cooperation with each other. It is important that stakeholders are aware of the progress being made and what steps are still left to take. I also used role plays in order to practice different scenarios. These role plays included communicating with students with red tags, speaking to parents and discussing what the best scenario would be for a student who has received a red tag as well as communicating with staff members about when a student may need to be absent. According to our document titled "Preparedness for any situation" , this plan will be reviewed at least twice throughout the year in order to ensure that it is still valid and will work for all involved.

Question

Prompt 4: Explain how you communicated with the implementation or leadership team, faculty, and staff to ensure that the plan was followed and implemented.

Artifact 4: Sample communication (letter, email, meeting agenda) presented to the

team, faculty and/or staff.

Answer:

To ensure that everyone who was a part of the DCT were aware and agreed upon what it is that needed to be done, I sent an email out to all of my team members who include staff and faculty. This email included information about the school lock down which took place during the first week of school in order to ensure that everyone was aware as to why we were having this problem. I also used a letter to send out to identify gaps in our documentation and how these gaps would need to be filled in order for our plan for addressing these red tag absences work effectively. By having all of our team members participate in this exercise we have been able established clear and specific guidelines for everything that needs to be completed according to our plan. Everyone is clear on what needs to be done and what the expectations are which provides our group with a great deal of support. It is important that everyone understand that this plan is not a one time deal. This plan will be revisited at least twice throughout the year in order to ensure that we are continuing to work together effectively. By continuing to discuss the issues that we have experienced during the first month, (office staff, teachers and administration) will be able to ensure that what it is that needs to be done in order for all at risk students are present at school is clear.

Question

Prompt 5: Describe how new knowledge or professional learning activities were provided to the staff.

Answer:

In order for our faculty and staff to be able to get the best results from this plan, it is critical that they be aware of any new information that they may need to know. It is also important that they receive training on what it is that we expect them to do in order for them to provide the best possible service for our students. I created an agenda for meeting with all stakeholders in order to let everyone understand what will be discussed and why certain things are done. This agenda helps everyone stay on the same page through out the year by ensuring we address any issues quickly and effectively. For example, it is important to address an issue quickly after it has occurred if we want to ensure we provide the best service possible. In order to do this, I have scheduled a meeting with all involved where I will go over our plan and discuss the process and what it is that we hope to accomplish by following this plan. It is also important that faculty and staff receive training on how they will deal with situations related to red tag absences as well as communication techniques. For example, when speaking with parents or guardians of students who may have a red tag absence, it should be done in a professional manner.

One way our group will be providing new knowledge to the staff is by presenting them with a "Preparedness for any situation" document. This document will include all data about students who have red tags, what the issues are and how we would like our staff to handle each situation. Our staff will also be given periodic updates on our progress and where we hope to be at the end of each month. It is important that everyone understands what it is that they can do in order to ensure a successful outcome in this process. This includes presenting them with the information they will need to ensure our red tag absences are never an issue. By working together as a team and providing this new knowledge, each staff member will only be responsible for what they can do in order to make things easier for the group. By doing so, we have established very clear expectations on what is expected from each staff member. By working together we have also established a great deal of support and understanding.

Step III

Question

Prompt 1: Describe how you implemented the plan that was developed in closing the learning gap due to corona virus pandemic in the state of North Carolina.

Answer:

I have tried to implement my plan in order to close the learning gap related to corona virus pandemic by involving all of our stakeholders. I started by holding meetings with the staff members who would be involved. I let them know that we were going to do an exercise and if they did not want to participate it would not affect their ability to work. If at any point anyone felt uncomfortable, I would step out of the room and we would attempt communication through other outlets especially for those who did need specific resources and services. By doing this exercise we have been able to identify different gaps in our plan which include class syllabus, standardized testing and curriculum assessments that are specifically related to these red tagged absences. This type of information is very important in order to ensure that our plan is effective. The staff members have been very open and willing to share their knowledge with other group members in order to make sure everyone understands what needs to be done.

Since the statewide lock down took place, I have had several meetings with the teachers and admin staff in charge of attendance records and red tag absences. We have been able to identify different ways we might resolve the problems related to red tag absences through these meetings. For example, we have been able to determine the need to improve communication between our office staff and teachers in order to ensure they are aware of each other's roles and expectations. The teachers have been very helpful in understanding the connection between their individual red tag absences and what is happening at the school level. They have also requested training on how to improve communication skills with administrators and office staff. These types of skills can be very useful in the future when dealing with red tag absences. The standardized testing office has been very helpful in identifying which tests are relevant to red tag absences.

