

principle 1 | reflection 1

“Candidates possess the necessary content knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning.”

[interpret]

This principle deals with my area of content expertise—that is, what knowledge I have that qualifies me to be a teacher of English rather than mathematics, science, or history. Furthermore, the principle stresses the connection between this knowledge and the enhancement of student learning. In other words, my duty as a competent English teacher is not to simply convey the content knowledge I have, but to present it in such a way that students might be engaged by and interested in the study of English—if not to the same degree as myself, then at least some degree more than when they entered my classroom.

[select]

To demonstrate my English content knowledge, I have selected handouts and reading questions used in conjunction with Kurt Vonnegut’s short story “Harrison Bergeron.” Specifically, this artifact is comprised of the following items:

- **Four unique half-sheet handouts**, each identifying a different handicap. [P1.R1.A1]
- One **“handicap reference guide,”** which describes the reason for and nature of each handicap. [P1.R1.A2]
- One set of **10 reading questions** related to “Harrison Bergeron.” [P1.R1.A3]

[describe]

The reading of this story and the subsequent lesson occurred near the end of a five-week short story unit in an honors-level English I classroom. I placed “Harrison Bergeron” near the end of the short story unit because, as a dystopian tale, I thought it would serve nicely as a segue into the following unit on George Orwell’s *Animal Farm*. I taught the lesson twice during the school day, using it in both my first and fifth period English I classes.

Because I wanted to emphasize the concept of dystopia, I attempted to develop a lesson that would come as close as possible to giving students firsthand experience in the world of the story. Specifically, I handed out reading questions to each student and told them to complete the questions in groups of four (the standard unit of in-class small-group work for this class). Only after I had distributed the reading questions did I inform the students that there was a catch: each member of the group would have to complete the assignment while also dealing with a unique handicap. I distributed the half-sheet handicap identification handouts, then projected the handicap reference guide via the classroom document camera.

Each handicap was realized through specific rules and props. Students with vision restrictions were given neckties to wear as blindfolds; those with hearing restrictions wore makeshift earplugs made from bits of paper towel; and those with literacy restrictions were told to put away any and all written material, and were given paper bags to wear over their hands so as to prevent the manipulation of a pen or pencil. Those with speech restrictions were simply told not to engage in any sort of verbalized communication; while they may have been disappointed at not having an actual handicap device of their own, I thought it not best classroom practice to gag my students.

After the handicap assignments and devices had been distributed, the students were given the majority of the class period (around 30 minutes) to complete ten reading questions related to the story. I circulated around the room while they worked to answer questions and enforce the wearing of handicaps. With between 10 and 15 minutes left in the period, we went over the questions as a class.

[analyze]

The components of this artifact evidence my content knowledge in several ways. First and perhaps most obviously, the set of reading questions show my understanding of the key points of “Harrison Bergeron” that I want students to understand in turn. Certain questions address specific literary techniques such as symbolism (questions 6 and 7). Others model the kind of analytical questions students should learn to ask themselves as they read (questions 1-5 and 10). Still others focus on understanding the story’s genre and theme (questions 8 and 9, respectively). Overall, the types of questions I have included in the handout for students’ consideration show my knowledge of the story’s key concepts.

The handicap identification handouts and reference guide also display my literary content knowledge, because without an understanding of the tone and themes of the “Harrison Bergeron” — indeed, without an understanding of dystopian stories in general—I would not have been able to craft these faux-authentic documents that seem to exist within the world of the story. In creating these handouts, I drew upon my knowledge of “Harrison Bergeron” as well as other dystopian tales (Orwell’s *1984*, for instance) so that I could inhabit the character of the Handicapper General and make documents that had a distinctly dystopian look and feel.

In a sense, then, the handicap handouts also evidence my creative writing content knowledge, because I am able to adopt a distinct voice (namely that of oppressive bureaucracy) for use in writing that is pseudo-fictional and not strictly academic. Modeling creative writing ability for my students was also an important goal, as the culminating activity for this short story unit was the writing of an original work of short fiction.

[appraise]

I believe the materials included in this artifact worked effectively in the context of the lesson. Based on student reactions and responses, the reading questions appeared to be both clear and provocative; few students asked for clarifications on the questions, yet they were able to generate thoughtful responses to each. The handicap handouts clearly communicated to students what behaviors were expected

during the lesson, while also extending the dystopian world of “Harrison Bergeron” into the classroom through their style and tone.

In retrospect, what I think this lesson is lacking is a kind of meta-analysis on the part of each student. My goal was to develop students’ understanding of dystopia by, in essence, having them briefly inhabit one. While my own observations suggest this goal was met with at least moderate success, I cannot be entirely sure simply because I never asked. Part of the class discussion of the reading questions did center around the definition and characteristics of a dystopia, but at no point did I ask students how they themselves felt while completing the task. I believe this kind of student reflection would more firmly cement the concept of dystopia in their minds because it forces explicit connections between each students’ personal, immediate feelings and the more abstract concepts of the story.

[transform]

In the future, then, I would readjust the timeframe of my lesson to include space for some sort of concluding reflective exercise. This could take the form of a survey that would ask students to rate their responses to a series of statements (e.g. “I was physically and/or mentally uncomfortable during the exercise”), like a kind of anticipation guide in reverse. In an even simpler approach, I could ask students to write a brief journal entry on a prompt like the following:

How did you feel while completing the reading questions? What specifically was either easy or difficult? Did the system put in place by higher authority (i.e. Mr Smith) seem reasonable? Fair? Equal or equitable?

In either case, the class as a whole would then have a specific, concrete way to discuss their own personal experiences in the mini-dystopia.

[OFFICE OF THE HANDICAPPER GENERAL]

The OHG regrets to inform you that you are in violation of the Federal Equality Act established under Constitutional Amendments 211, 212, and 213. To establish equality and maintain societal order, the OHG has issued you the following handicap:

H-093V: VISION RESTRICTION

You are required by law to comply with all issued handicaps and to wear any and all necessary handicapping devices at all times. Failure to do so may result in legal action including but in no way limited to fines beginning at \$2000 and jail time not less than 2 years per infraction.

The OHG thanks for your cooperation.

[OHG | PRESERVING EQUALITY SINCE 2081 | WWW.OHG.GOV]

[OFFICE OF THE HANDICAPPER GENERAL]

The OHG regrets to inform you that you are in violation of the Federal Equality Act established under Constitutional Amendments 211, 212, and 213. To establish equality and maintain societal order, the OHG has issued you the following handicap:

H-250S: SPEECH RESTRICTION

You are required by law to comply with all issued handicaps and to wear any and all necessary handicapping devices at all times. Failure to do so may result in legal action including but in no way limited to fines beginning at \$2000 and jail time not less than 2 years per infraction.

The OHG thanks for your cooperation.

[OHG | PRESERVING EQUALITY SINCE 2081 | WWW.OHG.GOV]

[OFFICE OF THE HANDICAPPER GENERAL]

The OHG regrets to inform you that you are in violation of the Federal Equality Act established under Constitutional Amendments 211, 212, and 213. To establish equality and maintain societal order, the OHG has issued you the following handicap:

H-372H: HEARING RESTRICTION

You are required by law to comply with all issued handicaps and to wear any and all necessary handicapping devices at all times. Failure to do so may result in legal action including but in no way limited to fines beginning at \$2000 and jail time not less than 2 years per infraction.

The OHG thanks for your cooperation.

[OHG | PRESERVING EQUALITY SINCE 2081 | WWW.OHG.GOV]

[OFFICE OF THE HANDICAPPER GENERAL]

The OHG regrets to inform you that you are in violation of the Federal Equality Act established under Constitutional Amendments 211, 212, and 213. To establish equality and maintain societal order, the OHG has issued you the following handicap:

H-956L: LITERACY RESTRICTION

You are required by law to comply with all issued handicaps and to wear any and all necessary handicapping devices at all times. Failure to do so may result in legal action including but in no way limited to fines beginning at \$2000 and jail time not less than 2 years per infraction.

The OHG thanks for your cooperation.

[OHG | PRESERVING EQUALITY SINCE 2081 | WWW.OHG.GOV]

[OFFICE OF THE HANDICAPPER GENERAL]
HANDICAP REFERENCE GUIDE

H-093V: VISION RESTRICTION

Due to exceptional visual acuity, you are required to wear the standard issue Visual Handicapping Device (VHD) at all times. Under no circumstances may you remove the VHD.

H-250S: SPEECH RESTRICTION

Due to above-average speaking skills, you are forbidden from further verbal interactions. Cease any and all forms of vocal communication immediately.

H-372H: HEARING RESTRICTION

Due to adeptness in hearing and listening, you are forbidden from responding to auditory stimuli of any kind. Immediately discontinue any engagement in or with conversation, music, and any other sources of sound.

H-956L: LITERACY RESTRICTION

Due to high skill in reading and/or writing, you are prohibited from engaging in literate behaviors. You are required to wear standard issue Literacy Handicapping Devices (LHDs) at all times to prevent the manipulation of writing implements. In addition, you are forbidden from viewing any written materials.

Failure to comply with any handicapping directive will result in legal action as described in your handicap assignment. The OHG thanks you for your cooperation.

“harrison bergeron” discussion questions

Name:

Date:

Period:

Answer the following questions as completely as possible using complete sentences.

1. What is the state of society as described in the opening paragraph? What systems are in place to ensure equality? Has equality truly been achieved?
2. As the opening paragraph succinctly states, the story is set in the year 2081—72 years from now. How might the society we now live in progress to the point of that depicted in the story? Do you think something like this could ever actually happen? Why or why not?
3. Describe the effects George’s handicaps have had on him, both physically and mentally. In the normal world of 2009, what could someone like George be capable of? Would he be successful? What might he do for a living?
4. What does George say about competition? Do you agree?
5. What does George say about laws and society? Do you agree?

6. Consider both the dance scene between Harrison and the ballerina and Harrison’s fate at the end of the story. What statement might the author be making about those who resist oppression and seek freedom?

7. What symbolic effect do the last three lines of the story have? After finishing the story, do you have an optimistic view of George and Hazel’s future? Why or why not?

8. Get a dictionary and look up the word *satire*. What aspects of human thought or behavior is the author satirizing?

9. While you have the dictionary handy, look up the word *utopia*. Could the story’s version of the United States be described as a utopia? Why or why not?

10. Is there a moral to the story? If so, what?

principle 1 | reflection 2

“Candidates possess the necessary content knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning.”

[interpret]

This principle deals with my area of content expertise—that is, what knowledge I have that qualifies me to be a teacher of English rather than mathematics, science, or history. Furthermore, the principle stresses the connection between this knowledge and the enhancement of student learning. In other words, my duty as a competent English teacher is not to simply convey the content knowledge I have, but to present it in such a way that students might be engaged by and interested in the study of English—if not to the same degree as myself, then at least some degree more than when they entered my classroom.

