Lisa Bays

Reflection Paper 6

I believe if someone were examining my portfolio for the first time, they would see my interest in taking what I have learned in the Marshall graduate program and applying it in the “real world”. Throughout my time in Marshall’s graduate program I have always tried to make my assignments not just something I could turn in for a grade, but something I would use in my classroom. My interest in graduate school has always been to find ways to improve my ability to help my students become as successful as possible, and I hope my projects and portfolio reflect this.

The area I am strongest in is Planning, Instruction, and Assessment. I have always been a firm advocate of using data based decision making to improve what I do. I feel Planning, Instruction, and Assessment are all necessary parts of the data based decision cycle. All three elements are necessary to adapt my lessons and style to my learners. My favorite project in this portfolio is the Author Study of Chris Van Allsburg. In order to make this lesson successful I had to continuously assess my students’ progress, and adapt the lesson to my student’s unique learning needs. This involved a lot of work and planning, but the payoff was amazing. I still have many students from previous years greet me and ask “Do you remember when we did the Jumanji Play?” When students become emotionally invested in the learning process it becomes indelibly imprinted into their minds.

The area I feel needs the most development is Learners and Learning. I feel I learn something new about the process of learning, and how to help meet specific learners’ needs almost every time I step into the classroom. The project that typifies this best is my figurative language thematic unit. After I began the webquest portion of it for one of my graduate classes, I began to see the value of integrating various learning styles and was amazed at how my lower performing students shined when I addressed their learning style. Learning how this webquest engaged my students, I saw the importance of seeking out new methods and techniques. I believe finding these new methods and techniques will be a lifelong challenge, and I am look forward to where this will take me.

At this time, I do not have any plans to pursue a higher degree, however I will still continue to take classes that interest me. I will continue to pursue my professional development. I intend to go forward with what I have learned in this graduate program, and continue to incorporate these lessons into my classroom to become a better teacher. Graduate school has already changed many of my approaches to teaching, and I am sure that as time goes by, and I gain experience, I will find even more ways to implement what I have learned.

Developing this portfolio reminded me of the importance of engaging in lifelong learning through reflective practice, participation in learning communities, and related activities that promote professional growth. Graduate school has demonstrated to me how quickly the art of teaching students is evolving, and how important it is that we, as teaching professionals, continue to evolve with it. If we stop growing as professionals, we begin to miss opportunities to fully meet the needs of our students.

Creating this portfolio allowed me to re-examine many of the projects that I completed in the course of pursing my Master’s Degree. I was amazed to see just how much my viewpoints had changed during the pursuit of my degree, and how the tone and quality of my work had improved as well. This portfolio served as a reminder for just why it was that I sought out my Master’s degree, self-improvement and enhancing my ability to help my students reach their potential. It has been an interesting and fulling journey, and I can not wait to see what the next chapters of my life will bring!