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Professional Development Plan

Student teaching gave me a new, broader perspective on the type of school in which I want to teach and gave me more realistic expectations about schools and school districts. Student teaching also left me better informed about different positions available in the school other than the classroom teacher. I also feel more focused in my search for graduate school programs after discussing different positions and gaining first-hand experience in teaching for 12 weeks.

Working in Peabody Elementary School and observing other CPS schools rounded out and solidified my ideas of the qualities I will look for in a school or school district when searching for jobs. I need a school which allows for some degree of teacher autonomy in developing curriculum. I was frustrated by the mandated use of pre-written and even scripted curriculum at Peabody. One of the reasons for the curriculum was that Peabody is a school on probation according to No Child Left Behind. When I asked the principal about the curriculum in the school, he told me that the district gave him a few choices of curriculums to use, and he had to choose one and stick to it. The teachers are not given much choice, and people from the school district visit the classrooms periodically to be sure the curriculum is being used and implemented properly. Though I can use curriculum as a guide for my teaching, I would not want to feel that level of pressure to conform so strictly to a specific curriculum.

I would also want a school environment, at least for my first few years, in which I could see constructivist principles being welcomed and practiced in the school. I do not

feel ready to be on my own in a school and I still need the support of other teachers and the school environment, since I do not have much experience teaching, especially using a constructivist methodology. I also want to begin my teaching career in a smaller school where I can connect better with the students and other teachers. I am looking for a school with a diverse student body, preferably with a bilingual program in English and Spanish.

I interviewed people in the school whose jobs may interest me in the future. I already had some interest in becoming a school administrator after getting some experience teaching, so I interviewed the principal of my school, Federico Flores. Mr. Flores discussed the difficulty of holding an administrative position, and said that he found it even more stressful than teaching. He mentioned the importance of maintaining a support system when working in such a stressful job. He informed me that he had to go to graduate school for an administration degree, and in addition to that, he has had to take other classes and tests to keep his licensure current. He told me that he needed to constantly update his education in order to stay current both for licensure and for professional growth, since the climate of education is in a state of constant change. He also stated that he thought becoming a principal or any administrator took a great deal of skill in behavior management, since the job requires managing both students and teachers.

I also interviewed Theresa Berdiel, the lead literacy teacher for the AREA at my school. I am very interested in focusing on reading and teaching literacy to students while nurturing a love of reading, so Ms. Berdiel's job intrigued me. As the lead literacy teacher, Ms. Berdiel travels to different schools to help instruct teachers on different methods they can use in their classroom. She had to earn a Masters in reading and a

reading endorsement in order to pursue this career, as well as have experience as a teacher. She told me that her job involves running professional development seminars for teachers, taking part in grade level meetings, coaching teachers and modeling reading programs for them, and administering tests to students. She told me that she enjoys her job because it allows her to bring meaningful information to teachers. As a teacher, her information can be helpful because she told me that the most difficult part of her job is dealing with un-cooperative teachers. I want to always be open and receptive to new ideas in the teaching profession. Her job sounded like an interesting way to remain highly involved in education if I decide to try a different career besides teaching.

I also talked to one of the special education teachers at Peabody, Ms. Nicole. Ms. Nicole has a small class of students with special needs that remain in her room for the entire school day, and she also works as a resource teacher and pulls out students from regular classrooms who need some extra assistance. She told me that she enjoys working with students with special needs because she can help students who may otherwise not get much help in a regular classroom setting. She also said that she enjoys having the time to get to know students more personally, because she has a smaller class and gets a lot of time to work one-on-one with students. She also has a few aids in the room who help keep the class structured and provide more attention for the students. She earned a degree in special education in order to teach in this type of setting. One of the challenging parts of special education, according to Ms. Nicole, is that many schools do not have the proper resources for special education students and that she has had to change schools several times either because the school downsized or entirely got rid of their special education program to move students into regular classrooms or other schools, or because

she did not have the right type of resources to be successful. Her job sounds like a difficult one, and I would need much more training before I would be able to do it. However, it was helpful to hear her discuss special education needs because I will certainly deal with students with special needs in my classroom, and a special education teacher can be a good resource for advice on how to best support these students.