[select]

To show my use of content knowledge to enhance student learning, I have included materials used in studying a short one-act play by David Ives titled “Sure Thing.” Specifically, the artifacts are as follows:

- An **assignment handout** titled “Do Your Own ‘Sure Thing,’” which outlines a small, in-class project based on the original play. [P1.R2.A1]
- My own **model of the assignment**, dramatizing an encounter between Willy Loman (of Arthur Miller’s *Death of a Salesman*) and Jay Gatsby (of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s *The Great Gatsby*). [P1.R1.A2]

[describe]

I studied this short play with my standard level English III students in my final week of student teaching, just before they began a longer unit on Arthur Miller’s classic play *The Crucible*. Ives’ much shorter dramatic work thus served as a light, simple reintroduction to the dramatic form and its conventions before students began grappling with much more serious content.

We first staged an informal reading of the play as a class, with pairs of students taking turns acting in front of the class. During the reading, I would occasionally stop the action to ask students various questions related to the play’s characters and devices, specifically the bell that makes it so unique. After finishing the reading, I handed out and explained the related assignment. Students then had the remainder of class to begin work on their projects.

The following day, before allowing the students to return to their own plays, I presented my own model of the assignment. After acting out my play in front of the class (with the help of my mentor teacher), I explained my thought process while writing—why I chose the characters I did, how I portrayed them and made sure they were sufficiently developed—and then asked for any student questions. Students

finished their in-class work on the plays that day and presented their finished projects over the rest of the week.

[analyze]

My model of the “Sure Thing” project supports this principle because it shows, quite simply, that I am able to do what I ask of my students. If I were unsure about how to write a short play inspired by Ives’ work—or analyze poetry, or identify symbols, or discuss characterization—I would have no grounds to ask my students to do such things. The teacher should be a knowledgeable participant in the activities of the class; in writing and presenting my model of the assignment, I fulfilled this role.

More significantly, this display of my own content knowledge enhanced students’ understanding of the project and, subsequently, their own work. By providing students with my own model, I explained the project and my expectations of their work in a way that the assignment handout could not. Rather than telling the students what I wanted, I showed them. Through my use of content knowledge—that is, my understanding of Ives’ play and my ability to mimic its style in creative writing—I helped students reach a fuller understanding of the assignment and ultimately produce more sophisticated work than they otherwise might have.

[appraise]

Overall, I feel the “Sure Thing” mini-unit was successful as a reintroduction to reading and understanding drama. Reading the play reacquainted students with the format and conventions of playwriting, and it also gave me the opportunity to teach some basic theatre terminology they would later need for a project related to *The Crucible*.

Based on the quality of student work I received, I would also say that my model of the project clarified students’ understanding of the style and quality of work I expected. Their plays were not only creative and entertaining, but often insightful and humorous. The vast majority of students clearly grasped the purpose of the bell in Ives’ play (namely to repeat and revise past events) and were able to appropriately mimic its use in their own writing. Some students may have only needed Ives’ original work as a reference in order to achieve what they did; for others, though, my model offered yet another informative example on which to base their understanding. Had I not developed and used this model, my students’ work may not have been as strong as it was.

[transform]

My only transformation of my “Sure Thing” model has to do with its implementation in class. After performing my play for the class, I was somewhat brief in explaining my own writing process and reviewing my expectations for the assignment. In the future, I believe the model could be more beneficial for students if they had the opportunity to engage in more extensive dialogue regarding the model, perhaps through a more formal class discussion or question-and-answer session.

do your own “sure thing”

Name:

Date:

Period:

Now that you’ve read David Ives’ short play, you have a chance to **create your own artistic work** in the style of “Sure Thing.” As inspiration for your work, consider using events from your own life (a bad date, a job interview, an awkward encounter at a drive-thru window, etc) or that of any character you’ve encountered this year (Willy Loman, Holden Caulfield, Jay Gatsby, etc). Your artistic work might take any of the following forms:

- Script
- Comic strip/graphic novel
- Short film
- Poem
- Song

If you have other brilliant, awe-inspiring ideas for a form not on the list, by all means ask me about it. Regardless of content or form, make sure your work contains **at least three substantial iterations**¹ of a given scene—that is, the bell (or whatever signal you choose) should sound at least three times.

If you so choose, you may collaborate with **one** other playwright on your project.

Get creative and have fun!

¹ By “substantial,” I mean something more than repeating a line or two.

“Sure Thing” project model | Willy Loman meets Jay Gatsby

(A busy street in New York City. WILLY is dressed modestly and walks briskly, carrying two oversized suitcases. GATSBY is wearing a white suit, silver shirt and gold tie as he strolls down the avenue. GATSBY bumps WILLY’s suitcases as they pass and the contents—salesman’s product samples—spill onto the sidewalk.)

GATSBY: Oh, dear. Sorry about that, Old Sport. Wasn’t even watching where I was going. *(He moves to help pick up the mess.)*

WILLY: Who’re you calling Old Sport?! Watch where you’re going!

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Oh, dear. Sorry about that, Old Sport. Wasn’t even watching where I was going. *(He moves to help pick up the mess.)*

WILLY: Ah, what’s the point. I’m just going to run the car off a bridge later, anyway.

GATSBY: Um...

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Oh, dear. Sorry about that, Old Sport. Wasn’t even watching where I was going. *(He moves to help pick up the mess.)*

WILLY: Don’t mention it; entirely my fault. Thanks for your help. Name’s Willy Loman.

GATSBY: Jay Gatsby. *(They shake hands.)*

WILLY: You know, I can tell you’re a man who’s well-liked.

GATSBY: How do you—

WILLY: It’s in the way you greet a man, see—firm handshake, look him in the eye. You’re a well-liked man, Mr. Gatsby; that I can see plain as day.

GATSBY: Yes, you said—

WILLY: Can I interest you in purchasing some nondescript consumer items intended to symbolize the universal and ultimately fruitless struggle toward the American Dream?

GATSBY: Um...

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Funny you mention that, actually.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: The American Dream, you say? I'm suddenly compelled to invest completely in whatever it is you have to offer.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Have I told you about the green light by my house?

(Bell.)

WILLY: Name's Willy Loman.

GATSBY: Jay Gatsby. *(They shake hands.)* You know, Mr. Loman, you've got the look of a well-liked fellow with a flair for sales. Would you perchance be interested in a business connection?

WILLY: Of what sort?

GATSBY: Entirely legitimate and legal business-type ventures.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Working for a man who wears human teeth as jewelry.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: Bootlegging.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: The growing field of non-traditional wholesale pharmaceuticals.

WILLY: I appreciate the offer, Mr. Gatsby, but David Singleton never got by on newfangled fads like that. Thanks anyway.

GATSBY: Sure thing, Old Sport.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: You know, Mr. Loman, you've got the look of a well-liked fellow. How about coming to one of my parties sometime? This Saturday?

WILLY: Sounds wonderful. Where do you live?

GATSBY: No need to worry about that; get in any cab in Manhattan and you'll be inexplicably borne to my front door.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: I have a palatial mansion on Long Island directly across the bay from the current home of my boyhood love.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: West Egg, Old Sport. Everyone who's anyone is living out there.

WILLY: I'd love to come. That way I can witness the massively successful lives of your guests and fool myself into thinking I might one day create such a lifestyle for myself.

(Bell.)

WILLY: I'd love to come. Mind if I bring my mistress from Boston?

(Bell.)

WILLY: I'd love to come. Mind if I bring Biff, the one son I actually liked and hoped would achieve all I was never able to?

(Bell.)

WILLY: I'd love to come. Thank you for your kind invitation.

GATSBY: You're most welcome. Of course, you probably won't see me there because I'll be too busy looking for Daisy, the one woman who symbolizes the entirety of my hopes and dreams and thus evinces the paradox of my nouveau riche lifestyle.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: You'll be too busy participating in drunken revelry that represents the corrupted vision of the American Dream.

WILLY: Corrupted—you're telling me.

(Bell.)

GATSBY: You'll be too busy having a splendid time with my splendid guests. Splendid, Old Sport.

WILLY: Splendid. Until then, I'm off to continue my pointless pursuit of the American Dream.

GATSBY: You're kidding—me too!

WILLY: This might sound odd, Mr. Gatsby, but do you ever feel like a boat?

GATSBY: Beating against the current?

WILLY: Borne back...

BOTH: ...ceaselessly into the past!

WILLY: Someone who finally understands! Maybe I won't commit suicide after all.

GATSBY: And maybe I'll finally end my senseless and impossible quest to turn back time. Thanks for your help, Old Sport. You've given the keen insight that only a well-liked man can provide.

WILLY: Sure thing, Old Sport—sure thing.

principle 2 | reflection 1

“Candidates possess the necessary professional knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning, including meeting student needs across physical, social, psychological, and intellectual contexts. Candidates incorporate a variety of strategies, such as technology, to enhance student learning.”

[interpret]

In short, this principle is all about differentiated learning. Part of my job as a knowledgeable, effective teacher is to make sure I am actively engaging my students as much as possible. Cultivating and maintaining this engagement means varying classroom activities to suit the disparate learning styles, attention spans, and ability levels of my students.

Technological resources offer a host of opportunities for differentiation. A single computer with internet access can open a classroom to—quite literally—a world of possibilities. The artifacts accompanying this reflection speak to the use of technology in differentiating instruction.

[select]

To demonstrate my use of technology to create differentiated lessons, I have included two computer screenshots from the websites of National Public Radio (www.npr.org) and *Time* Magazine (www.time.com). Specifically, the screenshots represent the following online resources:

- **“Study: Drug Can Erase Fearful Memories”**
(<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=100754665&sc=emaf>) [P2.R1.A1].
This four-minute audio clip from the NPR program *All Things Considered* talks about a possible new use for ordinary blood pressure medication: blocking the retention of harmful memories. The piece goes on to say that one of the potential applications of the drug could be in persons suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
- **“Talismans”** (http://www.time.com/time/photoessays/2006/talismans_multimedia/) [P2.R1.A2].
This annotated photoessay, referenced in a November 2006 article titled “The Things They Carry,” documents fifteen men currently serving in Iraq. Each soldier is pictured holding personal items of some significance that they carry in the field.

[describe]

Both of the selected artifacts were used at different times during a five-week short story unit in an honors English I class. Among the stories we read during the unit were “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” by J. D. Salinger and “The Things They Carried” by Tim O’Brien.

Both stories deal with poignant, significant topics. The protagonist of “A Perfect Day for Bananafish,” Seymour Glass, commits suicide in the story’s final paragraph, presumably because he suffers from PTSD

related to his participation in World War II. “The Things They Carried” offers a no less gripping account of the horrors of war, this time through the events (and items) surrounding a company of young men in Vietnam. War, death, and the trappings of each are centermost in both stories, and I felt that my students might reach a better understanding of these themes if they could approach them with additional outside information.

