**InTASC Standards Progress June 2012**

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**Introduction**

Here I have documented a brief description of the ways I worked to meet the InTASC Standards through my internship at Ottawa Hills High School (Grand Rapids, MI). My placement with Ms. Bobbi Jo Kenyon began in September, 2011 and continued through June 2012. I cannot emphasize enough how much of this document can be attributed to her efforts as a coach, model, and professional colleague.

**The Learner and Learning**

**Standard #1: Learner Development.**

The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

Since the beginning of my work in Ottawa Hills High School I have been working consistently at improving the language I use in instruction, making assignments student-friendly, making directions explicit, and properly scaffolding students during class. This has included creating assignments where students are given appropriate choices for tackling specific content (e.g. online assignment where students selected a genetic disease to investigate & reported-out to their classmates). It has also included increasing the amount and clarity of visual, verbal, and written directions during hands-on assignments (e.g. supporting lab procedures with drawings of the procedures on the whiteboard).

**Standard #2: Learning Differences.**

The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

During instruction I have consistently worked to build a safe and inclusive learning environment by encouraging student participation, rewarding approximations, and developing my relationships with students. I prompt students to join discussions through choral response, fist-to-five formative assessment, voluntary hand-raising, and cold-calling. For students who were academically at risk I have been reaching-out to them, encouraging them to come in after school, during lunch, or during prep time to get extra help. This has included inviting some students to a Friday afternoon study group during 6th hour. I have also used differentiated instruction to hit a wide range of student abilities while addressing the same learning targets.

**Standard #3: Learning Environments.**

The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self motivation.

I have worked to facilitate collaborative learning experiences in class including pair, small group work, and large group work. This has also including establishing “critical partners” –small permanent groups of students who establish social contracts and work to assist each other and other groups with assignments. I have also utilized a variety of techniques for grouping students including random-placement, placement with playing cards, targeted placement (experts with learners), students’ choice, grouping by Lexile score, and “turn and tell a neighbor”. I have also developed experiences during lessons where students reflect on their own understanding of materials and developed a survey instrument that was used to help students track their own goals over the last semester.

**Content**

**Standard #4: Content Knowledge.**

The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

I have designed and implemented several lessons that utilized an inquiry mindset, encouraging students to explore topics and develop their own ideas through previous experiences. This has included an inquiry activator related to Mendelian traits in humans, a lab where students investigated their own traits and compared these to the national averages, online investigations into human karyotypes and DNA structure & function, and multiple online exploratory activities on activities ranging from genetic diseases to carbon cycling. I have also encouraged students to explore current issues in science, including the implementation of a WonderWall where students would post questions we could not address during class with the option of answering such questions for extra credit.

**Standard #5: Application of Content.**

The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

Drawing on my background in arctic ecology, I established connections between my classroom and the GVSU Arctic Ecology Program. Members of the Arctic Ecology Program came into our classroom and talked to my students about climate change in the arctic and life as a researcher, encouraging them to pursue their interests in science. I also set-up several hands-on activities for students to engage with which got them thinking about what life is like in the arctic and why studying climate change matters. I also had students investigate genetics topics related to authentic issues (genetic counseling, exploring their own traits, effects of genetic diseases, issues of sex-linked traits, etc.). Additionally, I invited a guest speaker who is currently working on her doctorate in nursing come in to talk to students about her work with cancer patients. This allowed my students an opportunity to think about potential career options and ask questions related to authentic issues in cancer research.

**Instructional Practice**

**Standard #6: Assessment.**

The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher’s and learner’s decision making.

Since the beginning of the school year I have been involved in the process of documenting students’ weekly progress and recently have been in charge of developing the pre & post assessments for tracking their learning. I have used a variety of techniques for carrying this out including written response, performance assessment (drawing), formative assessment (fist-to-five, wallwisher, informal interviews with students during and after class, scrap-paper basketball, asking students to repeat directions to me, etc.). Each method has enabled me to adjust my instruction to better meet the needs of my learners.

**Standard #7: Planning for Instruction.**

The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Since the beginning of March I was expected to create a weekly lesson plan (school requirement). This practice gave me the opportunity to think about upcoming instruction and plan high-quality students. In constructing daily lessons, I worked to become increasingly aware of students’ needs for clear and explicit directions and of the importance of aligning assessment, instruction, and practice such that students create a logical and clear picture of each topic. Through daily reflections, formative assessments, and weekly quizzes I worked to elicit misconceptions and re-teach content that was not thoroughly understood. On a daily basis I made it clear to students that their success mattered to me and that I was more than willing to support them through tutoring during lunch, 6th hour (prep), and after school. As evident by the records of our tutoring hours, many students have taken it upon themselves to take advantage of these opportunities and from these students I have seen marked improvement in grades, confidence, and self-efficacy.

**Standard #8: Instructional Strategies.**

The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Throughout each day I attempted to provide at least two types of instruction, one of which was usually teacher-led while the other was typically student-led (individuals, pairs, or small groups). The lessons I designed and used relied on a variety of tools for engaging students in materials, including hands-on activities, online exploration, building models, reading articles, watching videos & animations, using guided notes & graphic organizers, and exploring information through MS PowerPoint & Prezi. I also incorporated visual aids into my lessons, such as using molecular model kits to show carbon atoms moving through the carbon cycle. I have also been working consistently at devising strategies for holding students accountable for their own involvement in their learning. For example: by creating critical partner groups and allowing students to draft their own social contracts I immediately saw students holding each other accountable for participating and contributing to group learning activities.

**Professional Responsibility**

**Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice.**

The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

Since the beginning of the school year I have discussed lessons, classroom management, professional development, and observations on individual students with my mentor teacher. Throughout the fall and early winter I kept a formal record of my progress toward reaching goals each week and used a template to track this progress. This has allowed me to receive targeted feedback and focus my efforts on improving various areas of instruction. Each week we review the goals and set new ones for the coming week. This form of feedback has been invaluable to me as I have been transitioning to the role of lead-instructor. I have also discussed classroom observations with Barb Labeau (Associate Director), Wayne Bickel (OHHS DL Coach), Jacque Melin (Field Coordinator), and Ms. Kenyon (Mentor teacher) and used the feedback from each to improve my instruction.

**Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration.**

The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners, families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure learner growth, and to advance the profession.

Starting in the weeks before my clinical placement I began attending professional development events through OHHS and GRPS. Throughout the school year I also attended school events, including the PBIS “Family Fun Night” where members of the community were invited to come learn about the school. Opportunities such as these let me interact with students and their families outside of the school environment, building valuable relationships. Since last semester I have been involved in making phone calls to parents regarding student behaviors (both good and bad) and student grades. I also scheduled and held a meetings with parents to discuss student behaviors that were of particular concern. These collaborative efforts allowed me to represent Ottawa Hills and act as a voice for the school and advocate for the students. I have collaborated with other Fellows in lesson planning and preparation. This included sharing and critiquing lessons along with completing observations and cognitive coaching cycles. Beyond these experiences I also collaborated with guest speakers, including researchers at GVSU, to expose students to authentic issues in science.