

SAMPLE PORTFOLIO REFLECTION with Feedback

NOTE: Regular type indicates an original portion of this Master's degree student's portfolio reflection. QUESTIONS IN CAPS are questions posed by the instructor to encourage the student writer to elaborate upon her comments to give more specific information/examples and to show her impact on her K-12 students' performance/learning. The underlined text shows possible elaborations to make this a stronger reflection.

Reflection:

Many things in my practice have changed as a result of my participation in the Special Education Master's program. First, I feel more capable of meeting the needs of all students. The classes that we have taken in our program have offered valuable resources for me to use in my class. I always thought myself to be an aware teacher, meaning that I understood that what works for one does not work for all. I am tolerant of people who are different from me and try to make everyone feel valuable. I have not changed in that aspect. What has changed is the way I deliver instruction and the strategies that I use. **CAN YOU GIVE SPECIFIC EXAMPLES OF THESE STRATEGIES AND INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES AND THEIR IMPACT ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT?** (e.g., graphic organizers such as concept diagrams and maps, using color with graphic organizers, use of curriculum-based assessment to focus my teaching, better structure for my cooperative learning groups). I constantly self-monitor and adjust to make sure that I have made sufficient modifications to my instruction. **CAN YOU GIVE SOME SPECIFIC EXAMPLES?** (e.g., I am more comfortable and fluid in differentiating for students, and able to adjust lessons as needed if students are not understanding the material. I make sure that the purpose of each lesson is clear to students and I always assess for understanding at the end of each lesson. Behaviorally, I am actively trying to take a positive stance towards discipline. I have made rules and procedures clear and precise in hopes of creating an environment that promotes learning. I am using a positive reward system in place of punishment. For example, instead of punishing students who do not turn in homework, I am rewarding the students who do turn in homework.

My collaborative practice has also changed as a result of the program. **IN WHAT OBSERVABLE WAYS?** I have increased variety in my co-teaching arrangements including parallel instruction, stations, interactive and alternative teaching. I feel very comfortable having students and teachers move in and out of the room. This program has pushed me to have a working relationship with my co-teacher. I now value what that relationship brings to me professionally and to my students. I have also become more knowledgeable about No Child Left Behind and what a wonderful resource the VDOE can be. **WHAT SPECIFIC RESOURCES HAVE YOU ACCESSED FROM VDOE AND FOUND MOST VALUABLE?** (e.g., documents such as Parental Rights and Responsibilities, IEP Models, Accommodations and Modifications, lesson plans from the Enhanced Scope and Sequence)

WHAT CHANGES HAVE YOU SEEN IN THE STUDENTS AS A RESULT OF CHANGING YOUR PRACTICES? (e.g., These strategies and instructional techniques have helped support students with the learning process. Using them allows the students to interpret information in different way. By presenting content in multiple ways, I am increasing the chance for my students to be successful. Changes that I have seen in my students as a result of these changes in my teaching include my students seeming to be generally happier in school, kinder to one another, and trying harder to do their best. Several parents have told me that their children are more successful and eager to go to school this year than they have ever been. My students show more than one year's growth in reading each year, and they performed just under the gifted and talented student class (TAG) on last year's Standards of Learning assessment.) This program has taught me many things that are improving the way I interact with teachers and students.

Effective Example of a Portfolio Reflection

CEC STANDARD 5: INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

The Standard of Instructional Planning encompasses individualized decision-making about instruction. This involves having a vision specifically of both long-range goals and shorter-range goals and objectives for individual students. I have demonstrated these standards in varied formats.

I began using **Course Maps and Unit Organizers** in my sciences courses and found that they were beneficial in helping students see the big picture and understand the expectations of a course and of specific units. It was very helpful for students who were disorganized to have this graphic organizer. It was especially helpful when I had them complete the expanded map to fill in the details of the unit organizer. The students that more carefully filled in the organizers were the ones who were naturally better at gleaning important information. By pairing them with students who were less motivated or less able to identify most important information, stronger students were able to model use of the strategy for weaker students. My students particularly began asking for the "bubble sheet" as they called it. These tools helped me to organize information to be taught so that I also presented it in a more organized manner. They helped me to address overall instructional planning.