I used the NPR clip with “A Perfect Day for Bananafish” as part of what I termed an “audio journal.” I explained to students that, while driving home the night before, I had heard a short piece on the radio that I thought related well to our work in class. I asked them to listen to the clip (which I had already found online and pulled up on the classroom computer), then respond to the following questions in their journals:

- Do you think this treatment would be valuable or beneficial, either to PTSD sufferers in general or Seymour specifically? Why or why not?
- In your opinion, is this an ethical treatment? Why or why not?

After giving the students time to write, I asked them to share their responses with their seat neighbor. We then discussed the responses together as a class.

I used the “Talismans” photoessay in conjunction with “The Things They Carried.” First, I asked the class as a whole to list as many of the story’s numerous characters as they could remember. I listed these names on the board, then passed out a handout with my own list of major characters. This handout provided a brief description of each character (no longer than a single phrase), as well as a quote or two for each character detailing what things each one carried.

I then gave students some brief background on the photoessay, namely that it was from an issue of *Time* magazine and documented fifteen modern soldiers in a manner similar to O’Brien’s story. I asked students to carefully view each photo, then discuss in groups of four which character from the story seemed to best align with the soldier in the picture. I turned off the annotations in the online presentation so that students had to identify what each soldier was carrying and consider what personal significance each item might have. After an individual photo, I would ask each group to tell the rest of the class which character they chose from the story and, most importantly, why they made that choice.

[analyze]

I feel my use of these online resources evidences my understanding of this principle for two reasons. First, it shows my willingness to make technological resources an integral part of my lessons in order to enhance student learning. Both the audio clip and photoessay provided modern context related to each short story, and enriched students’ understanding of the stories as a result. In listening to the radio segment and viewing the photographs, students developed an understanding that these stories related to the larger world outside their English class. Without technological resources, it would have been far more difficult to make this connection possible.

Second, the nature of the two resources and their use in class shows an understanding of differentiated instruction. These resources communicate with their audience (my students, in this case) in different ways—one aural, one visual—and are thus able to engage the diverse ways in which students process information.

In addition, the way I used each resource within its respective lesson further exemplifies differentiation. With the audio clip, students first reflected in writing on their own reactions to the piece and its connections to the story, then verbally shared those reflections at length with others. With the photoessay, students first engaged in discussion and decision-making within a group, then briefly shared their thoughts with the class as a whole. Each lesson, then, used different social setups (e.g. solo work and pair sharing versus small group work) as well as different styles of communication (written and verbal) to engage students and enhance their classroom experience.

[appraise]

In both cases, I feel the use of technology was warranted and beneficial. Rather than being somewhat superficial (as a PowerPoint presentation accompanying a lecture might be), the online resources served as key parts of each lesson, providing new and interesting content that students then connected to the literature they had read.

My informal observations during each lesson also support the conclusion that my attempt at differentiated learning was successful. Class discussion after the NPR clip was active and insightful, particularly in response to the question of ethics. While viewing and discussing the photoessay, students reached unique conclusions that they debated quite emphatically. Overall, students seemed to be highly engaged during both lessons.

[transform]

I would change little, if anything, regarding the use of the online resources. Each one offered valuable contributions to their respective story, and students seemed to respond well to the different perspectives technology allowed. Of course, with different technological resources, I would have to adjust accordingly; without an LCD projector, for instance, I might have to prepare transparencies of each photo. In an effort to remain relevant, I might also re-evaluate these resources further in the future and try to find more recent ones that can similarly enhance my lessons.

As it stands, the one addition to these lessons that might be useful is a more formal survey on the effectiveness differentiation. I currently have only my own judgment to rely on—judgment that cannot be perfectly aware or accurate at all times. By taking a minute to verbally ask the students “Did you all find this enjoyable or helpful,” or even to ask for a brief (one to two sentence) written response, I could more accurately assess how well my attempts at differentiation are enhancing my classroom.

The screenshot shows a web browser displaying an NPR article. The main article title is "Study: Drug Can Erase Fearful Memories" by Nell Greenfieldboyce, dated February 16, 2009. The article text states: "All Things Considered, February 16, 2009 - A lab study shows that a common blood pressure drug can modify a fear memory in people. Scientists are hopeful such drugs could be used to treat people with post-traumatic stress disorder, and this is already being tried in one clinic." Below the article is a "Comments" section with two entries: one from Martin Ivancic (JABA) and another from R. Jackson (fairskies). A navigation menu at the bottom includes categories like "SERVICES", "RADIO", "PODCASTS", "COMMUNITY", "NEWS FEEDS", "TOOLS / API", "DESKTOP", "MOBILE", "NEWSLETTERS", and "PROGRAMS".

An audio player is embedded in the article, titled "Study: Drug Can Erase Fearful Memories". The player shows a progress bar at 03:55 / 03:59. Below the player, there are several "MORE HEALTH & SCIENCE" recommendations, including "Smart People Really Do Think Faster" and "When It Comes To Shampoo, Less Is More".

The browser's address bar shows the URL: <http://www.npr.org/templates/player/mediaPlayer.html?action=1&size=1&urlid=100754665&nm=100754916>. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows the system clock as 6:25 PM and a battery level of 76%.

The screenshot shows a web browser window displaying a Time magazine online photoessay. The browser's address bar shows the URL: http://www.time.com/time/photoessays/2006/talismans_multimedia/. The page features a large black and white photograph of Lance Corporal John Pomas, a young man with a beard, wearing a dark t-shirt and a necklace with a cross. He is holding two small, rectangular photographs in his hands. The word "Talismans" is written in white at the top left of the image area. Below the main image, there is a navigation bar with a "NEXT" button and a "RELATED ARTICLES" link. To the right of the main image, there is a copyright notice: "Copyright © 2006 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without permission is prohibited." Below this, there are links for "Subscribe", "Customer Service", "Help", "Site Map", "Search", "Contact Us", "Privacy Policy", "Terms of Use", "Reprints & Permissions", and "Media Kit". At the bottom of the page, there are several advertisements. One is for Verizon Wireless, another for "Introducing Friends & Family" with a 100% amazing, 50% off offer, and a third for "Free Overnight Shipping" with online orders. The browser's taskbar at the bottom shows various icons, including the Windows logo, and the system tray on the right shows the time as 6:24 PM and a battery level of 75%.

principle 2 | reflection 2

“Candidates possess the necessary professional knowledge to support and enhance student development and learning, including meeting student needs across physical, social, psychological, and intellectual contexts. Candidates incorporate a variety of strategies, such as technology, to enhance student learning.”

[interpret]

In short, this principle is all about differentiated learning. Part of my job as a knowledgeable, effective teacher is to make sure I am actively engaging my students as much as possible. Cultivating and maintaining this engagement means varying classroom activities to suit the disparate learning styles, attention spans, and ability levels of my students.

[select]

To show my development of differentiated lessons that address similar content, I have selected materials from my Honors English I *Animal Farm* unit. The artifacts included with this reflection are as follows:

- Sample **propaganda images** viewed and discussed in class. [P2.R2.A1]
- A handout with **analysis questions** related to the propaganda images, titled “Understanding Propaganda.” [P2.R2.A2]
- The **“Propaganda Mini-Project”** assignment and rubric, which outline a project in which students design their own propaganda posters featuring slogans from the novel. [P2.R2.A3]
- The **“Animal Farm Oration Project”** assignment and rubric, which outline a project in which students analyze and present one of the speeches from the novel. [P2.R2.A4]

[describe]

Both of these projects were part of an Honors English I unit on George Orwell’s novel *Animal Farm*, and both aimed to develop students’ understanding of how language can be used to control thought and opinion.

Prior to either assignment, students viewed and discussed various examples of real-world propaganda, some of which were contemporary to the novel (e.g. Soviet-era posters promoting Stalin and the Five Year Plan) and some more modern (e.g. the iconic Obama campaign “Hope” poster). Students worked in groups to examine each poster and answer questions about the strategies and techniques it used.

After developing a basic understanding of propaganda methods, the propaganda mini-project was assigned. The students’ task was to select one of nine slogans featured prominently in the text and illustrate that slogan using an original propaganda poster. Having studied prominent historical examples of propaganda, students now had some idea of how to effectively construct a visual propaganda piece.

After completing their propaganda posters, students displayed their work in a gallery walk format, in which one group of artists stands with their posters while the rest of the class walks by and observes.

Later in the unit, as part of our post-reading discussions of the novel and its themes, students returned to propaganda concepts through the oration project. This time, their task was to pick a major speech from the novel, study its structure and use of language, then deliver their speech to the class as effectively and persuasively as possible. The importance of persuasive tactics was underscored by the inclusion of peer scoring on the assignment rubric. After having class time to study and rehearse, students presented their orations over the course of two periods.

[analyze]

These two assignments represent differentiated instruction in their unique approaches to understanding the topic of propaganda. Any one of the formats used to study this subject—written responses to questions, artistic design, or oration—could not offer a full, complete examination of the topic on its own. As a whole, however, these assignments each address different facets of the broader concept of propaganda.

Moreover, each assignment capitalizes on different learning styles. For the “Understanding Propaganda” questions, students connect to the assignment visually by examining each poster, then use more formal reading and writing skills to answer the analysis questions. The propaganda mini-project further capitalizes on the skills of visual learners as students craft a poster of their own—essentially creating a unique visual text. The oration project takes the same broad concepts of persuasion and language use, but applies them this time in an auditory context. Each assignment encourages students to draw from a variety of learning styles with the ultimate goal of developing a deeper, richer understanding of their common concepts.

The assignments further meet students’ diverse intellectual needs by allowing them to express themselves through avenues an English class might not typically encourage. Students proficient in visual art or theatre, for example, now have an opportunity to develop and display their unique talents while still learning pertinent course material. Through assignments such as these, students will hopefully observe connections between disciplines and realize that no one subject exists in a vacuum.

[appraise]

All of the assignments seemed to be well-received by the students. As the most traditional assignment of the three, the “Understanding Propaganda” questions were perhaps the least exciting assignment; still, students seemed to enjoy viewing the images (many of them interesting due to their unfamiliarity) and actively contributed to discussion about the features of each. As one might expect, different groups of students found the poster design and oration projects engaging. Those students less interested in one, though, were usually more excited by the other, further demonstrating the purpose and success of differentiation.

In addition, the overall quality of student work on the assignments was high. Regardless of interest, most students put high levels of time and effort into the posters and orations. The vast majority of students were justifiably proud in displaying their work (though some were naturally reluctant at first in the case of the orations). Most importantly, this level of quality meant that students had indeed developed an understanding of how propaganda is created and used.

[transform]

These assignments were, in my opinion, among some of the best I designed during my student teaching, and I plan to use them in the future largely unchanged. I do, however, have some small modifications in mind to further improve these projects.

First, I may shorten the “Understanding Propaganda” questions. Of the three propaganda-related assignments, this one seemed least engaging to students, and its length may be at the root of this problem. If five questions can effectively cover the material that nine make redundant, then I ought to revise the handout. Discussion questions that are brief and succinct will likely also cultivate a clearer understanding of propaganda strategies for use in the subsequent projects.

