

Capstone Reflection

Name of Preservice Teacher _____ Courtney Cale _____
Name of Mentor Teacher _____ Yvonne Church _____
Email of Mentor Teacher _____ churchy@live.siouxcityschools.com _____
Dates of Capstone ___ May 2, 3, & 4 ___ Grade(s) Taught ___ 1 ___
Location _____ Leeds Elementary School—Sioux City, IA _____
Subjects Taught _____ Social Studies _____

Brief Summary

Present a holistic description of your Capstone experience. Include a profile of your students so that the university supervisor has a better understanding of the context.

My cooperating teacher was Yvonne Church. She has been teaching for 39 years and was dedicated Teacher of the Year this year. The first grade class I taught had 22 students in it. This was such a diverse group of students. Five of the students in the class were ELLs receiving services, 5 have learning disabilities, 3 were receiving learning disability services last year and are no longer receiving them, 2 students were advanced, and 2 students had physical disabilities. Of the physical disabilities, one student had cystic fibrosis and had some medical needs to care for. The other student had muscular atrophy and needed a Para to assist her physically.

The first day I was in the classroom (May 1), I went and observed the whole day, taking note of modifications I had to make in my lessons to fit the needs of the class. The next three days I taught my social studies lessons, I read aloud, and I actually assisted the guided reading groups also. It was a great experience and I learned so much from it.

The guided reading groups took up most of the morning. There were four stations and four groups. Each station was thirty minutes long. The students were well practiced in where they had to be and what was expected of them. I taught one of the stations while I was there. The social studies time period was initially at the end of the day the students would spend thirty minutes learning social studies. When I was there, however, this time frame was elongated and shifted to different parts of the day, depending on the lesson and what else was happening that day. The first day I taught, the social studies lesson was thirty minutes long and the last two days I taught, it was an hour long because of the stations I set up.

The topic I taught was on the seasons spring and summer. The first day, my main focus was on why we have seasons and what some characteristics of spring and summer are. The other two days, I established four stations that they would each go to in small groups. They each went to two stations each day. The four stations were writing, reading, art, and social studies. In the writing station, they wrote in their journals about spring and summer. I had writing prompts available for them to go off of if they wanted. In the reading station, there were a bunch of books on the

seasons and the students just free read as the time allotted. The third station was art. In this station, the students made collages of their favorite season. The last station was social studies. In this station, the students were given prompts to ask a partner about their family traditions in the spring and summer, what their favorite thing to do in that season is, etc. I encouraged them to generate their own questions to ask also.

Analytical Reflection

Please reflect on the components listed below. Note strengths as well as modifications for the future.

1. *Hook*—The students didn't need much of a hook to be interested in the topic. I had them talk to a friend about what they had learned the previous day and I brought in props. The props were a hit. They loved when I turned the lights off and turned the flashlight on.
2. *Tapping into prior knowledge*—I asked them questions to glean what knowledge they had on the subject. Some students knew a lot about the seasons and some students didn't.
3. *Setting a purpose*—I stated it clearly what my objective was for the whole unit and for each day and wrote it on the white board so that they could always come back to it. I was good about reiterating why it was important to know about the seasons and how the seasons affect us daily.
4. *Vocabulary strategy*—I had a good layout for teaching vocabulary, but when I went into the class the first day and showed Yvonne Church my plans, she said that I was expecting too much of them. I was going to teach them 15 new vocabulary words, but I reduced it down to 5. I should have gone over them more in depth and explained them so that the students really understood them, but there wasn't enough time.
5. *Comprehension strategy*—There were many comprehension strategies I included in my lessons. One comprehension strategy was that I had them aesthetically demonstrate their knowledge of the vocabulary words by having them act it out. They acted out rotation and revolution and showed me that they understood the difference between the two words. Another comprehension strategy is that I split the class into smaller groups and they had to talk to one another about different prompts I created for their discussions and about what they had learned the day before. And yet another strategy included in the lesson is to have them go into different stations and demonstrate their knowledge through different means (collage, discussion, research, writing).
6. *Methodology*—The first day I taught, I did mostly direct instruction that required some interaction from the students. I brought in different

props like a globe, flashlight, tape, and a pencil to demonstrate the understanding of why there are seasons and then the students were to replicate what I had modeled using the globe with their bodies and partners. The next two days were more cooperative, small groups. I explained to all the students what was expected from them at each station and for the art station, I showed them a collage that I had created. I then split them up into groups and distributed them to the different stations. I walked around and helped aid the students that needed help and gave suggestions to others.

