Michelle Rathmann

Reflection 1

There are many areas of concerns that I have as a committed and caring teacher. Three areas that I feel of most concern are not only highly qualified teachers but highly qualified staff overall in a school building especially in a special education setting, another area of concern is the special education process and placing students where is most appropriate, and lastly are the many roles that a teacher plays that can be overwhelming.

Prior to being a teacher I never fully understood what it meant to be a highly qualified teacher. However, now that I am in my 6th year, I now know the importance of having highly qualified teachers especially in the special education setting. Personally the amount of education and experience I have in undergrad did not prepare me for being a teacher. I never felt more overwhelmed and unprepared in my first couple years of teaching. I even knew very little about IEP’s and I was hired as a special education teacher. Therefore, to better serve our students, there needs to be education programs that better prepare future teachers and staff in a school for all aspects of education. I also feel that in our building we have various teacher assistants and paraprofessionals that support students. Additionally, I have worked with several paraprofessionals that have no idea what they are getting into for a lack of better words. While there are offered trainings for paraprofessionals. They need to be offered more frequently and prior to school starting. There is so much to know in our world of education and so little time to go over this information with all staff. We also have experienced staff shortages across the board. Every year I have been with my district we have started the year short on staff. This is a concern mainly because it can be a safety concern for the students and staff. Overall, having highly qualified teachers and staff makes a huge impact in education and with having such staff we can start to see more success in students.

Another area of concern is the special education process and placement of students. Every year there seems to be several students that are not placed in the most appropriate system and there seems to be a process to find the most appropriate setting for those students. The special education process in my specific district seems to be very unorganized and inconsistent. With better systems in place, I feel that teachers could be more organized in setting up opportunities for students to achieve success. One main reason that I feel this is a concern is because oftentimes students are misplaced and it can harm other students educational needs.

Lastly, the overwhelming amount of roles that a teacher can play is a concern as a committed and caring teacher. While my roles may differ from a general education teacher, it seems that every year special education teachers are being given an additional role in their job. When there are so many roles and jobs that need to get done all at once, it can be difficult to prioritize. Obviously as being a teacher students are the number one priority, however, there is much important paperwork that is necessary to be completed.

In summary, as much as I love being a teacher it can be difficult when there are so many areas of concern. I find myself often remembering the reason why I wanted to start teaching in the first place. I want to make a difference and an impact on students' lives and I want to be the reason a student makes big strides in all areas. Mainly I just want my students to become positive role models for generations to come.

Reflection 2

I would like to think I am a globally competent teacher. However, after completing the Globally Competent Learning Continuum survey, I feel that I have many areas that need improvement. When it comes to being globally competent it is not intentional to not be. It is a matter of putting in the effort and taking the time to dive deep into our differences. As humans, it seems natural to only be caught up in our own cultures and to carry those traditions on to future generations. Also I was unaware of how many areas there are to be globally competent. One thing that I do feel is important to achieving such competence is to be open minded and I believe I have that. I am willing to learn and listen to others when it comes to those differences.

I would say that I scored mostly in the nascent - progressing level. I find it hard to believe that people are advanced in these areas due to the need to always improve. The areas that I feel that I am progressing in are valuing multiple perspectives and promoting equity. I truly do appreciate and value all backgrounds and cultures. As I learn more and more about cultures, I become more intrigued and I can better understand why we act and behave the way we do. Although I promote equity, I wouldn’t say I promote equity worldwide and feel that I could always do better not just through my words but through my actions.

Some areas I need improvement in are creating a classroom environment that values diversity and global engagement. Other than it is obvious based on our physical attributes that we are different, as a classroom I want to dive deeper into why we look the way we do and where we come from. Creating a classroom environment for this also makes the students feel more welcomed and appreciated. It also bridges communities for the area that a school building is in. Another area that I feel I could improve in is providing opportunities for students to communicate more with local, national, and international partnerships. I feel that this is important because it provides students with real world experiences. Starting this at a young age can also promote better relationships for their future.

I hope to become a more globally competent teacher and take those steps to become more aware. I understand that this is crucial and makes a significant impact on our students' learning. I truly feel that academics are not always a priority when it comes to school. A priority is to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our students and shaping them to become better citizens of our community and the best version of themselves.

I can become more aware of my biases by going to more workshops, training, and just through the experience of doing the work. The more work I put into it the more I will see improvements and reach the level of advanced.

This issue is critical in how I formulate and frame an Action Research question for the reason of taking everything into consideration. In order to be ethical, I need to dissect every barrier and biases that I may have. When formulating and framing an Action Research question, I also want to be careful in my approach in trying out these interventions. I want to make sure I am providing each student with an equitable opportunity. Overall, it is very important to be globally competent when it comes to researching and verifying valid information. I need to make sure that I am providing the facts and do not show those possible biases.