I would also like to make sure students have a strong basis for the oration assignment by offering some basic public speaking instruction. Many of the students have had little to no prior public speaking experience, and thus could benefit from some discussion of proper posture, eye contact, projection, and the like.



understanding propaganda

Name:

Date:

Period:

Examine your group's assigned propaganda image and answer the following questions.

1. What slogan appears on the poster? Restate it in your own words.
2. Upon first looking at this poster, what is your eye immediately drawn toward? Why?
3. What images are present in this poster? Which seem most important? Why?
4. What colors are used in the poster? What symbolic significance do they have?
5. Does this poster seem to appeal more to your emotions or logic? Explain your answer.
6. How does the poster achieve its appeal(s) to emotion and/or logic? What effects do the images, colors, and other techniques have on you, the observer?
7. In a single, clear sentence, state the message you believe this poster is attempting to convey.

propaganda mini-project

Name:**Date:****Period:**

Now that we've studied some examples of real-world propaganda, it's time to try writing some of your own. Below are eight slogans selected from your *Animal Farm* reading thus far. Your task is as follows: choose one slogan, then design a propaganda poster that features and communicates that idea through the thoughtful and effective use of text, color, and images. After choosing a slogan, it might behoove² you to look up your chosen slogan in the book (page numbers are listed below) and refresh your memory as to its context and meaning.

You will have construction paper, markers, magazines and newspapers, and glue at your disposal. Use them wisely and well. In addition, you are highly encouraged to supplement these materials with anything else you can think of—Pictures and/or text printed off the internet? Screen captures of YouTube videos? Fingerpaints and macaroni, kindergarten-style? Impress me with the creative genius I'm certain you possess.

Finally, bear in mind three ideas while completing this project:

- Get creative;
- Have fun;
- Don't hesitate to think like a jumping, dancing, conniving little pig.

Make Squealer proud, young propagandists, and may Our Benevolent and Merciful Leader Comrade Napoleon smile upon you.

[slogans]

1. "I will work harder." (47)
2. "Four legs good, two legs bad." (50)
3. "Vote for Snowball and the three-day week." (65)
4. "Vote for Napoleon and the full manger." (65)
5. "Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?" (70)
6. "Napoleon is always right." (70)
7. "Long live Animal Farm!" (77)
8. "Long live the windmill!" (83)
9. "Death to Humanity!" (90)

² If you're not sure what this means, look it up. After doing so, use it in casual conversation whenever possible (e.g. "Dude, it might behoove you to stay away from the mashed potatoes at lunch," or "Mom, it might behoove you to sit down, take a deep breath, and let me give you a foot massage before you look at my progress report").

propaganda mini-project rubric

Name:

Date:

Period:

Selected slogan (write out in full):

1. The artist's propaganda poster clearly shows his/her understanding of the chosen slogan.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

2. The poster makes full use of all available resources (e.g. paper, markers, magazine/newspaper clippings, text or pictures printed from the internet, etc.) in its design.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

3. The poster's design and level of detail clearly show that the artist put in high levels of time and effort.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

4. The poster's design includes careful, thoughtful use of color, text, and images.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
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[score] / 16

[comments]

animal farm oration project

Name:

Date:

Period:

"The others said of Squealer that he could turn black into white."

[the assignment]

In order to better understand how language can be used to control people and their thoughts, you're going to once again step into Squealer's shoes as propagandist extraordinaire. This time, though, you'll be harnessing the power of the spoken word rather than print.

Your task is to choose one of the novel's key speeches (listed below) and deliver it as persuasively as possible. Memorization is not necessary or required; you may have the text in front of you. Don't, however, think of this assignment as **reading**; rather, consider this a kind of **interpretive performance**, in which you show your understanding of the selected speech through your delivery. Handout versions of each speech are available so that you can make notes directly on the text you will perform.

To assist in the understanding and preparation of your speech, you'll also be completing an analysis sheet that poses questions about audience, purpose, and rhetorical strategies. The more carefully you think about who your character is speaking to and how he's doing it, the more convincing your performance will ultimately be.

[the speeches]

1. Old Major – "The Animalist Manifesto" (28-31)
2. Squealer – "Brainwork" (52 & 80)
3. Squealer – "Comrade Napoleon's Sacrifice" (69-70)
4. Napoleon – "Death Sentence" (82-83)
5. Squealer – "The Secret Agent" (89-91)

animal farm oration rubric

1. The speaker makes effective use of volume, articulation, and eye contact; he/she can be clearly understood by the audience.

[0] not present	[1] needs improvement	[2] sufficient work	[3] quality work	[4] exemplary work
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2. The speaker’s delivery engages the audience and holds its attention; he/she is speaking to the audience rather than simply reading words off a sheet of paper.

[0] not present	[1] needs improvement	[2] sufficient work	[3] quality work	[4] exemplary work
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3. The speaker shows an understanding of the speech’s rhetorical strategies through his/her delivery as well as the initial written analysis.

[0] not present	[1] needs improvement	[2] sufficient work	[3] quality work	[4] exemplary work
----------------------	----------------------------	--------------------------	-----------------------	-------------------------

4. Average audience rating³:

[0] not persuasive	[1] minimally persuasive	[2] somewhat persuasive	[3] highly persuasive	[4] supremely persuasive
<i>Dude, even the sheep aren't fooled.</i>	<i>Well, at least Boxer is listening.</i>	<i>Jessie and Bluebell's ears are perked up.</i>	<i>Everyone but Benjamin is convinced.</i>	<i>Whoa! When did Squealer get here?</i>

[total] / 16

[comments]

³ Average audience rating is subject to teacher override and/or alteration without notice (the “Simon Knows Best” rule).

principle 3 | reflection 1

“Candidates possess the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct and interpret appropriate assessments.”

[interpret]

To me, the crux of this principle is the word “appropriate.” Assessments of student work should be appropriate in two ways:

- **to the assignment.** The nature of the assessment should match the nature of the assignment. Low-stakes assignments such as journal entries or vocabulary sentences should generally be graded with less rigor than high-stakes assignments such as essays or major projects.
- **to the student.** Regardless of the assignment, assessments should offer students constructive, informative feedback that focuses on helping students improve their work. This feedback may be more or less extensive depending on the stakes of the given assignment, but should always be present in some form.

My focus for this reflection is on the different forms of high-stakes assessments I used in my classes on a variety of assignments.

[select]

To demonstrate my ability to develop, administer, and interpret appropriate assessments, I have included materials from the two units (one on short fiction, the other on *Animal Farm*) that I taught to my Honors English I classes. The artifacts referred to in this reflection are as follows:

- The **short story unit final project overview**, which explains and outlines the culminating project for the short fiction unit. [P3.R1.A1]
- The **short story checklist** used in grading the short story. [P3.R1.A2]
- The **“Propaganda mini-project”** assignment and rubric, which outline a project wherein students design their own propaganda posters featuring slogans from *Animal Farm*. [P3.R1.A3]
- The **“Animal Farm: the essay”** handout, which explains and outlines the final analytical writing assignment. [P3.R1.A4]
- The **Animal Farm essay checklist** used in grading the essay. [P3.R1.A5]

[describe]

All of the included artifacts were used with my Honors English I classes. The short story assignment was used as a creative, non-traditional assessment at the end of our short story unit, which consisted of students reading, discussing, and modeling published stories to understand both their literary qualities and the broader process of creative writing. I distributed the assignment and checklist together after we had finished reading all the short stories and before students began the first drafts of their own stories. The students then could refer to the checklists as they wrote and revised, in order to be sure that their

final products would meet my expectations. In addition, I made more explicit use of the checklists during in-class peer editing and teacher conferencing sessions.

The propaganda mini-project was used as part of our *Animal Farm* unit. One of my major focuses for the unit was on the use of language to control thought, and this assignment gave students an immediate, hands-on look at this practice. As with the short story checklist, I distributed the assignment and rubric together before students began work on the project so that they clearly understood my expectations and could tailor their work accordingly.

The *Animal Farm* unit concluded with a traditional essay assignment. Students could respond to any one of four different prompts, but all essays were graded using the same checklist. This checklist, once again, was distributed before any writing began so that students might clearly understand my expectations as their work progressed.

[analyze]

These artifacts evince my understanding of this principle because each one communicates a set of expectations that are detailed, unique, and thus appropriate to the given assignment. Because each of these assignments requires a significant investment of students' time and effort, each assessment provides a corresponding level of detail that helps students understand exactly how that time and effort should be applied. It is my opinion that I can only grade an assignment as high-stakes when I have clearly made that level of expectation clear with students from the beginning.

In addition, the details of each individual assessment are specific to the given assignment. Rather than defining my expectations in terms of vague generalities, I designed the rubric and checklists to pertain directly to each assignment. The short story checklist, for example, discusses issues of character believability and plot development, while the essay checklist deals with aspects of more formal writing such as a strong thesis and logical organization.

Moreover, each assessment device reflects the major concepts covered in each unit. Literary devices, for example, were a main topic of discussion during the short story unit, and thus they appear on the checklist for students' stories. When studying propaganda in conjunction with *Animal Farm*, class discussion focused on the use of color and imagery to sway opinion; the propaganda project, then, includes a criterion that addresses understanding of this concept.

In designing assessments that are specific to the given assignment, my goal is to not only provide students with clear, sufficiently detailed expectations, but also to trigger the recollection and retrieval of past knowledge required to complete the given assignment. Ultimately, my assessment designs reflect my desire for each student to succeed as fully and completely as possible.

[appraise]

I feel that the assessments I designed for these assignments were useful both to me and, more importantly, the students. During my own grading process, the checklists and rubric gave me clear

criteria by which I could examine student work on a somewhat more objective basis, rather than relying on some ethereal, highly subjective conception of what makes a given assignment “good” or “bad.”

Students also engaged in some degree of self-assessment by referring to the checklists and rubric as they completed each assignment. For the propaganda project, I only gave students verbal encouragement to do so (e.g. announcing as students worked that they should not consider themselves finished until they checked the rubric against their own poster). For the short story and essay, however, the checklists were used more explicitly during student peer-editing sessions, in which students were required to complete a checklist for each story or essay they read.

The major problem with the formal use of checklists in class is that some students inevitably take them more seriously and complete them more honestly than others. Some students, then, receive informative, useful feedback on their writing, while others are simply told “it’s all good.”

[transform]

The major transformation in these assessments relates not to their content, but their implementation. In the future, I want to introduce checklists and rubrics like these in such a way that as many students as possible obtain valuable, informative feedback through their use before a final product is submitted. In a broader sense, this will translate into a more detailed, content-rich peer-editing process. Perhaps the best way to achieve this goal is to simply be clearer with students about how I expect checklists and rubrics to be used. Modeling their use before a peer-editing session (in conjunction either with a writing sample of my own or of a willing student volunteer) might ensure a higher level of meaningful student participation. Checking in with peer-editing groups as they work and pushing them to go further with comments (e.g. “Brad, make sure you tell Jenny *why* her characters are interesting”) will also help meet this goal.