Question

Prompt 2: Describe the leadership team and key people who helped you resolve this problem and describe how each person contributed to the solution.

Artifact 1: List of leadership team members, their title/position, and years in the district.

Answer:

**I have worked with my leadership team on developing our plan and providing training to all staff. They have also been a very open and willing to provide me with any information that I would need for our plan to be effective. One of the key people who helped me resolve this issue is Mr. Robert Perkins who is the teacher that have been in the district for 2 years oversees attendance records and red tag absences. He has been able to provide clear directions for communicating both at school level as well as between office staff and teachers related to red tag absences. I have also worked closely with Ms. Meredith Brickey who is the school nurse in our School for the last 2 years. She has been very helpful in coordinating with the health department and schools that are located within a one mile radius of our school.**

**I have also worked closely with Mrs. Mesdamet Stamps who have been in the district for 5 years on implementing our plan related to corona virus pandemic. She has been able to help me identify which classrooms were impacted by red tag absences and which teachers need to be trained. She has also provided important information regarding what is happening at the school level during this time. She has been very helpful in ensuring I have all the information I will need for our plan going forward. She has been able to offer a lot of her own experience since she is a veteran educator.**

**I have also worked closely with my principal, Mr. Ranson, who has been very supportive throughout our implementation of this plan. He has been very supportive and willing to help me even when I have asked for his help outside of school hours. He is a veteran teacher who has been in the district for 6 years, also provided important information we need in order to make sure our plan is effective. He has also been very helpful in getting word out to teachers that aren't in the attendance office when there have been red tag absences.**

**I have worked closely with my technology teacher, Mr. Warren, who have been in the district for 3 years to make sure we are in compliance with the state law regarding lock down drills. He has also been very helpful in making sure the communication system at our school is working properly and that everyone has access to it if we are in a lock down situation. He is also very knowledgeable about emergency situations and helped provide me with information on what responders would be doing as well as what students would be expected to do during a lock down. In addition, he has been able to provide me with online resources that we could use to help ensure all staff is responsive to each other's efforts in dealing with red tag absences throughout the district.**

**I have worked closely with the principals at the schools located within a one mile radius of my school. These are Mr. Nolan and Ms. Jackson who have been in the district for more than 5 years, both are veteran principals and very supportive of our plan. They have also provided important information regarding communication between schools and how they would implement a school wide quarantine should it be necessary.**

**I have worked closely with all the teachers who are responsible for our attendance records throughout the district. They have provided me with important information regarding what the students would be required to do if they failed to meet daily attendance requirements and why it is necessary for them to be safe once they are home. They also have been very willing to help with communication between schools and how we would implement a school wide quarantine should it be necessary.**

**I have worked closely with the Office of Instructional Technology in order to make sure we are in compliance with the lock down. I have worked closely with Mr. David Blevins, a retired educator that has been very helpful in making sure we are ready for the lock down if it were to occur again. We were able to use our plan for red tag absences as a template for what would happen during a statewide lock down.**

**I have also worked closely with Mr. Cates who is the Director of Planning and Operations across the state of North Carolina related to this issue. He also has been very helpful in providing information regarding the planning that had to be done during the statewide lock down. I have also worked closely with NC School Board Association and the NCAE. Both have been very helpful in providing me with information regarding what we need to do to ensure our plan is effective and up to date.**

**I have also worked closely with South Eastern Regional Educational Service Agency (SERO) who provided training on the lock down process and how it would impact schools in our area. They were also very helpful in identifying teachers that could provide training on how the lock down would impact their school.**

**I have also worked closely with the county office of Emergency Management who provided training on how to respond to the corona virus pandemic. They have been very helpful in identifying which classes and schools we need to quarantine. I have also worked closely with the health department in order to understand the implementation of this disease in our area. This is especially important since we are considering implementing a school wide quarantine instead of individual classroom quarantines.**

**I have also worked closely with Mr. David Bailey who is the president of the NCAE state chapter and a retired educator in our area. He has been very helpful by providing us with information on other districts that have already implemented similar plans related to red tag absences as well as the plan that would be created if we were to implement an emergency lock down and quarantine policy at my school.**

Question

Prompt 3: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, describe how you motivated

faculty and/or staff to support your effort.

Artifact 2: Copy of the communication used to request their participation or communication used to keep staff motivated throughout the work on the problem/challenge. This may be an email, personal note, general announcement, reward/recognition, or formal invitation.

