

Final Paper: Diverse Learners Practicum

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According to one researcher (Lynch, 2016), it is necessary for school classrooms to diversely educate for several reasons. Diversity in the classroom offers a greater bond between student and teacher, gives each student a better chance at an equal level of success, encourages students to recognize themselves, facilitates the individuals processes of learning, and helps educators assist students to assimilate what they learn from what they already know. Diversity is greatly influenced by an educator's willingness and effort to self-educate themselves on their student's backgrounds, but it can make a huge impact for student learning and overall success in the classroom. The purpose of the Diverse Learners Practicum Final Paper is to express a few individual diverse experiences one person has shared in, and examine how to use these experiences to influence an educator's future teacher style constructively and effectively.

The Diverse Learners Practicum is an excellent opportunity to reflect on past experiences in a diverse setting as well as expand on a person's knowledge of diversity and build through further opportunity and experience. Although I was able to attend and reflect on several experiences which will influence my future teaching style, this paper will dig deeper into my experiences at Dreams in Motion and Pride Inc. which each stood out to me in a special way. In both experiences, I was allowed to acknowledge and embrace experiences that I am not able to normally participate in.

Expansion of Understanding of Physical Disabilities

Dreams in Motion

Dreams in Motion is a non-profit based out of the Bismarck/Mandan community whose goal is to provide adaptive sports, both competitive and recreational, to people of all ages. In 2017, Dreams in Motion held a wheelchair basketball tournament at Mandan Middle School. At

this event, several teams who participated were regular wheelchair users, while others were not. I was lucky enough to receive the opportunity to play on a team with a few of my teammates from my high school girls basketball team. One image from this experience is shown in Appendix A where I was being assisted in taping my hands so they would not get raw from the tires of the wheelchair. For the players who did not regularly utilize a wheelchair, this experience provided an opportunity to discover what it was like to participate in a basketball game while confined to a wheelchair, as well as interact and listen to stories from other athletes who participate regularly. This experience helped provide me with a perspective of the difficulty of wheelchair sports, as well as provided me the chance to speak with the extremely talented athletes who participated.

In my classroom, this opportunity will assist me in sharing new ideas and personal connections from this event with students who may be confined to a wheelchair, but love to compete. Also, I can share my experience and educate other students in my class who may have questions about wheelchair basketball. As my experience with Dreams in Motion helped me further my understanding and appreciation of others who participate in activities with a physical disability, Pride Inc. helped me learn more about an individual with an intellectual disability, who happened to be one of the friendliest people I had ever met.

Expansion of Understanding of Intellectual Disabilities

Pride Inc.

Pride Inc. is an organization that helps people of all ages with different disabilities realize and help reach their potential to live and work in the community. I received the opportunity to shadow my roommate, Megan Fields, at a session of her work at Pride. Megan works as a youth mentor at Pride Inc., meaning she is responsible for the direct delivery of services to children and youth living in the community to preserve the integrity of the family unit. My role while

assisting Megan was to give social advice and care to a teenage boy with Down Syndrome. Sadly, because of HIPPA regulations, I was not able to take any pictures of my experience. While spending time with this individual, I learned how much love and care this boy had for others. We went to several different places in the community, and no matter where we went, he would run up to nearly every person he met, say hello, and ask each person how their day was. Although this was a boundary goal that Megan was working on teaching this boy, the whole experience helped me take a lesson on how welcomed I would like the people I meet and interact within my life to feel like.

This opportunity will help me in my future classroom to, no matter the circumstance, respect who individuals are as people and help meet various students' proficiency levels. Each individual offers something special and has gifts and talents that should be brought about from an educator in the classroom. I also think the understanding and experience I developed from this opportunity will help me create more effective future questioning strategies and classroom activities if I have a student in my classroom with Down Syndrome.

Conclusion

Diversity Education

Diversity education is not only represented by educators acknowledging the differences of her or her students and having respect for each person, but it is about embracing these differences and learning how to incorporate strategies to best assure the success of all students. As stated previously in this paper, the purpose of the Diverse Learners Practicum Final Paper is to express a few individual diverse experiences one person has shared in, and examine how to use these experiences to influence an educator's future teacher style constructively and effectively. My experiences and education throughout this course have greatly influenced my

understanding of diversity and the implementation of strategies in the classroom. The more an educator can reach out, build a relationship, and help a student feel comfortable about sharing their diversity and individuality, the better sense of community this student will feel in a classroom, and the greater chance a student has to learn and prosper in a school setting.

References

Lynch, M. (2016, January 16). 4 Reasons Why Classrooms Need Diversity Education. The Advocate. <https://www.theadvocate.org/4-reasons-classrooms-need-diversity-education/>.

Appendix A

