

Raphael Gisstand

5100:620 Psychology of Instruction

Dr. C. Knight

April 18, 2012

Pre-Service Teacher Portfolio Requirement

## Introduction

### District Profile

The Akron Public School District is located in Akron, Ohio. According to Just the Fact 2011 (JTF), the district is diverse with a total of 23,000 students. The demographics of the student population in the district are 2.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 47.1% Black/African American, 1.7% Hispanic, 7.4% Multiracial and 40.9% White/Caucasian (JTF-Akron, 2011). There are a total of 34 schools in the district (18 Elementary schools, eight Middle Schools and eight High Schools) (JTF-Akron, 2011). The school district also has 21 Community Learning Centers (CLCs) (17 Elementary schools, three Middle Schools and one High School). The school district has 18.8% students with disabilities in 2010-2011 and has 84.7% students that are economically disadvantaged (ODE-Akron, 2011). The school is located in an urban area.

According to the Ohio Department of Education, all schools are rated on a system that demonstrates how well the school is doing in relation to the rating system that is set up by the state school standards. Based on the Akron Public Schools Report Card, the school district rating is Continuous Improvement. Continuous Improvement is one of five ratings that schools can receive (Excellent, Effective, Continuous Improvement, Academic Watch and Academic Emergency). This rating system is given for every school in the state. Districts and schools earn credit for the performance of the school based on the rating system. School districts are evaluated

on 26 indicators which comprise the school's rating statewide. Schools are rated on the following indicators- (Grade One through Grade Eight- Reading Math and/or Science; Grades Ten and Eleven-Ohio Graduation Tests- Reading, Mathematics, Writing, Science and Social Studies; Attendance Rate- All Grades; Graduation Rates- All Districts) Districts are evaluated based on all 26 indicators. The number of state indicators met by the school district is 5 out of 26. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a measure within the Ohio Department of Education that is a federal mandate holding schools accountable for the performance of all students and subgroups. For example, schools can meet AYP goals in one of four ways (Current Year Results- proficiency level is at or above AYP goals, Two Year Combined Results- proficiency level is at or above AYP goals when the results from the current year are combined with the prior year. Safe Harbor-student group must make a ten percent or greater reduction in its percentage of non-proficient students and must meet the secondary goal in the AYP indicator-attendance rate or graduation rate, or Growth Model-a non-proficient student must be on a path to proficiency within two years to be considered proficient in the current year). The Growth Model uses data from the Ohio Achievement tests and for Grade Three to Grade Eight; traditional high schools cannot use the Growth Model to determine AYP. Presently, Adequate Yearly Progress has not been met by the district. The Value-Added Measure was Met (Expected Growth). Expected Growth rating is indicating one year of progress for the school as it relates to state indicators for the district in the 2010-2011 school years.

### School Profile

According to the Ohio Department of Education Report Card, the student population of Buchtel High School is diverse and there is an average enrollment of 764 students. In the school, there are 95.4% Black, non-Hispanic students, 2.3% Multi-Racial and 1.9% White non-Hispanic (ODE-Buchtel 2011). There are 25.6% students with disabilities and 81.4% students who are

economically disadvantaged (ODE-Buchtel, 2001). The school district is located in an urban area.

According to the Ohio Department of Education Buchtel High School Report Card, the school rating is Continuous Improvement (rating that demonstrates a district has met and is continuously meeting unmet compliance requirements from the prior school term). State indicators are a number of state assessments given over all test grades. To earn each indicator, a district or school needs to have a certain percentage of students reach proficient or above a given assessment. In Ohio, there are a number of test and non-test indicators. The number of state indicators met by the school district is 3 out of 12. The Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is a federally required measure that is included in Ohio school's accountability system. Every school and district must meet AYP goals that are established for reading and mathematics proficiency and test participation, attendance rate and graduation rate. AYP has been met by the school-School Improvement OK. The Value-Added Measure recognizes that districts and schools may be making significant improvement in the academic performance of their students, even though they may not have met the standard for student achievement. Value-Added measures were not scored in the 2010-2011 school year due to year end results not yet available.

### Classroom Profile

I teach a grade 9-12, Social Studies class. This class consists of a total of 23 students, ages ranging from 14-17 years old. There are twelve girls and eleven boys. I have a student confined to a wheel chair due to a bicycle accident and is going through rehabilitation so that he may walk again. In the classroom, I work with six students that have Individual Educational Plans (IEP), two girls and four boys. My students are diverse ranging from a variety of cultural backgrounds including Hispanic-two students, African American-20 students and Caucasian- one

student. A classroom with such a diverse group of students creates an environment whereby learning occurs by the exchange of ideas from students from all of the different cultural backgrounds. Engaging students to work together promotes teamwork, cooperative learning and respect. Students will have an opportunity to have a well-balanced education.

