

Field Study Report: Summary

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GRADUATE DIPLOMA COHORT: Inquiry based learning in the Reggio inspired
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Teaching and Learning Environment in which your Field Study occurred:

(Please include the grade level, and general character of any classes involved in your classroom inquiry.)

2/3 French Immersion class. Enthusiastic and energetic. A variety of levels and abilities

Focus and Rationale:

I think this year the group that I have will need more one on one time than previous years. This term I will also have a student teacher doing his long practicum. He will be doing primarily most of the teaching and so I hope to use the conference time as a way to connect with students. During our summer institute we watched some videos from Dylan Wiliam. One of the videos was on collaborative learning. I think that by being able to conference with my students not only as individuals but in groups will help me in creating a more collaborative environment for learning. I hope to encourage not only self-feedback but also peer-feedback during conferences which I believe will also promote a collaborative learning environment. Going back to "Children as citizens" I hope to utilize conference time as a way to encourage student voice and to help them in recognizing what are their strengths as well as the areas they want to improve in

Inquiry Question(s) Pursued:

How might I use conference time with my students to encourage self- assessment?

Sub questions:

- What would happen if I use conferences to develop student goals?
- How might I use conferences to encourage peer feedback?
- How might I use conferences to create classroom community?

Outline of Field Study Design:

- As a class we began by creating a wish for ourselves this year, it could be school or non-school related. I met with each student to discuss their wish and what they would do to reach it and also how I could support them. This was to build the habit of conferencing with me over the course of the term.
- As a class we discussed the Core competencies using the book "The 6 Cedar trees" we took moments as a whole class to self-evaluate of where we were in the Core Competencies with different projects and activities in the classroom.
- With my student teacher we created a rubric together for a writing project. This served as a way to self-assess in their work.
- My student-teacher conferenced with students about their writing project and was able to set goals with them on their writing
- During our daily word study we would go over the expectations and ask them to self-assess in the criteria for their word study.
- We have done class blogging which was new for many students and used the Proficiency scale to assess where we were in making a blog post
- We used the proficiency scale to self-assess where we were in our effort to speak in French
- Shoulder conference during journal writes
- guided reading in small groups or one on one

Successes and Challenges:

Successes and challenges:

A success during this field study was students became more familiar with using rubrics as a means for self-assessment not only for bigger projects but for routine activities. Having a student teacher gave me the opportunity to have conference time through guided reading groups. A challenge with conferencing was being consistent in meeting with my students. It took me a long time to conference with each student about their wish for the year. I also found it was easier to do self-assessment activities as group such as when we worked on portfolios because everyone was doing the same thing at the same time. I found that as we talked more about the language of self-assessment in regards to the proficiency scale that will be used in report cards students were more reflective in their learning and were honest with what they wanted to improve on. I found that having quick "shoulder conferences" with students during work time gave me a better insight on how my students saw themselves as learners. A challenge and a success for me was conferencing during the learning process. As we created a rubric for our writing project I was able to use this with students to "shoulder conference" about how their writing was going. This gave me the opportunity to check in and help them set goals for their final product. The challenge for

me was that sometimes I felt I was prompting students toward a direction I wanted them to go in rather than allowing them the time to think and reflect on what they wanted their learning goals to be.

Connection to Educational Research, Individuals, Theories:

"Feedback is most effective when it is grounded in an artifact (a draft paper, a painting, a diagram) that represents the learners' thinking, when it is solicited before the work is finished, and when the learner identifies specific questions to respond to." (Visible learners, Mark Krechevsky, Ben Mardell, Melissa Rivard, Daniel Wilson, Chapter 11 "Supporting Learning in Groups in the Classroom")

I found that when talking to my student teacher about the conferences we had about the students' writing project, they were much more reflective and were able to set specific goals for their future learning. One student wanted to set the goal of improving his printing. A few days later when he was working on a different assignment he made more of an effort to write neatly in other areas as we reminded him what the goal was that he set for himself. With this project we conferenced with our students in two parts, once when they worked on their draft and the second time when the project was finished. I think that the first conference helped the students keep in mind what were things that they wanted to add or change when it was time for the final project.

"Good conferencing is more deliberate and structured. It often relies on a routine set of questions and prompts to glean as much about the child's progress as possible. Conferencing with students is formative assessment at its best. As we gain a sense of where the child is at, we can also provide on the spot specific feedback and guidance about where to go next" (The Power of Inquiry, Kath Murdoch, Chapter 4 "Inviting uncertainty")

I found that the moments that I conferred with my students more deliberately were during my guided reading groups. During this time I would meet with a group of 3-4 students who read at similar benchmark levels. When we would read together I would make notes on what were things I felt they needed help with. This helped me to have a focus on what to work on with each group. The following time that I met with the group I was able to be more specific in giving them feedback and was able to structure my mini lessons with each group according to their needs. For example with my lower groups we were able to focus more on reading strategies such as "chunking out" the sounds and with my higher groups we worked on inferencing the meaning of new words. During my guided reading groups the rest of the class was occupied doing their own reading and so this allowed me a time to

be uninterrupted, for the most part, and be able to focus specifically on the needs of each group. I was able to ask more specific questions to each child and gain a better sense on how I could support them in their reading. My guided reading group time also gave me specific information that I could share with parents and how they could support their child in their reading.