Another more general transformation involves revising these assessments. By asking students which criteria seemed either especially clear and helpful or murky and confusing, I can better understand which parts of my assessment design are effective and which are not, allowing me to continually revise and rewrite assessments so that they best serve the students I currently work with.

short story unit final project overview

As a culminating project for this unit, I want you to stretch your writing muscles a bit. Instead of writing some variety of analytical essay, we'll try our collective hands at something more creative: a short story of your own.

The reason I'm telling you about this so early is so that you can begin thinking. Creative writing (and any other type of writing, for that matter) is a process. As we progress through the unit, we'll go through the steps of this process together so that when it comes time to actually begin putting words on paper, you'll already have plenty of ideas formed and ready to go.

Here's a rough timeline for the writing project:

[date]	[event]
Monday, February 2	Story pitch meetings Due: 3-5 rough short story ideas
Friday, February 6	Due: Story sketch
Monday, February 16	Peer editing day Due: Rough draft
Tuesday, February 17	Writing conferences Due: Revision #1
Wednesday, February 18	Writing conferences
Monday, February 23	Due: Revision #2
Wednesday, February 25	Writing workshop day
Friday, February 29	Due: Final draft

We'll go over each of the assignments in more detail as they arise. Feel free to ask me questions at any time, either in class or by email—my address is ira.t.smith@unc.edu.

short story checklist

Name:

Date:

Period:

Story title:

[plot – 30%]

check

Believability

The action of the story is believable given the context of the story; plot twists and resolutions do not occur abruptly or without apparent reason.

Pacing

The plot develops at an appropriate rate, neither too fast (leaving the reader without enough information) or too slow (bombarding the reader with information they do not need).

[character – 40%]

check

Development

Characters are well-developed (i.e. they are round rather than flat).

Believability

Characters say and do believable things given the context of the story. Their motivations are clear and plausible.

[literary devices – 5%]

check

The story contains at least **one** example of a literary device (e.g. metaphor, personification, symbolism (either through objects or colors), *purposeful* alliteration, etc).

[language and structure – 10%]

check

Diction

The story correctly uses a varied, interesting vocabulary.

Sentence structure

The sentences in the story are varied in length and structure, creating a unique narrative voice that holds the reader's interest.

[continued on back]

[grammar and mechanics – 15%]	check
Title The story has a unique title somehow related to its content.	
Point of view The story has a consistent point of view throughout (or contains evident reasons for shifting point of view).	
Other grammar issues The story adheres to basic grammatical conventions (e.g. proper use of punctuation, correct verb tenses, etc).	

propaganda mini-project

Name:**Date:****Period:**

Now that we've studied some examples of real-world propaganda, it's time to try writing some of your own. Below are eight slogans selected from your *Animal Farm* reading thus far. Your task is as follows: choose one slogan, then design a propaganda poster that features and communicates that idea through the thoughtful and effective use of text, color, and images. After choosing a slogan, it might behoove⁴ you to look up your chosen slogan in the book (page numbers are listed below) and refresh your memory as to its context and meaning.

You will have construction paper, markers, magazines and newspapers, and glue at your disposal. Use them wisely and well. In addition, you are highly encouraged to supplement these materials with anything else you can think of—Pictures and/or text printed off the internet? Screen captures of YouTube videos? Fingerpaints and macaroni, kindergarten-style? Impress me with the creative genius I'm certain you possess.

Finally, bear in mind three ideas while completing this project:

- Get creative;
- Have fun;
- Don't hesitate to think like a jumping, dancing, conniving little pig.

Make Squealer proud, young propagandists, and may Our Benevolent and Merciful Leader Comrade Napoleon smile upon you.

[slogans]

10. "I will work harder." (47)
11. "Four legs good, two legs bad." (50)
12. "Vote for Snowball and the three-day week." (65)
13. "Vote for Napoleon and the full manger." (65)
14. "Surely, comrades, you do not want Jones back?" (70)
15. "Napoleon is always right." (70)
16. "Long live Animal Farm!" (77)
17. "Long live the windmill!" (83)
18. "Death to Humanity!" (90)

⁴ If you're not sure what this means, look it up. After doing so, use it in casual conversation whenever possible (e.g. "Dude, it might behoove you to stay away from the mashed potatoes at lunch," or "Mom, it might behoove you to sit down, take a deep breath, and let me give you a foot massage before you look at my progress report").

propaganda mini-project rubric

Name:

Date:

Period:

Selected slogan (write out in full):

5. The artist's propaganda poster clearly shows his/her understanding of the chosen slogan.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
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6. The poster makes full use of all available resources (e.g. paper, markers, magazine/newspaper clippings, text or pictures printed from the internet, etc.) in its design.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

7. The poster's design and level of detail clearly show that the artist put in high levels of time and effort.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

8. The poster's design includes careful, thoughtful use of color, text, and images.

[0] not present		[1] needs improvement		[2] sufficient work		[3] quality work		[4] exemplary work
----------------------	--	----------------------------	--	--------------------------	--	-----------------------	--	-------------------------

[score] / 16

[comments]

animal farm: the essay

Name:**Date:****Period:**

Below are several essay prompts related to *Animal Farm*. Choose one prompt and respond to it in a thoughtful, detailed, well-developed essay. Use quotes as evidence to support your claims (citing and punctuating them correctly when you do, of course). As always, keep in mind rules of grammar and mechanics as you write.

[the prompts]

1. Who (or what) is to blame for the failure of Animal Farm and the Animalist experiment? Why?
2. Compare and contrast with “Harrison Bergeron” and/or “The Lottery”—which world is more dystopic (i.e. is the bigger failtopia), and why?
3. Compare and contrast Squealer’s and Snowball’s rhetorical tactics. Who is the more effective rhetorician, and why?
4. Do you think Animalism could be a viable ideology or form of government? Why or why not? What changes would have to be made, or what safeguards put in place?

[the schedule]

We will spend some (but certainly not all) in-class time next week working on the essays. The overall timeline for this assignment is as follows:

[date]	[assignment]
Friday, March 20	Choose topic and begin draft #1
Tuesday, March 24	Bring first page (at least) of draft #1 to class
Wednesday, March 25	Complete draft #1
Thursday, March 26	Begin editing draft #1
Friday, March 27	Continue editing/re-writing process [optional: turn in draft #1 by 4:00 for teacher review]
Friday, April 3	ESSAYS DUE

[final note: blind submission]

When you turn in your essay, please use a **separate title page** indicating your name and class period. Your name should **not** appear anywhere on your essay itself—this includes the body, headers and footers, etc.

animal farm essay checklist**Author's name:****Date:****Period:****Draft version:****Edited by:****[the title]** [check]

The title is original and clearly states the essay's topic; it does not simply regurgitate the title of the novel (e.g. *Animal Farm* Essay).

[the introduction] [check]

The intro hooks the reader with a thought-provoking first line or two.

The intro provides basic background information about the novel.

The intro offers a clear, limited, precise thesis at the end of the paragraph.

The intro does **NOT** list the main points of the argument.

[content] [check]

The essay contains at least three points that logically, clearly address the thesis.

The essay is logically organized; the order of its arguments leads the reader to its conclusion.

Each paragraph contains evidence from the text to support its claims.

The essay does **NOT** summarize the plot of the novel.

[quotes] [check]

Quotes used in the essay clearly and **succinctly** illustrate a point; long quotes are used only when absolutely necessary.

Paragraphs do not begin or end with quotes.

Introduce the speaker (if necessary) and provide context for each quote.

Quotes are connected to the thesis through explanation and analysis.

[conclusion] [check]

The conclusion crystallizes the main intention of the paper.

The conclusion makes a final point without beginning a new argument.

The conclusion adds something to the essay; it does not simply restate each argument.

[point of view and verb tense] [check]

The author avoids "I," "we," "you," and other personal references.

The author uses present tense verbs when referring to the novel.

[language] [check]

Spelling, grammar, and punctuation mistakes are minimal at most.

Absolutes and forbidden words (e.g. get, thing, good) are avoided.

The author varies sentence structure and uses a wide vocabulary.

[over for grade breakdown]

[criteria]	[weight]	[grade]
Depth and sophistication of content	40%	
Introduction and conclusion	15%	
Correct use of quotes	10%	
Correct use of language and mechanics (verb tense, point of view, vocabulary, etc.)	10%	
Total effect	25%	

[final grade]

[comments]

principle 3 | reflection 2

“Candidates possess the necessary knowledge and skills to conduct and interpret appropriate assessments.”

[interpret]

To me, the crux of this principle is the word “appropriate.” Assessments of student work should be appropriate in two ways:

- **to the assignment.** The nature of the assessment should match the nature of the assignment. Low-stakes assignments such as journal entries or vocabulary sentences should generally be graded with fewer rigors than high-stakes assignments such as essays or major projects.
- **to the student.** Regardless of the assignment, assessments should offer students constructive, informative feedback that focuses on helping students improve their work. This feedback may be more or less extensive depending on the stakes of the given assignment, but should always be present in some form.

My focus for this reflection is on low- to mid-stakes assessments and the kinds of feedback given on those assignments.

[select]

As evidence of my ability to conduct appropriate assessments, I have included three scripts that students wrote after reading David Ives’ short play “Sure Thing.”⁵ Specifically, the artifacts are as follows:

- **“Tessa and O,”** in which a wrong number leads to a strange romance. [P3.R2.A1]
- **“Gatsby, Tom, and Daisy,”** in which the titular Fitzgerald character gets another shot with his one true love. [P3.R2.A2]
- **“Job Interview,”** in which an aspiring camp counselor learns to carefully choose his words. [P3.R2.A3]

[describe]

After reading and discussing David Ives’ one-act play “Sure Thing,”⁶ students spent two class periods writing their own scripts in a similar style. They then presented these scripts to their peers in the form of staged readings in front of the class. Elementary props and blocking were used to give some degree of life to the presentation of their dramatic work. This style of presentation also prepared students for the similar but far more extensive project they would later complete as part of their study of *The Crucible*.

⁵ For the handout that explains this assignment, see artifact P1.R2.A1.

⁶ For additional description surrounding this assignment, see reflection P1.R2.

The in-class readings of each “Sure Thing” project were not graded; instead, they simply offered each author a chance to publicly display and take part in his or her creation. The scripts themselves, however, were turned in and graded on a mid-stakes ten-point scale. I commented on each script where I found passages to be notably clever or well-written, as well as where improvements (usually grammatical or mechanical) could be made.

[analyze]

My assessments on these scripts can be considered appropriate in both senses of the word (as outlined above). First, the scale of the assessment and depth of my feedback are fitting for the nature of the assignment. Because this project was not introduced as formal writing and students had no explicit instruction in playwriting before they began, I did not grade it as stringently as I would an analytical essay. The spirit of the assignment was for students to increase their understanding of the work we read by imitating it; if this understanding was apparent, students generally received high grades.