## II. Characteristics of Learners

### A. Cognitive Development

Jean Piaget is a Swiss developmental psychologist that is best known for his theory on the development of learners based on their cognitive development as it relates to teaching and learning. According to Piaget's Individual Constructivist Perspective, the cognitive development of the students is important. Piaget views cognitive development involving changes in cognitive processes and abilities. Piaget believed that early cognitive development involves processes based upon actions and later progressing into changes in mental operations. The student cognitive development in the class is diverse in terms of skill level and cognitive ability. All of the students fall under Piaget's Individual Constructivist Perspective. There are a total of 23 students in the class (mixed gender). Of the students, there are twelve girls. Two of the girls have IEPs based upon their ability level (performance below grade level). The two girls are in the Concrete Operations stage (Weakness-according to the Individual Constructivist Perspective). The IEPs are based on behavior and ability level. There are ten other girls in the classroom. The remaining girls are in the Formal Operations stages and performing according to age and grade level. There are eleven boys in the classroom. Of the boys, there is one special needs student. This student is special needs due to his confinement to a wheelchair for a leg injury and not related to ability. Of the eleven boys, four boys have IEPs based upon their ability level and behavior. The four boys are in the Concrete Operation stage (Weakness). The remaining seven boys are in the Formal Operations stages and performing according to age and grade level.

Developmentally appropriate teaching practices that are used with the six students in the Concrete Operational stages are based on the use of visual aids and diagrams that students can understand. Other appropriate teaching practices involve students manipulating and testing objects that they identify with. It is important to also incorporate breaking down tasks so that students can understand what is being asked of them. By using familiar examples that act on a students' prior knowledge on a topic, students do not feel pressured when they do not answer quickly. Additional teaching practices involve allowing the students to break down tasks into components so that they are able to process more complex problems. Other methods of teaching to students include brain teasers and open/ended questions where students are able to work through their problems at their level of understanding. Teaching practices are effective when students do not feel overwhelmed and ultimately shut down. The teacher must be the facilitator in the learning process.

Developmentally appropriate teaching practices that are used with the 17 students in the Formal Operations stages are the continued use of Concrete Operational stages in addition to other appropriate teaching practices. Teaching practices that are effective with students in this stage are the use of position papers and debates. Other teaching strategies that are effective with this group are group discussions, experiments and question and answer sessions. Additional practices that can be used are the teaching of broad concepts that utilize materials and ideas that are relevant to the lives of students. Other methods of teaching to students include the adoption of pro/con positions (are the students for or against a topic-positions), listing (the writing down of identifiable qualities) and personal vision (when the students visualize what it is see a position).

Lev Vygotsky is an educational psychologist who proposed a sociocultural theory and worked with other psychologists to develop the Vygotskian. His theory is based on the fact that social interactions lead to changes in the thought pattern of children. In his theory, there are four main core principles to consider. The theory contains the following (1.Children construct their knowledge 2. Development cannot be separated from its social context 3.Learning can lead development and 4. Language plays a central role in development). According to Vygotskian theory, the zone of proximal development is the distance between the developmental levels and potential development under adult guidance or peer collaboration. The theory views interaction with peers as a way for students to learn. The theory suggests that teachers pair students of lower ability with students that are more capable. The use of scaffolding is an important part of the theory whereby students are provided assistance to complete a task and reducing assistance to students as mastery of the task takes place. In my classroom, scaffolding is an effective means of allowing the students to work in groups with other students that grasp the task better initially. By grouping students of different ability, students are able to work together in cooperative learning groups and assist one another. The task completion allows the students perception to be masked by the completion. The students, when working together, maintain their attention to the task and are more focused on task completion as opposed to distraction. Maintaining classroom management is easier when using cooperative learning because each student is proud of their allegiance to the task and their group mates.

## B. Personal Development

Erik Erikson is a German psychologist and developed the theory of psychosocial development. This meant that he believed that personality develops in stages. Erikson's stages of psychosocial development of Latency (six to twelve years) and Adolescence (twelve to eighteen

years) are present in the student population of the class. Six of the students in the class are in the latency stage and seventeen students are in the adolescence stage. The way that this stage influences their sense of self and self-socialization is in how they behave in the classroom. For the six students that have IEPs, they share a commonality of behavior problems plus level of cognitive ability. The behavior is a result of the level of inability to perform and it appears as though their acting out in school is related to this. The developmental changes' occurring (in self) has been stagnated by the insistence on these students to act out in school. In their childhood, these students have not mastered self-discipline and focus. Their reliance on acting out reflects their disregard for learning. Learning new skills is a challenge for these students. The risk of failure, inferiority and incompetence cause the students to misbehave. For the remaining 17 students, they are forming their identity and learning more about themselves. The level of focus for this number of students is high and their achievement is easily recognized. Peer relationships are important to these students. By using the teaching practice of cooperative learning, student interaction places the students in groups where they can learn from one another. This type of learning influences peer relationships in respect to the interactions. Developmentally appropriate teaching practices include past/present/future exercises, behavior recognition and application of prior knowledge.

