Katherine Turcios

Field study #1 Learning Statement

**Field study question:**

How can I use documentation to encourage critical thinking in my students?

**Learning Statement:**

I am learning that documentation is an ongoing reflective process both for myself and my students and how to utilize reflection time in my practice in order to better meet the needs of my students.

**Elaborations:**

One thing that I noticed throughout my field study is the importance of student voice. In the beginning of this program we discussed about engaging students in a more natural and authentic way. I found that at the beginning of my field study when I explained to my students about my question and how I would be documenting activities and events in the classroom they were very keen on helping me. In one math activity related to patterns, they were using manipulatives and were continuously calling me over to take pictures of their creations. I was grateful for them being eager to share with me, however I had the impression that this was not as authentic as if I had just been observing as I normally would. As the year went on I continued to document my students in the classroom but didn’t really do much with the documentation. I looked back at my guiding question for my field study and realized that “encourage critical thinking in my students” piece was not present. I noticed that I was taking the time to reflect on my learning of my field study question but where was the time for my students to reflect?

At the beginning of the year we began a reflection journal and it was fairly empty and what was there was not very rich or indicative of my students’ voice. I found that I would observe their learning and could make assessments but I was missing a key piece which was their own reflection about their learning process. I think this is an important piece in holistic practices because through the child’s and my own reflections we are able to get a more complete picture of what is going on and what needs to be done to meet my students’ needs. I think this learning has been reshaped my perspective in valuing my students voice more and taking into account how they see themselves and what they need from me as their teacher.

**Evidence:**

* **Student blogfolios:** Having the opportunity to explore with my students the blogfolios has helped me learn that reflection can be student driven. When I first introduced blogfolios to my students I was concerned that they would find it boring. I was surprised to see how much they enjoyed writing about their experiences. This was especially true when they received comments and feedback from their parents. I think my next steps with this would be providing families with more specific forms of feedback for their students.
* **In-class reflection journals:** It took some time before I was able to get my students on the blogfolios and technology although amazing in some ways is not always as reliable as a paper and pencil. I started off using Reflection journals in class as a way to begin introducing the reflective process. I also had a journal for myself that I would write in at the end of the day. Some days what I wrote was not very much. I think one of the things I would like to do next year is make reflections time more consistent for myself and for my students.
* **Revisiting events through photos:** One thing that I began to do more often was group reflections. Sometimes after certain activities or lessons I would be taking photos and videos and afterwards we would gather as a class to look and discuss them together. I found that by doing this it was a less formal way of reflecting that also felt more personal. I discovered as well that students who were more hesitant to share with the group would make comments even if it was just to the person next to them. I also found that students who struggled with writing were more willing to share in this context and were able to express themselves more freely. This makes me think about how I am using reflection time in the classroom and how I can provide different opportunities for my students.

**Capacities:**

* **Collaborate in learning communities to support your teaching practice:** Part of the reflective process for me has happened when meeting with my mentor group. They have been supportive to me throughout this learning process and I have been able to gain new insights on myself that I may not have recognized on my own. I especially found that having a promise partner accountable to helped me to see things differently and learn about my own strengths and areas that I need to improve on.
* **Explore contexts and environments that support and respond to learners’ needs:** I found that making time to reflect for myself and for my students was a challenge. As I tried to incorporate reflection time as a separate activity I found it was difficult for me and for my students to know what to reflect upon. As time went on I found that the best moments to reflects were right after an activity or lesson. This was hard for me to do sometimes as it ended up cutting into our time for other lessons. I realized though that giving this time, even if I felt it was taking away from something else, was more valuable than having a specific time for reflection. In my future Field studies this is something that I want to keep in my mind because I think it will help me to think about how I plan my time throughout the day.
* **Develop a disposition of inquiry and critical reflection to understand and develop your practice:** I think I have become more comfortable with the unknown and I’m working towards being more willing to try something that stems from events that have happened in my classroom. I’m learning to be more willing to take those risks and try something out. Starting this program was one of those risks and it is something that I’m glad I did. It has opened up new opportunities for me to explore and develop my teaching practice further.

**Connection to Educational Theory**

Project Zero: Documentation: Transforming our Perspectives

**“A good documentation is one that modifies our image of the child” Sandra Piccinini**

* Through my own and my students’ reflections on their documentation I have found that my perspective of my students learning needs has changed. I have found that seeing their perspective on their own learning has also transformed my way of how I approach a lesson or theme and how I can use this information to better meet their learning challenges.

**“Documentation creates a dialogue and offers teachers the possibility to learn”**

* I have found that one of the most valuable things I have gained from this field study is having the opportunity to discuss and dialogue with my colleagues not only from this program but at my school. These conversations are also a form of reflection and have helped me in guiding me in the next steps of my field study.

**“Try to look better, giving you some tools that can support, that can sustain you in this effort, as we say, to listen to the children. Be able to get closer to them. That means also to develop and increase your knowledge about the learning process of the children but at the same time your learning process in order to becomes a teacher” Tizianna Filippini**

* As in every field there is opportunity to learn and grow. Teaching is no exception. I have found that in doing my field study the progress that I see in myself as teacher and learner is just as important and evident as the progress and growth I see in my students. I have watched and re-watched this documentary several times during the course of my field study. One message that stands out to me the most is focussing on the process and not the product. I think that previously I was still in this mentality but as I explore and learn more I find that my perspective on progress has changed and that my students are also beginning to think differently on how they think about their learning.

**My Visions and Goals for the future**

* Continue to document and try different methods that are out of my comfort zone.
* Involve my students in the documentation process
* Make time for reflecting on documentation as a group and as individuals
* Using documentation to communicate student learning and growth to their families.