My comments also reflected the assignment’s purpose in that they related not to technical issues of playwriting, but to how well the student captured the essence of the original “Sure Thing.” On most scripts, for example, I noted where the author made effective use of repetition in the style of the original play. I also made note of my own reactions to the scripts—where I found lines to be surprising (“What?!”), ominous (“Uh oh...”), or simply humorous (“Ha!”).

Secondly, I offered each student feedback on how to improve his or her specific piece. For the students re-imagining *The Great Gatsby*, I suggested they “spend more time with Tom and the actual argument.” In the case of “Tessa and O,” whose author showed a clear understanding of how “Sure Thing” works, I noted a few spelling errors to correct (though not all, since grammar was not a specific focus of this assignment).

In general, I tried to provide students with feedback that would help them understand the effect their writing had on its audience (namely me). I strove to write comments that were not punitive or snide, but helpful and encouraging. I also reigned in my desire to offer up every improvement I could imagine, so that the extensiveness of my comments matches the stakes of the assignment.

[appraise]

I feel the mini-unit on “Sure Thing,” which culminated in these scripts, represented effective and useful design. First, it achieved its purpose of reacquainting students with how to read and understand drama. Reading and acting out the various plays reactivated students’ prior knowledge of drama (gained while reading *Death of a Salesman* earlier in the year) and mentally prepared them for reading the task of reading *The Crucible*.

The short unit was also a welcome break after studying *The Great Gatsby*. As a class, we analyzed Fitzgerald’s novel in great depth, working together to understand its symbolism, themes, and characters. Students then formalized this understanding by writing analytical essays on the novel. After

this kind of serious literary work, a brief look at an unusual, entertaining comedy was an appropriate change of pace.

Finally, this project in particular was valuable because it offered students a rare chance to practice creative writing. Too often, writing in English classes deals with literature in an analytical or reflective sense and discourages students from emulation. In this case, however, students gained a better understanding of the work not by writing about it, but writing like it. They were allowed and encouraged to be creative, and many students flourished who might not have otherwise done so.

[transform]

The one transformation my assessment of this project needs is some kind of guideline or rubric. Because this assignment is non-traditional, and because some students find the creative writing it requires somewhat daunting, I need to provide students with as much clarity as possible. By creating a short rubric or checklist and providing it to students when they begin writing, I can ensure they understand my expectations when grading.

principle 4 | reflection 1

“Candidates view and conduct themselves as professionals, providing leadership in their chosen field, including effective communication and collaboration with students and stakeholders.”

[interpret]

This principle addresses behavior fitting to a member of a profession. Like any professionals—doctors, lawyers, journalists—teachers have an obligation to continually improve their own practice through professional development. In addition, teachers must improve their practice through conversations not only with other professionals, but also with those immediately affected by that practice—students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders in the educational endeavor. Those who engage in thorough, thoughtful professional development are those who become leaders of the profession.

This reflection focuses on leadership within the teaching profession and professional development that arises from conversation among educators.

[select]

To demonstrate my participation in professional development, I have selected a variety of materials related to my participation in the 2009 School of Education Research to Practice Symposium as a member of the planning committee. Specifically, the artifacts are as follows:

- The **event program**, which I designed in conjunction with committee co-chairs Beth Bader and Mary Bratsch. [P4.R1.A1]
- Sample **minutes** from two planning committee meetings, dated February 26, 2009 and March 18, 2009. [P4.R1.A2 and P4.R1.A3]
- My own **notes from the second breakout session** I attended, which was an overview of the Elementary School Success Profile⁷ assessment tool. [P4.R1.A4]
- Screenshots from the **2009 Research to Practice Symposium Wiki**, which I designed in conjunction with fellow MAT member Trisha Klein (available online at <http://uncsoe.pbwiki.com>). [P4.R1.A5]

[describe]

My involvement with the Symposium Planning Committee began when MAT Program Director Dr. Jim Trier recommended me for a seat on the committee as a member of the student community. I emailed committee co-chair Beth Bader to confirm my interest, and on February 26, I attended my first committee meeting.

The purpose of the Symposium as described to me at this first meeting was to bring together members of the academic research community and education practitioners, with the ultimate hope of creating a

⁷ Developed by the UNC School of Social Work. More information online at www.schoolsuccessonline.com/ESSP.asp.

conversation that might bridge the gap between the two. We discussed as a committee the idea that academic research too often seems to exist apart from concrete practice on the classroom level; researchers are too often seen as using students and teachers as guinea pigs—observing and recording their behavior, but doing little to improve it. The committee’s aim in planning the Symposium was to develop more positive, co-operative ideas about research and practice through a discussion of researchers’ obligations to the schools they work in, as well as practitioners’ ability to be active members of the research community rather than solely its subjects.

This conversation would revolve around four current examples of education research: FirstSchool, the Durham Freedom School, the Research Triangle Schools Partnership, and the Elementary School Success Profile⁸. These projects would each present a brief description of their work, then participate in a panel discussion in which they answered audience questions. After the panel discussion, each project would have its own afternoon breakout session to speak about more specific aspects of their research and how it could translate into practice. We encouraged all members of the educational community to be part of our audience—School of Education graduate and undergraduate students, university faculty, local teachers and administrators, and any other interested persons.

After two months of planning, the Symposium took place on April 24, 2009. Though the event was not without its glitches and went more lightly attended than the committee members had hoped, it nevertheless achieved its basic purpose of continuing a dialogue between researchers and practitioners. In addition, this year’s event further solidified the foundations of the annual Symposium so that, in the future, it might grow to become the major educational event that the committee first envisioned.

[analyze]

My participation on the Symposium Planning Committee addresses this principle in terms of both leadership among educators and my own professional development. In agreeing to take part in the planning of the Symposium, I added a new dimension to my teaching identity. I was no longer simply a classroom teacher; in some sense (however small), my participation on the committee meant I was participating in the growth of the teaching profession. In helping to plan the symposium, I helped foster a meaningful conversation about the growth and betterment of education.

My work with Trisha Klein to develop the Symposium wiki further signifies leadership among educators. Because of prior experience in creating wikis, Trisha and I offered our services to bring the Symposium into the 21st century. We developed the site with keen attention to both a clean, simple appearance and rich content. This online presence became not just a place to post information about the Symposium itself, but a repository for a variety of educational resources across disciplines. Our intent is for the wiki to remain online not only so that it might be used for future Symposiums, but also serve as a general gathering place for educators in need of content-area-related resources.

My attendance at the Symposium event itself also represented my first professional development activity. By listening to the panel discussion, I learned about a host of research projects I was previously

⁸ Full descriptions of each research project can be found in the Symposium program (P4.R1.A1).

unfamiliar with. More importantly, I began to consider how those projects could inform my own practice. In particular, the Elementary School Success Profile seemed to provide a wide, highly organized array of practical solutions to problems I might encounter in my teaching. Even if I only rarely use this resource or any other that I encountered through the Symposium, my professional development has still grown in the sense that I now have an incrementally greater awareness of the educational community and my colleagues' work within it.

[appraise]

As a member of the Planning Committee, I can say with some certainty that this year's Symposium was a mixed success. As with any event of this size, the Symposium had some mild problems such as logistical hiccups and rather sparse attendance.

Perhaps the biggest issue was the Symposium's somewhat vague purpose. Early in the planning process, many of the research projects we asked to attend were unsure about exactly what was expected of them as key presenters. Though we knew our overall intent was to discuss the connection between research and practice, I never felt it became fully clear either to the committee or the attendees exactly what this meant. In the future, the Symposium's purpose statement—its thesis, if you will—should provide a clearer, more specific focus for discussion.

Still, even with its flaws, the Symposium was a valuable event. Meaningful conversations did happen, and I came out of the experience with new resources to use in the classroom as well as experience working as part of the educational academia.

[transform]

The most important transformation the Symposium can undergo is the development of a clearly stated purpose. This might be achieved by centering each Symposium around a single question—for example, "How can teachers put research into practice?" Developing a more effective purpose statement would inevitably also require discussion between the committee and all Symposium participants to ensure each group understands the wants, needs, and goals of the others. With this improvement, the discussion fostered by the Symposium can only become more fruitful and thus more valuable as a professional development activity.

Research to Practice Sym... x
 http://uncsoe.pbwiki.com/
 Research to Practice Symposium
 Maintenance Announcement: Pbwiki will be undergoing scheduled maintenance Tuesday, April 28 1:00-5:00AM GMT/UTC. Find out more.

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2009 School of Education Research Symposium

Research to Practice through Engagement with the Community of Practitioners

- April 24, 2009
- 9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
- Frank Porter, Graham Student Union, UNC Chapel Hill -- Multipurpose Room and rooms 3201, 3203, 3206a, 3206b

This year's Research Symposium brings together undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, and other professionals from across disciplines and educational program areas to identify intersections between practice and research. The focus for the 2009 symposium is an in-depth look at research projects that are exemplary models of working with local communities and schools.

Attending programs include:

- FirstSchool
- Durham Freedom School
- Research Triangle Schools Partnership
- Elementary School Success Profile (developed by the UNC School of SocialWork)

- Click [here](#) for the day's agenda.
- Download the [2009 Research Symposium flier](#) or [details on the attendees and schedule](#).

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[Attending programs]

- FirstSchool
- Durham Freedom School
- Research Triangle Schools Partnership
- Elementary School Success Profile

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principle 4 | reflection 2

“Candidates view and conduct themselves as professionals, providing leadership in their chosen field, including effective communication and collaboration with students and stakeholders.”

[interpret]

This principle addresses behavior fitting to a member of a profession. Like any professionals—doctors, lawyers, journalists—teachers have an obligation to continually improve their own practice through professional development. In addition, teachers must improve their practice through conversations not only with other professionals, but also with those immediately affected by that practice—students, parents, community members, and other stakeholders in the educational endeavor. Those who engage in thorough, thoughtful professional development are those who become leaders of the profession.

This reflection focuses on communication and collaboration with stakeholders, specifically parents of students.

[select]

As evidence of my efforts to communicate with parents as stakeholders in the educational process, I have included the following materials that were part of an assignment for EDUC 644 (Learner and Learning I):

- two sets of **notes from parent interviews**. [P4.R2.A1 and P4.R2.A2]
- the final **presentation** given in class that includes information from the interviews. [P4.R2.A3]

[describe]

These interviews were conducted as part of a larger group assignment examining the transition from middle to high school. Group members were to research the transition from the perspective of teachers, students, and parents; it was my task within the group to interview the latter.

I asked my mentor teacher for names of the parents of two freshman students that he thought might yield particularly helpful or thoughtful information. My mentor teacher exchanged emails with the parents and gave me their phone numbers, and I then called them on a November evening to conduct the interviews.