### C. Social/Moral Development

In the class, students are developing socially and morally. Of the six students with IEPs, cooperative learning is helping to decrease the distractions that misbehavior may be causing. The students are becoming more aware when they disrupt the order of the classroom. Students are maturing in the class and are more aware of the difference between right and wrong. Developmentally appropriate teaching practices are the rewards for the entire group of students

as opposed to the lack of reward (pizza party, snacks, free time). The students are becoming morally aware. Lawrence Kohlberg is a psychologist that based his theory of moral development largely on Jean Piaget. Kohlberg's theory has six stages (Level One- Pre-conventional Morality: Stage One-Obedience and Punishment Orientation, Stage Two-Individualism and Exchange; Level Two-Conventional Morality: Stage Three-Good Interpersonal Relationships, Stage Four-Maintaining the Social Order; Level Three-Post-Conventional Morality: Stage Five-Social Contract and Individual Rights, Stage Six- Universal Principles). Based on Kohlberg's theory, the six students with IEPs are split. Two of the students are in Pre-conventional Morality Stage 1 (Obedience or Punishment Orientation). These two students continually disrupt and have not learned the consequences of their actions. The other four IEP students are in the Pre-Conventional Morality Stage Two (Self Interest Orientation). These students are beginning to learn the consequences of their actions and have begun to conform to following the rules and being in order. The remaining seventeen students are in the Conventional Morality Stage Three (Social Conformity Orientation). These students contribute to the social order in the classroom and realize that they are on a team. These students do not disrupt the class and want to be able to be rewarded for their behavior (good girl/good boy). A learning environment that will foster moral development is contingent upon the imparting of life lesson learning (teaching that some behaviors are right or wrong). Students gravitate towards receiving rewards. There are also discussions on bullying. In fact, the students helped to compile classroom expectations in the beginning of the school year. Bullying videos have also been shown and current events that have resulted from bullying of students have been outlined. The students realize that bullying is a form of intimidation and is not tolerated in the classroom environment. The gender differences in the classroom have not been a problem.



### III. Assessment

Students will use paper/pencil tests (bell work, quizzes and tests). The students will be evaluated based on their performance on written tests. The students will learn from timed tests and from subsequent question/answer sessions. The teacher will be the facilitator by providing direct instruction and guided discussions. The students will have the ability to correct their responses in problem solving tasks.

An additional evaluative tool will be in class guided discussions whereby students will respond to open/ended questions facilitated by the teacher.

The students will also work in cooperative learning groups and will work along with their peers. Pairing the students with peers in this environment will also increase their awareness, promote teamwork, and allow the students to demonstrate their comprehension in a group setting. The learning environment will also help the students adapt to groups and students will learn how to peer monitor.

The students will also participate in the class with the use of technology (computer assisted instruction). The assessments will provide value added to the students due to their particular stage in their growth and development. The teacher will be the facilitator and guide lessons. The teacher will also maintain classroom management at all times. Students will participate in self-assessment by acknowledging their personal growth by determining their strengths and weaknesses.

The students will participate in goal setting whereby they will be set goals in their learning. The students will determine what progress they are making and realize their own potential.

#### IV. Conclusion

Working with the diverse population of learners has been a rewarding experience. Application of theory has also been profound. Each student in my classroom is different considering their learning styles and levels of cognition. The students have differing levels of prior knowledge and the process of assessing every student has been challenging. Each student has a potential to learn. The students also have varying levels of social needs. All of the students are motivated either intrinsically or extrinsically. The majority of the students are extrinsically motivated by rewards (extra responsibilities, being allowed to attend an occasional pizza party, or by praise). The goal is to intrinsically motivate students where they find value in learning for their own knowledge. As an educator, I have found that I must be diligent and organized. I must also focus on finding students where they are (prior knowledge) and working to bring the students up to the level that they are to be performing at. I have learned how my understanding of theory must be applied to my classroom. I have also learned that classroom management is essential to facilitation of lessons and creating structure. I must also be fair and consistent, serious and focused and treat every student's potential in a way that molds them as learners. Based on theorists that I have highlighted, I must understand that a single theory cannot be the basis for my approach to classroom teaching styles. I realize that I must blend various techniques and become more creative in the development of lessons in my classroom. I must also focus on utilizing what I have learned (differentiated instruction, direct instruction, cooperative learning, and computer assisted instruction). The lessons that I plan must consider all of the students in my classroom and I must use a variety of innovative techniques to maintain student interest. I must also learn how to continually make the lessons meaningful to students that I encounter and demonstrate the value in the lessons. I must treat all students fairly and not give preferential treatment. I must develop learners into critical thinkers who can create positive worldviews.

## References

2012. Akron Public Schools-Buchtel High School

<http://www.akronschoools.com/schools/home/index.dot?schId=10339>

2012. Cognitive Constructivist Theories. (n.d.) Retrieved from

<http://viking.coe.uh.edu/~ichen/ebook/et-it/cognitiv.htm>

2012. Jean Piaget. (n.d.) Retrieved from <http://www.sk.com.br/sk-piage.html>

2012. Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky (n.d.)

Retrieved from <http://www.muskingum.edu/~psych/psycweb/history/vygotsky.htm>

Ohio Department of Education. (2012)

Retrieved from <http://www.ode.state.oh.us/reportcardfiles/2010-2011/BUILD/004077.pdf>

W.C. Crain. (1985). *Theories of Development*. Prentice-Hall: New Jersey. pp. 118-136.