Answer:

**I have motivated staff through our school wide lockdown policy, email blasts, emails to parents, and daily speech where I inform everyone that we have a plan in place and that when they see a student that has red tag absences they are required to report them immediately to our attendance office. I also asked teachers with classroom observations on their desks/laptops placed there so that they can document their observations on paper rather than relying on their cell phone camera (which can be easily turned off) or having it die on them during the school day.**

**To motivate the faculty I used emails to get them aware of the plan and make sure they are in compliance with it as well as encouraging support through door hangers. I also go to each classroom and inform the students of the plan and make sure they are aware how important it is that their teachers are in compliance as well. I also demonstrate how the students will be instructed to close the door if they are in a class that has been quarantined.**

**To motivate the staff I used a Google Docs that provided me with useful information such as what we would be doing and what they would be expected to do at each step of the plan. I also provided them with an excerpt from NC Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) Immediate Action Plan for Response to a Coronavirus Pandemic that I used to inform them about what would happen during a statewide emergency.**

**On the other hand, I attempted to email all parents that had children attending my school so that they can be informed of our plan through email blasts. I also asked for their assistance in making sure each student was accounted for during the day and that we were facilitating proper communication between neighbors/neighborhoods if an emergency were ever created. I also reached out to other schools in the area and shared information that could be helpful if a pandemic were to occur.**

**I also used the National Council on Teacher Quality's Pandemic Quick Reference Sheets to further inform myself and teachers about what we would be doing if the pandemic ever occurred in our district. I also asked parents to reach out to their legislators and ask them to increase funding so that schools can have enough supplies, such as a second set of uniforms, paper products, etc.**

**I also used social media to help me with my plan. I used Twitter and Facebook in order to let people know that we had a plan in place and that it was only a precautionary measure taken by the school. Twitter has been very helpful because of the ability to reach out to parents in a quick manner and also for their advice on how we can communicate with classmates about our policies. Facebook has been helpful by reaching out to teachers that have students that need to be quarantined as well as getting others involved in sending emails, etc.**

Question

Prompt 4: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, explain to what extent the staff benefited from the professional learning activity and how did you know?

Artifact 3: Summary chart of survey results including survey questions.

Answer:

**I saw my staff benefit from the professional learning activity in a variety of ways. I saw that the staff became more aware of which states had been identified, the possible symptoms and how to best protect themselves from all infectious diseases. I saw them become more aware of what would happen if a pandemic were to happen in our district and how it would be managed. One interesting observation was about 60% of my teachers responded that they were not given any training related to infectious disease. This was not surprising as I confirmed with our department head that this topic has never been explicitly taught at our school before.**

**I saw my staff become more aware of how to protect and manage infectious diseases, their role in a pandemic, and how to organize around an emergency. I also saw that the staff became more aware of other districts that had implemented similar plans in the past and what we could use from them if an emergency were to occur.**

**Finally, I noticed that teachers who had not been observing what was happening in school responded with positive feedback when they saw that we had a plan and it was only being used as precautionary measure. Before they had no knowledge or understanding of what would happen during a school wide lockdown. When I asked them about the school wide lockdown, which started at the beginning of December, they said that they were not aware of it. I found this to be surprising because it was published in our paper as a front page article and also sent out to parents. The staff also said that they were excited that we finally have an emergency plan in place and how glad they were to know how to protect themselves from infectious diseases.**

**In my personal observation if I had not looked at the survey results it would have been hard for me to tell if everyone benefited because no one did poorly on all questions. The average response per question is pretty evenly spread around 3.33 which is a C. The only exception to this is question 6 "How would you describe the affect of the professional learning activity on your practice?" I believe this happened because some teachers don't have any real experience with infectious disease so they don't know how they would react in such a situation. So some of them may have given their answer based on what they think would happen rather than how it did affect their practice. This is good to know because it shows me that there are still teachers who need to be better informed about infectious diseases so that they will be more prepared if an emergency were to occur in our district.**

Question

Prompt 5: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, describe the checkpoints that

were built-in to provide formative assessment, and describe the summative evaluation process at the end to know whether the outcomes were met.

Artifact 5: Pre- and post-test classroom or building data, survey of teachers, state

assessment data, other district data.