7. *Organization of lesson plans*—My cooperating teacher was very impressed with the amount of thought and time that I put into my lessons. I took a lot of time planning and laying out everything that I wanted to talk about and do within the lessons. It was difficult to write them though, because I didn't know very much about the ability level of the class, so I just had to guess on where I thought they were at. My cooperating teacher helped me a lot in modifying my lessons because they were more geared towards second graders. One thing that I would have changed is that I would have had everything set up and ready to go the day before. One day I was scrambling because I forgot to print off papers I needed that morning.

8. *Assessment*—I did a lot of informal assessment and asked a lot of questions for understanding. The more tangible assessments I did came in the stations. For the social studies station, I walked around and listened to the different groups asking and responding to each other's questions. For the writing station, the students each responded by writing and drawing pictures. And for the art station, I had the students each present their collages to the rest of the class and talk a little bit about them.

9. *Class management*—I was very lucky. My cooperating teacher had been teaching for 39 years, so her classroom management was excellent. The kids all knew what to do and what was expected of them because she had "trained" them that way. Her class was very well-behaved. When I took over the class to teach my lesson, my cooperating teacher gave me full reign of the class. They were very good, although they did get a little loud at points. I may need more practice in this area, though, because I don't feel like I could control a new class that hasn't had training in discipline.

10. *Pacing*—I really made it a goal of mine to go slowly while teaching and make sure the students understood what I was saying. I split my teaching into small chunks and asked questions in between to make sure their attention was still on me and what I was teaching, then I would teach them a little bit more, etc. Pacing was very difficult to judge though, because some students understood it the first time I said it, while others it took 3 or 4 times for them to understand. I feel like I did a pretty good job pacing my lessons considering.

Holistic Reflection

What did you learn as a result of this experience? How has this experience impacted your perception of self as a teacher?

I learned a lot from this experience; too much to put on this paper. I learned that it is good to have everything ready the night before. I learned that I need to get the students' attention, explain the directions in detail, and then send them off to their various groups. I learned that you need a lot of patience. I learned that you need to be flexible. No matter how wonderful your lesson is, be prepared to change and modify it. I learned that you always need to have a plan B and a plan C. I learned that a person may be wonderful at giving directions and teaching and disciplining the class, but it serves no purpose in the classroom if they don't love and genuinely care for the students. You can teach a person how to teach and discipline a class, but love for children is something you can't teach. I learned that direct instruction isn't suitable for every lesson. I learned that worksheets, if used appropriately, can add to the understanding of a lesson. I learned that a teacher needs to model what they expect from the students. I learned that it is important to collaborate with coworkers. I learned a lot of things from just three days of teaching.

I came into the capstone very unsure of myself. I didn't know how the teaching would go or how I would handle classroom management. I was terrified to be in front of the classroom being the one teaching the lessons. I was scared that I would have to be in control of the class. When I walked into the classroom, this feeling of confidence came over me. I knew then that I was in the right place. It just felt natural. I didn't know how I would do teaching, but I knew I wanted to be in the classroom. Yvonne welcomed me with open arms, which was so comforting. She gave me lots of pointers to prepare me to teach her class. We went over my lesson plans and she had such confidence in me that I couldn't help but feel confident in myself. I think confidence really makes or breaks a teacher. I made a lot of mistakes teaching and definitely had things I would change about what I did, but I'm glad I did them because I certainly learned a lot from this experience.

When I taught my lessons, I was nervous, but I was also confident because Yvonne was confident in me. I knew I could do it. So I got up in front of the class and it just felt natural. I know this is what I want to do—I want to be a teacher. I wished I could have spent more time with the students. I could have taught for the rest of the school year and been absolutely ecstatic about it. It was such a great class and I was under such a great teacher. It was an all-around very uplifting and inspiring experience.