"Belief 6 (Ownership of Learning) We believe both teachers and students should share ownership of the learning experience, whereby they collaboratively make meaningful decisions that impact the course of learning day by day." (Belief Statements, Reggio Emilia Study Tour 2012 Participants)

I found that taking time to conference with my students helped us to collaborate in each others learning. We were able to work together and build upon each others learning together. We were able to discuss what areas they wanted to work on and create specific and achievable goals to work on together. In conferencing with my students I found that I was thinking about them more as individual learners and what their individual needs were. Having the opportunity to be a mentor to a student teacher this year also gave me the opportunity to conference in a different way. After each formal observation we would have a post-conference. During these conferences we were able to collaborate together on how we could adjust our teaching to meet the students' needs. I could also see how my student teacher would set goals for himself and reflect on them after having our post-conference observations.

Summary of Learning:

- a) In one or two paragraphs, please summarize the significant insights you gained this semester. (What were your "aha!" moments?)

This year is a change in the language our school is using for Report Cards. I have been trying to use it with my class more in different activities so they are more familiar with it. One thing that I especially like about this language is the use of "I statements" I find that these have helped students in their self-assessment as it is in a language that is more accessible to them. I have been using a class blog in previous years to communicate student learning. This year has been the first time that I have begun it in first term. When I first introduce my students to blogging we started with a very basic post. This year after each time we made a blog post I had them self-assess on how they were doing with making a post by using the proficiency scale. I had one student who often is a bit "head in the clouds" and he assessed himself as more capable. As we continued to give example using "I statements" he came to realize that he still needed more support. This made me think about other situations in the class where a student

may genuinely think they are more capable or the reverse happening. I wondered what could I do for these students to help them understand the purpose of self-assessment. I found that most students were fairly honest in reflecting on their progress but I wondered about those few that were either at one extreme or another. I found that by continuously practicing self- assessment in routine activities that were "low risk" students became more thoughtful when it was time to assess themselves in areas that were a bit more demanding or "high risk."

Another insight that I gained was about peer-feedback. This was an area of my field study that I would have like to have gone deeper with. At first I thought it is too early on in the year to give them opportunities for this, but looking back I need to give them opportunities in any way that I can. In the book "Visible learners" Chapter 11 talks about structure for giving and receiving feedback. One point that stood out to me was: "Giving and getting peer feedback gives learners the opportunity to do the following; see themselves as sources of knowledge who can guide and shape their own and their peers' learning." I was able to see this in my class in two ways. The first was through giving the opportunity to students to help each other in completing an assignment. My student teacher was giving a lesson and this was one that I was formally observing. In our pre-conference we had discussed how he would be working with some students in the hallway at some point in the lesson and so the students needed to check in with each other before moving on to the next task. I was able to see the students give each other suggestions and reminders of the criteria. They were able to support each other in their learning and help each other move forward. The second way I saw this was through conferences with my student teacher. I myself have only been teaching for 6 years when I first took on a student teacher I was worried about being a good mentor and how I would support him in his learning. I found that as the weeks went on I was more confident in giving feedback but also seeing him teach and being able to discuss his lessons helped me to re-think how I approached my practice, especially in subjects areas that were always a challenge for me.

- b) How has this Field Study impacted yourself and your practice in relation to the program capacities?

Develop a disposition of Inquiry and critical reflection to understand and develop your practice

Investigate educational theories and philosophies to inform your practice

I have found that while doing this field study I have grown in these two capacities the most. I have become more reflective and asking myself "why am I doing this right now?" "what is my intention?" "How will this help my students?" I think previously I had fallen into somewhat of a routine in some areas of my teaching. This term having a student teacher has been an opportunity to really think and reflect on the decisions that I make in my classroom. Having someone else that knows my students just as well as I do but seeing them from a different perspective also gave me the opportunity to re-think my interactions with them.

My promise partner was someone who helped me grow in being more willing to investigate educational theories. When it was our mentor nights she often would share some articles or books that she was reading as part of her Field study and how she was going to try some of the things she read about in her classroom. Hearing her talk about what she was learning through her research and investigation made me read my book for my book club with more intention. I found that through revisiting previous topics discussed in this program I have also delved deeper in some of the readings than I normally would have.

- c) Describe how these insights have (or will) change your teaching practice and approach to inquiry.

Initially my question started from wanting to maintain a connection with my students while my student teacher did his practicum. I found though that as my field study progressed the part about conferences with my students ended up getting smaller and the part of encouraging self-assessment was coming more to the forefront. I think that is something that often happens with Inquiry. Initially we begin with an idea, a wonder or a curiosity and through investigation, discussion and experimentation we often end up somewhere different. Initially I was a bit upset with myself that I was not conferencing as much with my students as I had hoped but I found that the self-assessment piece was still happening. I still would like to continue to follow up with conferences in some way even if it is different from what I had originally envisioned. My learning statement for this term was "I am learning that inquiry and uncertainty is something I'm willing to welcome rather than hide from" I think this statement also applies to my learning in this field study. I had expectations of where and how I wanted it to go. It didn't really happen the way I thought, however part of that uncertainty helped me to make changes that helped me to better support my students.