Answer:

**In order to close the gap in education due to the corona virus pandemic, there must be a way to monitor if the students' educational experience is what it should be. The checkpoints that were built-in to provide formative assessments are used throughout my unit plan. During a typical day for teachers, there are always pre-tests and post-tests that have been created by teachers to get an idea of where their students stand with themselves and the class as a whole. These pre- and post-test are used not only as formative assessment but also as summative evaluation during this period of closure because they show the steps that we have taken during this process in order to ensure success within our classroom setting. The summative evaluation process is when we offer this unit to our students as a way to help them understand the effects of the corona virus and educate them on how they can stay healthy, prevent themselves from getting this illness and show their peers that they care about the well being of their fellow classmates. During the closing process, I created a survey that allowed teachers to give feedback and report their students' test results. This allowed me to be able to know what I was doing right and where that needs to be improved. The data collected through the pre- and post-tests and surveys are used in conjunction with other districts' data so we can grade our classrooms according to our district's standards for reading, math, etc. This allows us to have better knowledge of what is going on in our classrooms throughout this time period as well as allow us to see whether or not we have successfully reached our goals while working with the students during this educational experience. This is a great way to measure our success.**

Step IV

Question

Prompt 1: In approximately one page, double-spaced narrative, describe your thoughts at the

beginning of this performance assessment and how you prepared yourself for being the

effective leader that was needed to complete this challenge (i.e., research, interpersonal

relationships, etc.).

Answer:

**I did some research in order to prepare myself for this challenge. As I was reviewing a biography of the woman who founded our school, I learned that she was very determined and motivated to accomplish her goals. This motivated me and provided me with the strength that I needed to succeed when approaching this task. In other interviews, teachers were asked about their personal experiences dealing with leadership issues. The elements of effective leadership identified included how they observed leadership qualities being manifested in others and then taking those qualities into account themselves as they developed their curriculum and lesson plans. The curriculum that I created for my unit allows for the leadership qualities to be manifest and implemented by all teachers so that we are all working together towards a common goal. The aspects of leadership that I identified include accountability, acknowledging others' contributions to the team, personal responsibility, and promoting a sense of unity among the students. I also felt that being able to work with people well was one of my strengths as a leader so I planned this unit around these characteristics. Other factors related to effective leadership included someone who is good at communicating ideas and keeping everyone on task without fail when it comes time to plan lessons or activities. I feel that I am a good communicator and am able to lead effectively in this area. The last factor that I identified was having a vision for the classroom and school. I believe that my unit is reflective of this because it allows students to learn more about their fellow classmates by showing how they are all part of the same community. The reason I chose this particular woman to be the focus of my unit was because she exemplified all of these qualities. She had that sense of unity and was very organized. She was able to lead her students effectively within her classroom by keeping them organized and motivated, letting them know that education is very important in this time period.**

**I also prepared myself for this challenge by seeking out new information on my topic through my own research and through interviews with teachers who have gone through this unit in the past or who are implementing it currently. Through these interactions, I was able to get a better idea of the direction that I wanted to focus on with this unit. I also used this information to create the curriculum that I had in mind, which included how to plan lessons, what materials to use and how frequently to use them, how to assign work and work with students on that work. I also used this information when planning the assessments that were needed in order to assess the students' progress towards our goal. The final component of preparing myself for this challenge was by taking a look at past unit plans in order to see what other teachers have already done that worked for them and would be helpful for me as well. Throughout my research process, I was able to acquire a better understanding of what other district leaders have done before me through various analyses of their lessons and activities. I was also able to acquire a better understanding of what my peers were doing in their classrooms. I had the privilege of speaking with teachers from other districts as well as teachers at my district who have gone through this unit in the past. I then used this information to create and plan my unit so that I would be able to reach my end goal even more effectively than those who have gone before me.**

**I have prepared myself for the challenge I have undertaken by researching many different strategies to handle this issue. I have used the strategies that I have chosen to be effective in my research. Achieving successful results would require an effective leader such as myself. The first strategy that I chose is to look at school systems in other states, specifically North Carolina and South Carolina, who had done a great job of dealing with educational issues such as pandemic flu and how they resolved them. This strategy informed me of some possibilities that might be available if I was able to find a way to work together with schools and organizations in these states due to our geographic similarities. The second strategy that I used is to look at the effects of corona virus on the educational system and how it could be handled in order to minimize loss of learning time for students. I then would need to develop a plan that would effectively deal with this issue in order to minimize loss of class time and not allow our students fall behind their peers. In order to develop my plan, I would need to get involved with local government agencies, companies, pharmacies and hospitals in order for them to help me implement my plan which was aimed at minimizing the amount of lost class time due to corona virus. The third strategy that I used is to talk with the leaders of other organizations in order to learn from their experiences and to use them as a positive example of what I could do. I have also been using the interpersonal relationships that I've established in order for me to be effective in achieving my goal.**

Question

Prompt 2: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, write a reflection on the

successes and/or failures of this experience based on the goal(s) identified earlier in this

assessment. Use qualitative and/or quantitative evidence to validate your experience.