More individualized planning is evident in the **goals and objectives** I write on my students' IEPs. I have worked hard as I complete annual IEP updates to address areas of need for that individual that by accomplishing, they will be more likely to accomplish the goals and objectives of the general education courses in which they participate. What this accomplishes is more meaningful focus for me when working with students and for them as well. As I try to encourage students to become more involved in their own IEPs and in taking steps to meet their own goals and objectives, I have found that fewer goals and objectives that are more focused help students see better where they are going and what they are trying to achieve. The **goals and objective samples** included in the artifacts demonstrate a narrowed focus for a student who is receiving consultative services and is pursuing an advanced diploma. Together we were able to identify these specific areas as areas he needed to conquer to achieve his higher goal of an advanced diploma.

Bringing the focus of instructional planning into the co-taught classroom, **my co-planned and co-taught unit** demonstrates attention to individual needs within the larger context of the general education classroom. Specifically, the part of the lesson in which we changed our plan based on students' difficulties with some details of the concept we were teaching. Our change produced drastically improved grades on the quiz! In the unit following this we encountered problems with many students' understanding of a concept from an earlier unit. In an effort to help those who had not yet mastered the steps involved in changing a linear equation from standard form to slope-intercept form, I developed a **Process Chart**, modeled its use on the overhead with students using different colors to highlight important steps and was able to successfully scaffold students on the test on this material, by encouraging them to stop and think, picture our process chart and what was highlighted in each step. That brief reminder was enough to trigger the memory of most students who got stuck with this problem. Test results in the classes in which we spent more time on this chart were mostly in the B and C range, much higher than usual for these students.

Lastly, a very specific example of individualized instruction is my use of **guided notes** for one student with marked ADHD and writing difficulties. At the beginning of the semester he rarely wrote more than two lines of notes on a page even with repeated prompting. Once provided with guided notes, and with continued prompting, he is writing more. Along with this accommodation, my co-teacher and I challenged him during a class-wide goal-setting lesson to try keeping up with the guided notes just until the next progress report. If his grade did not improve then he had our permission to stop taking notes. By the next progress report he had a B, whereas his average for the first nine weeks had been 55, a solid F. Needless to say, he is still taking notes using these guides and shines as an example of the success of individualized instructional planning.

REQUIRED, BUT OFTEN NEGLECTED, FEATURES OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PORTFOLIOS

The Special Education program portfolios are organized according to the School of Education (SoE), Curriculum and Instruction portfolio sections, however, students must address the Council for Exceptional Children's (CEC) professional standards within that framework. See the crosswalk to determine which CEC standards should be addressed within each portfolio section. In some SoE sections, this means that multiple CEC standards will be addressed within one section. In the case of CEC standard #5 Instructional Planning and Strategies, address planning in the SoE section for Ability to Plan, Organize, and Prepare for Teaching; address teaching strategies in the SoE section for Teaching Skills.

In addition to the other required elements of your Special Education e-portfolio, Master's students are required to include the following:

1. **Artifacts that demonstrate your affect on the learning of K-12 students in your field placement or classroom.** Many of the artifacts or evidence included under standards such as those involving assessment, instructional strategies, and learning environments can be used to document your effectiveness in promoting student learning (e.g., CBA, pre- post-test measures, student work or portfolio entries showing growth, FBA/BIP, lessons/units, etc.). Be sure to highlight your demonstrated effectiveness in your evidence and reflections as you address the standards.
2. **Reflections.** For each of the CEC standards, you should include a reflection addressing:
 - a. What artifacts/pieces of evidence were selected to demonstrate competency attainment in the standard
 - b. Why those artifacts were chosen for that standard (What skills and/or experiences were they intended to show or illustrate?)
 - c. How they relate to the role of the teacher of special education students and what the work says about your growing competence in that area.

Some artifacts or evidence may serve to document competence in multiple standards/areas. The artifact may be posted in one section, but referred to in more than one section. Be sure to clearly indicate where all artifacts can be found in your portfolio for easy reference.

At the end of the portfolio, address your personal and professional growth as a result of the program and experiences provided. The School of Education Conceptual Framework elements (Content Expertise, Reflective Practice, Collaboration, and Teacher Leadership) should guide your commentary on your overall growth in this "mega-reflection."

Reminder: Be sure to respect confidentiality in preparing and presenting portfolio materials. Information that may identify particular students, families, schools, or teachers should be removed from documentation. You may have pictures that illustrate competencies, but if you use these, please obtain permission from the appropriate sources.