The job outside of teaching that most interests me is the job of a principal or administrator. I would like to eventually attend graduate school in order to become a principal or school administrator after several years of teaching experience. I found one particular graduate program that appeals to me for this goal. The University of Wisconsin- Madison has two programs in education that I would seriously consider in the future. The first is a degree in Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, which focuses on educational policy and has turned out school administrators at many levels of education. The other is a degree in Educational Policy Studies, which focuses on educational policies in the U.S. and internationally. The University of Wisconsin- Madison intrigued me because of its inclusion of international studies and because it embraces a constructivist philosophy of education. I also became interested in the University of Wisconsin- Madison because Madison is a progressive community in which I would like to live, work and teach. I could feel connected to the community there, and also find schools that are more open to progressive teaching philosophies.

One such school is Nuestro Mundo, a charter school on the far East side of Madison. I found Nuestro Mundo online after hearing about it from a child at the daycare that I worked at in Madison during the summer of 2007. It is a bilingual school with a diverse student population, and identifies itself as having a child-centered philosophy of

education. The population of the school, which consists of about 50% Hispanic students, 30% white students, and 20% African American and students of other races, drew me to it because I want to work with a diverse population of students. I also appreciate the use of Spanish in the school. The school serves a Spanish-speaking population and teaches Spanish as well through a bilingual curriculum. I would most definitely apply for a teaching position at *Nuestro Mundo*. I am interested in looking for jobs in Madison, WI because it contains both a graduate program that appeals to me as well as schools and a community that would fit well with my goals as a teacher.

I looked into unions that I may want to join once I become a teacher. I would definitely want to join a teachers union in order to provide protection for my job and my salary. Being a union member could also possibly provide a resource for educational reform. I researched two unions in particular that operate at the national level and have several local and state chapters. From their websites, I gathered that I would have to begin by contacting local representatives in whatever district I choose to teach. I discovered the American Federation of Teachers and the National Education Association. I found that the AFT is more centralized in cities and includes professionals in education other than teachers. Which I join will probably be influenced by where I choose to teach.

I will also want to subscribe to journals in the areas I want to teach. Since I want to teach lower elementary grades, reading is a huge part of the curriculum, and I have had some students during student teaching who have really struggled with reading. In order to continue to develop strategies to help students learn to read, I would likely subscribe to *The Reading Teacher* in order to read about best practice strategies for teaching reading to students. Since I want to work with a bilingual population, I would also want to

subscribe to a journal which would help me teach this specific population most effectively, such as *The Bilingual Research Journal*, which provides information on research related to bilingual education. I would be interested in keeping current on the latest research so I can continue to develop my practice in teaching bilingual students.

There are several opportunities to attend or present work at various conferences related to education. If I continue to work with bilingual students, I could attend the National Association for Bilingual Education Conference to get ideas or make connections with other teachers. To submit work, it would have to be relevant to the topic of the conference and I may have to do some research in order to present my findings. I also found conferences for other national organizations related to education, such as the NCTM conference. Any of these topics would be relevant to my professional development since I will be teaching all of the core subjects in elementary school. Another conference that I may be interested in attending is the Constructivist Design Conference on Educational Improvement, which could help me network with other teachers who hold similar philosophies to mine. It could also provide an excellent resource for ideas as a beginning teacher, or spreading my own ideas as I develop them later in my teaching career.

Currently, though I still want to apply for teaching jobs, I am also looking into other areas of education. Perhaps I will eventually lead up to school administration in my career. Perhaps I will pursue another path within education. Interviewing other professionals in the school helped me to see the many paths that I can take with my education degree. I want to find a community in which I can become an integral member and feel connected to, and Madison, WI may be such a community because of its

progressive atmosphere and educational resources, including the University of Wisconsin. I have also discovered other resources that will be helpful to me as a teacher, including information on unions, journals that I will want to subscribe to, and conferences that I will want to attend. I am confident that these resources will guide me once I begin my teaching career.