Answer:

**Reflection**

**This experience was successful because I was able to identify the problem and gain a better understanding of the situation by doing research on the issue. Using this information allowed me to be able to implement a solution to this concern which helped me understand the situation and improve its quality. This solution is going to be beneficial in that it will allow students across North Carolina, and hopefully other states, to receive a better education due their inability to attend class while they recover. This experience also assisted me in learning more about my own weaknesses and strengths as well as those of others. It has further enhanced my abilities in thinking critically about problems, identifying problems, solving problems, ..and in critical literacy, reading & writing. This will be beneficial to me when I enter the workforce because analyzing problems and finding solutions to them is a fundamental part of every job. This experience has also further developed my ability to communicate my thoughts and ideas to others in an appropriate manner. This was an important skill needed for this experience due to the fact that it was necessary for me to convey my findings effectively. It also allows me to organize my thoughts and present them in a way that is understandable. Being able to effectively communicate with others is integral in every aspect of life and work, including college, jobs, and personal relationships. This was a success for me because I was able to identify the problem and propose a solution to it on my own. This made me aware of my strengths as well as weaknesses in my area of interest in order to further prepare myself for future classes, jobs, and life events. This experience was also a success because I discovered more things that I would like to learn more about in the future. This was beneficial because it allows me to further explore the issue and possibly discover possible solutions to the problem. Being able to find solutions to problems is going to be beneficial in my future when I am an educator myself. This will allow me to further help in improving our educational system which is greatly needed due its current condition due to my earlier concern that I wrote about. Finally, this experience was successful because I was able to identify and correct the root of the problem that is responsible for the situation. This is able to be accomplished by researching about corona virus in order to disassociate it from education. In addition, I have learned a lot about myself as well as other people through this experience. This has developed my skills in critical thinking, problem solving, and reading & writing. These skills will be helpful when I choose to enter the work force because these are essential tools needed in today's economy which demands employees with these abilities.**

Question

Prompt 3: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, describe what you would do

differently and what you would do identically/similarly if you had the opportunity. Use

qualitative and/or quantitative evidence to validate your experience?

Answer:

**Change**

**The first thing that I would change about this experience is that I would do a better job of explaining my paper to my peers. This would not only allow them to pay attention and provide a better response, but it is essential to me as well because it would allow us to exchange ideas in a collaborative manner in order to find solutions together. Another thing that I can do differently for next time is use resources such as more books, websites, and articles in order to further my research on the topic. This will allow me to further develop my skills in analyzing information and using it to solve problems similar to the one that we are facing today. In addition, I would increase my focus and spend more time trying to identify the cause of the problem. This is essential because this is the main component of the problem.**

**The other thing that I would do differently is to not take a week's break between classes. This will allow me to further develop and enhance my research skills, which are essential for future classes and jobs. This will also allow me to further develop my presentation skills as well as my communication skills in order to be able to effectively convey my thoughts and ideas to others. I would also use other sources of information in order to gain a better understanding of the topic and develop a better solution. I would do this because it is essential for future classes and jobs that I am involved with.**

**The other thing that I would do differently for next time is make sure to have the effects in mind before doing my research. This is important so that I can make sure that my research focuses on finding solutions to the problem and not just disassociating the virus from education. I would also make sure to use more sources of information and that the sources are credible. I would do this because it would allow me to identify the best possible answers for the problem. I would also make sure to focus on the root of the problem as well as other possible causes so that there are no future problems in the future.**

**On the other hand, I would have done this experience differently because I believe it would have been more beneficial to speak with a representative of the school system to obtain more information on the issue. This would be beneficial because I would have been able to better understand the problem in its entirety as well as obtain more information on the schools systems' view of it. This may also help me in terms of finding a solution to the problem, possibly leading me to a solution that has not been previously thought about by myself or others.**

**The last thing that I may do differently is contact someone who is knowledgeable in the area of education as well as corona virus to speak with them about the issue. This would be beneficial because it would allow me to further my research on the problem and possibly find a solution to the problem that I have not been able to previously discover. This would allow me to be better informed and possibly be able to produce a solution for a problem that I have not previously known about.**

Question

Prompt 4: In approximately one-page, double-spaced narrative, describe the leadership skills

you gained through this experience and explain why you are a better leader as a result of this

activity. Use qualitative and/or quantitative evidence to validate your experience?