Reflection 3

I got to experience a few students making progress specifically in reading this week and also in writing. I have a student in 1st grade who is still learning letter names and sounds. However, she has been making great progress since when we first started. While we are still working on letter sounds, we have also been sounding out CVC words. I just started doing a word of the week for CVC words. We do a lot of building, writing, and color the word using playdoh, alphabet tiles, tracing, etc. Not only do the students really enjoy most of these activities, they are learning more and are able to identify words that we have covered.

Thinking about my 1st grade student, she is one that will constantly say that she doesn’t know how to read. Looking at her progress she was unable to read/ decode any words in our list back in December and now she is at 50% accuracy. Also in part of her learning process I was able to share with her last week the progress she has made and she herself was so excited. In my experience as a teacher, specifically, in my previous position if students made progress it was very little. So I really enjoy this side of being a resource teacher and seeing how students are able to grow so quickly with the right instruction.

Reflection 4

Something that has been a challenge for me is one of my social skills groups. Not only do they demonstrate negative behaviors but they are very behind in academics. They are also now in 3rd grade in which content seems to be getting harder. After speaking to their teacher and discussing their behaviors we both came to an agreement that they may be acting out due to content becoming more of a challenge. These students could be feeling some sort of stress or anxiety. However when I see them it seems impossible to accomplish any goals during our time together because I spend the whole time dealing with disruptive behaviors. Now I am trying to figure out how to best support their needs and reshape those negative behaviors.

Reflection 5

I know I have previously stated in my past journal entries about being new to resource this year. I feel that I am almost starting from scratch with teaching. When I first started this year I was not prepared for what I was teaching. I understand that all teachers had a change of plans given that the year started virtually. It took a lot of creativity from a lot of teachers and has been the biggest challenge to engage all students. However, for me not only did I not know what I was doing virtually, I also had no idea what I was doing if I am being completely honest. I felt that the beginning of the school year I was hoping for the best each day and felt some days I was making things up as I went. I am still learning from all the resources and materials provided to see what works for my students. With that being said this week I attended a brief reading PD on the Science of Reading and am meeting with one of our reading specialists to learn more. I am really excited to use this material for my students. It seems that there has been much success with this program so I am excited to see my reading students succeed as well.

Overall, I feel like I am already looking forward to next year being more organized and prepared with my students. I went into this year completely blind and things have always been changing so there has been a lack of consistency.

Reflection 6

Something that I am struggling with this year is finding resources for my reading groups. Being a special education teacher, I see a variety of students with different areas of strengths and weaknesses. One thing that I am challenged by is finding good resources to support specific needs. Not only finding good quality resources is hard but finding an interactive/ online friendly curriculum that works for my students is a challenge. However, with being my first year teaching resource, I am learning a lot more about teaching reading and am feeling more confident in my lessons.

One thing that I would like a majority of my students I see for reading to improve on is their stamina. It seems like many students lose that engagement piece very quickly unless it is really something of interest. I have noticed student’s overall stamina has decreased since the pandemic hit. It has taken some time to build that stamina back just to be at school for a full day.

Reflection 7

This past week seemed to be more of a difficult week for many of my students. We have been very short staff with a lot of teachers either sick or out on quarantine. Unfortunately with all these absences of staff it can really disrupt a student’s routine and schedule, especially for those with extra needs. Due to these absences, I observed many behaviors from my students. It is challenging to get what I had planned accomplished when these behaviors occur. It can tend to put us behind in our lessons and it also disrupts other students who are trying to learn.

However this week I feel like I have been able to be successful in organizing and planning for all my groups. One thing that I find frustrating as being a teacher is how little plan time we have. There is never enough time to adequately plan and oftentimes I feel like I am putting things together last minute. However, this past week/ weekend I spent a lot of time planning and organizing. There is no better feeling than accomplishing plans for the week and being prepared. Moving forward, especially with next school year, I hope to be more prepared for my groups.

Reflection 8

This week specifically in my reading groups there were a few times that I noticed student’s saying “I can’t do this,” “I don’t know,” “I can’t read,” etc. It is truly disheartening to hear especially such young students say these things. I also see these students for social skills and feel that Growth Mindset could be a great topic to teach moving forward in social skills. Chapter 2 also discusses how growth mindset and self-efficacy make an impact on a student’s ability to read. One thing that I want to instill in my students is to change their mindset to think more positively. I remember telling my students this week that I believe in them and that we are all learning together. I want them to be able to build confidence in not only reading but in themselves.

Something else I have been reflecting on is how much progress one of my students has made in reading. As this is my first year being a resource teacher/ teaching reading, I have noticed much more progress this year than with my previous position. Which says a lot given that we have spent most the year teaching during a pandemic. Something that I plan to do next week is to really celebrate this student’s growth. He has overcome a lot and am really proud of how far he has gotten. Overall, I am really excited to learn more about teaching reading and to help students succeed.