After the interviews were complete, I collaborated with my group members to assemble the information we had collected regarding the high school transition. We then presented our findings to the rest of our class, highlighting commonalities between the three perspectives and recommending courses of action to ease the high school transition.

[analyze]

The conversations I had in these interviews with the parents of my future students marked my first conversation as a teacher with those who held a stake in my work. Before completing this assignment, I was certainly aware that parents had a vested interest in their children's success at school, but having specific, directed conversations with individual parents made my awareness far more immediate. I learned not only what specific concerns parents had for their children, but what changes these parents wanted to see that might address them. The impact of this information was heightened by the fact that I was getting to know the students in question and could put faces to names and situations. Rather than something distant and hypothetical, these stories were concrete and real.

In a way, the presentation portion of the assignment also signifies communication with another group of stakeholders: fellow teachers. By collaborating with our classmates and sharing findings, we added to the common body of knowledge about schools and how students perceive them. Ideally, we could all then take information, ideas, and plans of action from the presentations that would improve our own practice, the environments of the schools we worked in, and our students' chances of success.

Overall, this assignment encouraged the development of an invaluable professional habit. By continuing to engage in this sort of collaboration and communication with all types of stakeholders, I will develop and preserve a conception of schools not simply as a place where students learn, but where they live and grow.

[appraise]

In one sense, the interviews were successful in that they increased my understanding of just what the high school transition means for parent and student. Both parents discussed the particularly precarious nature of the liminal space that is the freshman class. Socially and academically, they said, the transition is a difficult one; friends and interests change, as do teachers' expectations. Parents also discussed their ideas on how to ease this change—more frequent and extensive orientation sessions, for example.

Perhaps more importantly, though, the interviews were successful simply because they have ultimately led to this reflection. While the assignment did offer specific insights into the high school transition, it also emphasized the general importance of open communication with all stakeholders. Conducting these interviews was the first step toward fully developing open, ongoing communication and collaboration with all stakeholders I encounter.

[transform]

The only transformation necessary in relation to this principle is for this kind of communication to happen more frequently. The interviews I conducted and presentation I developed were informative and useful; now, my job is to ensure similar activities continue to occur. Doing so can only mean the betterment of my own practice and students' experiences in my classroom.

parent interview questions

Describe your student's behavior before and after the transition.

Anxious, partly because it was a brand new school

New situation

Still excited, because he had many friends who were sophomores through Boy Scouts

Ready to be done with middle school—too little, anxious to be around bigger kids

Able to adapt right away

No issues, as compared with elem_middle

Not all that different re: curriculum, changing classes

Pace is faster—more time doing “heavy duty instruction”

Seems more tired, more homework

What in your opinion was the hardest part of the transition (for you or your student)? The easiest?

As parent: not many opportunities to be involved

Limited to helping with PTA (like in middle) or help with guidance office, so can get into school and see what goes on

Honors English puts more strain on student—instruction is harder, higher level

Having a brand new school to go to was easy

Social aspect—natural thing to go to sporting events, etc as compared to elementary and middle

What kinds of support do you feel were essential to your child's success in making the transition to high school? What types of support did you feel were your responsibility? What fell to the school?

Principal calls every Sunday

Guidance met with him at Culbreth

What did the middle and/or high school do to facilitate the transition? In your opinion, was this enough? What would you have liked to see them do differently? Were there programs at other schools that you would have liked to see implemented at your child's school?

From elem to middle, did tour; would have been good in HS

Course catalog was overwhelming—huge document, could have used more help with that; courses of study, helping with class selection (eg elective planning)

Were teachers, other faculty, and/or the general atmosphere of the high school receptive to freshmen?

Do you recall other students or families being particularly more or less successful in the transition? Why do you think this was so?

Back to school night, meeting all the teachers—seemed like everyone was very excited, no negative

Any advice for parents preparing to go through this important stage of life with their child? For teachers?

Any final comments?

parent interview questions

Describe your student's behavior before and after the transition.

Very similar, active kid, focused on friends, "techie" (itouch, xbox), playful

Wanting more responsibility but not always being ready for it

Decided not to check in every day—child sometimes forgets things, etc

Wants to be left alone, but not always following through

One foot in ready, one foot not

Matter of focus—when he can, he does well

Some siblings of friends that he knew

What in your opinion was the hardest part of the transition (for you or your student)? The easiest?

"loved it from day one": independence, setup, environment

Making sure the work ethic is established—need to have it to back up independence

All the things he was scared about with middle school were not an issue—locker, finding way around, etc

Loved HS from day 1

What kinds of support do you feel were essential to your child's success in making the transition to high school? What types of support did you feel were your responsibility? What fell to the school?

Friends

Knows parents are there, involved, will intervene—relies on parents for problem-solving, administrative type things beyond classroom

Brian is "exceptionally loyal friend"

Great teachers—good resource, want to see him do well

Hasn't yet used tutors, counselors, etc, but is aware of them

What did the middle and/or high school do to facilitate the transition? In your opinion, was this enough? What would you have liked to see them do differently? Were there programs at other schools that you would have liked to see implemented at your child's school?

Communicate very well

High principal viz – sets positive tone

Awareness that they want kids to succeed

“open door policy” – parents can be as engaged as they want to be

Were teachers, other faculty, and/or the general atmosphere of the high school receptive to freshmen?

Only complaint that orientation happened a few weeks ago

Introduced resources

Asked for involvement

How to contact, who to contact, etc

Do you recall other students or families being particularly more or less successful in the transition? Why do you think this was so?

See Brian's friends

They've all “taken it in stride”

Several have struggled – “common theme around this one teacher”

Many parents accessing resources

Much more specific issues at this point

Any advice for parents preparing to go through this important stage of life with their child? For teachers?

Fine line between facilitating independence and encouraging autonomy; and being engaged enough to know if they're struggling

In middle school, teachers/counselors/someone calls home—no surprise; not so in high school

Check grades online, see missing assignments etc via NGrade

Be aware of the tools so you can watch from afar—“hand on the pulse”

Distractions are greater

Any final comments?

disposition 1 | reflection 1

“Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that all individuals can develop, learn, and make positive contributions to society.”

[interpret]

This disposition emphasizes the importance of having faith in all students’ abilities. What all teachers must understand and believe is that all students are capable of learning. Though they may manifest this capability in different ways, understanding material through a variety of means, there is no student that cannot be taught. The effective teacher seeks to include and cater to this diverse spectrum of learning styles so that all students can maximize their ability to learn, grow, and ultimately contribute to society.

[select]

To reflect the presence of this disposition in my own practice, I have included an **essay on rules and procedures** completed for EDUC 744 (Learner and Learning II). [D1.R1.A1]

[describe]

I wrote this essay to complete an assignment that asked students to develop classroom rules and procedures and examine the difference between the two. I found the rules portion of the assignment somewhat difficult to complete simply because I did not want to develop a set of rules without consulting with my students. They have a stake in the classroom just as I do, and we should discuss and codify our expectations as a community.

For the assignment, then, I more broadly explained the overarching philosophies I would bring to the table when creating rules with my students. These philosophies stem from a common idea communicated by Disposition 1: that all students are capable of contributing positively to the world around them.

[analyze]

In my essay, I make a simple statement that aligns with this disposition: we are all scholars. I first encountered the use of the term “scholar” during my work with the Durham Freedom School in my first semester of the MAT program. In the Freedom Schools, children are referred to as scholars rather than students to emphasize the important role they play in the educational community and the wealth of information and experience they can bring to it. The terminology tells children, quite simply, that they have already known and done things that have inherent value.

I borrowed this concept because it embodies ideas I want to cultivate in my own classroom—ideas also found in this disposition. By telling the children I work with that they are scholars, I tell them that they are capable of contributing to our classroom in a way that allows all to learn, develop, and grow. The classroom thus becomes a community of scholars engaged in a common educational endeavor, rather

than an audience of students whose allegedly empty minds are daily filled by an allegedly all-knowing instructor.

The two remaining points of my philosophy—“we are all different” and “we all make mistakes”—are based on the scholarly concept. Both of these concepts acknowledge sources of learning for all students, and thus explain how and why all children are able to be scholars. Because each scholar has had different and unique life experiences, they each have different and unique insights to provide to their colleagues. Similarly, the mistakes each scholar makes during the learning process are useful and important for the further contribution they make to life experience and, in turn, the learning process. Recognizing the importance of differences and mistakes, then, means recognizing the reasons why all students can learn.

[appraise]

Thus far in my teaching career, I have not yet had the opportunity to put the ideas of my essay into practice, only because I have yet to obtain a classroom of my own. When I do start my first real teaching job, however, this document will guide me as my students and I form a new classroom community. If nothing else, this essay assignment was valuable because it forced me to explicitly state a plan of action.

In all likelihood, I will find that my philosophy, though well-intentioned, is somewhat difficult to put into use due to its idealism. Still, I at least have a point of reference that I can return to and revise as my own experiences in teaching help me to learn and grow. Much like my students, I will use my mistakes to inform my philosophies and better my own practice.

[transform]

It is difficult to say exactly how the ideas in my rules and procedures essay may need to change. For some classes, these principles may work exactly as I intend; others may require different, more specific guidelines. For this disposition, the specific transformations themselves are perhaps not as important as the fact that I remain open to transformation in general. Indeed, my teaching career should be a perpetual cycle of creation, reflection, and revision. At the heart of this cycle, though, will always be the notion that each student I encounter can positively impact his or her world.

educ 744

creating community

rules and procedures assignment

ira t smith
27 january 2009

part one | rules

ESTABLISHMENT

I find the idea of outlining my own rules ahead of time antithetical to the formation of a classroom community. Instead, I want to engage students in the rulemaking process so that they feel some degree of ownership in and respect for those rules. Because the rules in effect belong to the students, they will carry more weight in the classroom community than an arbitrary, externally-imposed code of conduct (It's Just Good Teaching..., ch. 5 para. 7). In addition, having a substantial part in classroom affairs may increase students' feelings of self-efficacy as they observe a direct link between their input and the pseudo-official, codified output.

I will start the year by explaining to the class my own overarching philosophies:

1. We are all scholars.

Each member of the classroom community is capable of making insightful, original, illuminating contributions in class. We all have valuable things both to teach and to learn, and we arrive in our classroom community mentally and physically prepared to do so. We engage in this scholarly learning process through open, respectful discussion.

2. We are all different.

Each member of the classroom community has unique perspectives, experiences, and areas of expertise with which they can enrich our discussions. We respect this diversity for the wealth of knowledge it can bring to our learning.

3. We all make mistakes.

No one member of the classroom community—teacher or student—is perfect. We recognize not only that we all will make mistakes, but that we must do so in order to learn. We value

mistakes for the progress they allow us to make in learning, and establish our community as a safe place in which to make this kind of progress.

I will then engage students in a discussion about these concepts. In particular, I will encourage them to amend, challenge, or flat-out disagree with the philosophies I have set out. From these alterations, the class can then arrive at its own specific set of rules. They may add rules of their own, or they may be satisfied with my established outline; what is important is that the class as a whole reaches a democratic decision regarding its rules.