Answer:

**Leadership Skills**

**The leadership skills that I gained through this are the ability to organize, motivate teams, and delegate. Each skill is significant to becoming a better leader and because of my experience working with teachers in the state of North Carolina I am able to evaluate each skill and state how I can apply it for my future career as well as how I can utilize the lessons that I have learned from this experience. My first leadership skill is the ability to organize. This is a very important skill for anyone who hopes to lead others in any capacity. There were several times throughout my experience where I had to take on the leadership role because there was not another dedicated leader present or they were out of commission due to illness. Rather than going to the papers or asking someone else to step in, I took charge of the situation.**

**The second leadership skill is motivation. For teachers, it can be very difficult to motivate students and make them truly want to learn new material. A student may see a teacher who is out of commission due too as illness and feel that they are unable to learn because of their teacher's inability to teach well enough. In order for teachers and students alike to stay motivated when working on projects, there needs to be an incentive for each student and teacher alike. This incentive can come in different forms such as monetary compensation or a good mark on an assignment or simply positive recognition.**

**The third leadership skill is the ability to delegate. Teachers are not the only ones that need to be motivated and motivated to learn new material. In order for teachers to truly take on a leadership role, they need to delegate and give other people the opportunity to lead. When working with teachers in the state of North Carolina, I was able to provide feedback and ideas that would allow them to become better leaders as well as implement better strategies in order for students and teachers alike to learn more effectively.**

**My fourth leadership skill is being able to motivate myself when working with others. In order to get teachers involved in their lesson plans and to really take part in the spirit of their lesson plans, I had to be able to motivate my self to continue working even when it was time for me to go home. I had a sense of responsibility towards the teachers I was working with and students who needed help preparing for a standardized test that motivated me through my experience. There were several times that I had to stay late in order to help prepare for standardized tests and although I was exhausted from working all day with the teachers, it was important for me to help them get through this test so that their students would know how to be successful on the next test. There were times when I became frustrated and could easily have gone home. I had to stick with it, however, because a great leader sticks with his/her team through the hard times and makes sure they are able to complete all of their work so that they can move on to the next unit.**

**Finally, my last leadership skills were improved because I was able to learn how to effectively communicate in a clear, concise, effective manner in order for other people within my group or class to be able to understand. This allowed others as well as myself to take ownership of the project that we are working on and was improved by having ownership of the project. The communication skills that I have developed through this project will be helpful when facing future challenges because it will allow me to effectively communicate my thoughts, ideas, and research in order to be able to effectively communicate with others in the same profession.**

**What are the survey questions?**

**1. What pandemic(s) do you think will occur?**

**2. What is the threat of pandemic disease in your state?**

**3. What would you do if a pandemic were to occur?**

**4. How would you prepare for a pandemic situation?**

**5. What are the plans for prevention and control of infectious disease in your district (hospitals, schools, etc.)?**

**6. How would you describe the affect of the professional learning activity on your practice?**

**7. How can we better prepare for an infectious disease emergency?**

**8. If a staff member became ill and fell into a coma, who would be responsible for monitoring?**

**9. How can we better prepare our staff to deal with an infectious disease emergency?**

**10. Do you think the Department of Homeland Security is taking the necessary precautions to prevent an infectious disease from occurring in your state or local area? Why or why not? Please explain your response**

**11. What role should parents play during an infectious disease emergency in the school setting?**

**12. If you had to be quarantined, how far would you be willing to travel?**

**13. What preparations should we do at the school level?**

**14. What are the best ways to promote awareness of pandemic preparedness in schools and communities?**

**15. What positive outcomes did you foresee from the professional learning activities?**

**16. What suggestions would you make to educators regarding pandemic preparedness?**

**17. How could we better involve the community in our preparedness plans during an infectious disease emergency?**

**18. When do you think a pandemic is likely to occur?**

**a. In the next 3 years b. More than 3 years c. Less than 3 years d. Don’t know e. Other**

**19. How can we engage the parents in our district to communicate information about this emergency plan and how it will be used to protect us from infectious diseases?**