What ultimately emerges should, with any luck, look more like a declaration of intent for the classroom community than a set of codified laws. I will encourage the students to use the positive, collective phrasing (i.e. “We are...”) found in my own philosophies as we draft and revise the new rules. To make the democratic, declarative nature of the new rules explicit, I will then ask each of the students to sign the document in the style of the U.S. Constitution. The newly created rules then become a kind of contract for class behavior. The students, as signers, thus become invested with a degree of inherent accountability that might not otherwise be achieved.

THEORETICAL REASONING

The notion of the scholar as simultaneous teacher-learner draws on tenets of both the caring and ecological classroom models (It’s Just Good Teaching..., ch. 4). Students rely on each other for learning, and thus build supportive relationships (It’s Just Good Teaching..., ch. 4, para. 7) through their shared academic purpose.

These rules also facilitate my development of meaningful relationships with my students. Because I include myself among the scholars of the classroom community, I establish myself as no better than any other member of the class (just somewhat more knowledgeable in my particular area of expertise,

namely English literature). In this way, I hope to make myself more approachable and establish myself as a caring teacher.

Through the use of the “scholar” terminology, I hope also to influence students’ theories of ability and perceptions of self-efficacy. As students realize their role as active, contributing members of the classroom (even in the development of the rules themselves), they will hopefully realize they do indeed have significant power over their own learning. Encouraging self-efficacy will provide a firm foundation on which to build students’ subsequent motivation.

CONSEQUENCES

When students break the rules—violate the terms of their contract, so to speak—I will remind them that they both helped write and agreed to abide by the tenets of the document. Hopefully, this simple reminder will be enough to curtail any misbehavior that might occur.

In those inevitable instances where such a reminder is not enough, however, I will use a hierarchical response strategy (as outlined by Levin and Nolan, 2004). The reminder itself will probably occur as the first of the verbal strategies, used only after all less intrusive non-verbal options have been exhausted. The overall goal is to maintain the student’s control of their own behavior while minimizing disruptions to the classroom.

When management strategies fail and actual consequences must be imposed, I will strive to make these consequences logical whenever possible. Such consequences might include using non-class time (such as after school or lunch) to finish work that was not completed in class due to misbehavior, or completing work that was supposed to be done in class for homework. The point of these consequences is that they assure the completion of necessary assigned work; I will rarely, if ever, give arbitrary assignments as a form of punishment. Wielding course content as a potential weapon is far from logical, and it undermines any effort to establish student interest and motivation.

part two | example procedure: latecomers

CHALLENGES

Students will inevitably arrive at my class late. Their lives and schedules are as busy (if not busier) than mine, and from time to time they'll simply get tied up somewhere else.

The problem I have noticed with this procedure is not the fact that students arrive late; it's what happens once they get to class. Often they interrupt the lesson to give the teacher a pass, and then a digression ensues regarding the student's (usually) legitimate excuse. While necessary administrative matters are dealt with, the class is momentarily disrupted.

PROCEDURE

Instead, I propose the following procedure for late arrivals:

- **Enter discreetly.** Your fellow scholars are probably working. Show your respect for our classroom community by limiting any disruption.
- **Sign in.** On the sheet in the back of the room, note your name, the time you arrived, and a brief reason for why you were late.
- **See me.** Check in with me at a convenient point in the lesson (e.g. while small groups are forming) or after class so you can get any missed materials and tell me where you were.

(Note: I will make my own notations—written or mental—of late arrivals as a check for the sign-in sheet. If a student fails to see me, I will check in with them myself at the end of class.)

The low-stakes nature of this procedure (as opposed to one threatening punishment of some kind to latecomers) means lateness can almost become a non-issue in my classroom. Students understand they are responsible for their own attendance and work, and should feel an increased sense of autonomy by

handling their time on their own. By acknowledging this responsibility, I also recognize my students' lives and engagements outside of my classroom.

EXECUTION

Because this procedure could be needed at any time, I will explain it at the beginning of the year, possibly on the first day. It might even be useful to put it in written form on the course syllabus. I will also explain to students that following this procedure is simply an extension of their commitment to the class rules—minimizing disruption when late is part and parcel of valuing the classroom community and one's scholarly peers.

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disposition 1 | reflection 2

“Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that all individuals can develop, learn, and make positive contributions to society.”

[interpret]

This disposition emphasizes the importance of having faith in all students’ abilities. What all teachers must understand and believe is that all students are capable of learning. Though they may manifest this capability in different ways, understanding material through a variety of means, there is no student that cannot be taught. The effective teacher seeks to include and cater to this diverse spectrum of learning styles so that all students can maximize their ability to learn, grow, and ultimately contribute to society.

[select]

To demonstrate how my own practice embodies the idea that all students can contribute in a meaningful way, I have included a handout titled **“Seminar Discussion Procedure,”** which outlines how the class discussion will operate and be graded. [D1.R2.A1]

[describe]

One of the main concepts I wanted students to understand after reading *Animal Farm* was the power of language. Among the various activities I used in class to examine this idea was a seminar discussion. I had not originally considered including a seminar as part of the unit, but after my mentor teacher’s suggestion, it seemed like a worthwhile endeavor that would offer a unique change of pace.

Prior to the discussion, students had read and answered questions on two articles. One, from the *New York Times*, considered the term “Orwellian” and its usage. The other was an abridged version of Orwell’s essay “Politics and the English Language.” Students brought these articles and their responses with them to the seminar session.

At the beginning of class, I distributed the procedure handout and explained how the discussion would work. In particular, I emphasized the fact that my role in the seminar was solely as moderator; the content of the discussion and the directions it went in were (for the most part) up to the students. I then opened the floor to any speaker who wished to start. During the discussion itself, I recorded each student’s checkmarks and made sure those who raised their hands had a chance to speak.

After the seminar ended, I explained that students who wished to boost their grade by another check could submit a written reflection about the discussion the following day.

[analyze]

By its very nature, the seminar style of discussion supports the ideas of this disposition. First, a seminar discussion emphasizes the idea that all participants are capable of making valuable contributions. When introducing the concept of the discussion, I explained that all (or most) students had read the assigned

articles and had some kind of response to them; thus all had something to offer in our conversation. I further explained that these contributions need not be weighty, pensive statements on the novel or its themes; they could be as simple as well-explained agreement or disagreement with the articles. In addition, students could always respond to their peers' ideas, expanding on them either through agreement and extension or disagreement and counterargument. In some way, every student could offer a meaningful contribution to the discussion.

Second, the seminar also shows that all students can learn because through discussion, they collectively create understanding. Just as all students had ideas to contribute to the discussion, all students also had those ideas altered or even contradicted outright by their peers. Through discussion, students amended or revised their preconceived ideas. As a result of the seminar, each student's understanding of the novel's themes was increased thanks to the collective efforts of the class. Each student left the room that day knowing more about the use of language than they had when they entered. In short, each student learned.

[appraise]

The seminar discussion seemed to be a useful addition to the *Animal Farm* unit. It allowed me to expose students to related texts (namely the two articles) and show how they connected to the novel. The session also helped place *Animal Farm* in broader contexts, both within the English discipline and the world at large. Through our discussion, students were able to see how the novel commented not only on communism and the Russian Revolution, but also on the power of language over any people during any period of time—including our own. Students explored the modern implications of the themes of *Animal Farm* by discussing how the current United States government manipulates language to control opinion (e.g. in phrases like “No Child Left Behind” and “USA Patriot Act”).

From a pedagogical standpoint, the seminar was also effective because it further developed the classroom community. By staging this event, I tacitly endorsed the ideas that all students could make meaningful contributions and learn from each other. Students gained an increased sense of agency and voice within the class as they guided the discussion where they thought it should go and discussed the issues they found most pressing. In some small way, the seminar discussion hopefully emphasized the idea that our English class could work together as a team to reach a fuller, more relevant understanding of literature.

[transform]

While my own assessment of the seminar discussions is a positive one, I would like to have more concrete feedback from the students in the future. Either before ending the discussion itself or during the beginning of the following class, I would like to administer an informal survey (perhaps via journal entries) that asks for two responses:

- Name one thing, big or small, that you learned during our discussion today.

- Tell me whether or not you found the seminar helpful, and why. Did it increase your understanding of *Animal Farm* and its themes? What worked for you in the discussion and what didn't? In the future, what can I do to make this kind of discussion work better?

As simple as this feedback would be to collect, it could go a long way toward improving future uses of seminar discussion so that they become increasingly effective and informative.

seminar discussion procedure

[running the discussion]

To get the most out of our seminar, the discussion should be engaging yet orderly. As with any other class discussion, students are expected to raise their hands when they wish to contribute. The moderator (i.e. Mr Smith) will maintain a running list of whose hands were raised and in what order, so that each person gets their due time on the floor. In addition, no person will be allowed to speak twice until all have spoken once.

In general, be respectful of other speakers and their ideas, questions, and statements. The seminar is not a race, a competition, or a chance to show who is most intelligent; it is an opportunity to increase our collective understanding of the text through thoughtful discussion.

[participation grading]

For this class discussion, your participation will be graded using a system of checks. Checks are distributed based on the following criteria:

[criteria]	[checks]
Coming to class with the homework completed	2 checks
Contributing to the discussion by simply agreeing with someone else's point	1 check
Contributing to the discussion by adding to, modifying, or disagreeing with someone else's point	2 checks
Making reference to textual resources (either article or <i>Animal Farm</i>) in the discussion	1 check
Making reference to outside resources (other things you've read, current events, etc.) in the discussion	2 checks

Checks will be converted into grades based on the following scale:

A = 8 checks

B = 6 checks

C = 4 checks

D = 2 checks

F = 0 checks (no participation)

disposition 2 | reflection 1

“Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that continuous inquiry and reflection can improve professional practice.”

[interpret]

This disposition emphasizes the importance of constant re-evaluation of one’s work. The world in which teaching occurs is not a static one; from year to year, day to day, or even between first period and lunch, all members of the school community can change drastically. Effective teachers must always seek to understand the nature of this community and change their practice to best serve its needs. Only through a recursive process of inquiry and reflection—directed both inward and outward—can beneficial changes be made.

[select]

To demonstrate my own process of inquiry and reflection, I have included the following artifacts from my student teaching experience:

- My own **observation notes** taken during the fall 2008 semester, before I began teaching myself. [D2.R1.A1] (NOT included in uploaded version—see actual portfolio for this artifact)
- **Two written reflections** completed during the spring 2009 semester in response to my university supervisor’s observations of my teaching. [D2.R1.A2 and D2.R1.A3]

[describe]

In the fall of 2008, I began spending one day each week at Carrboro High School, observing my mentor teachers and the classes I would eventually take over from them. Over the course of fifteen visits, I watched the operations of two honors-level English I classes and two standard-level English III classes. Though not entirely certain at the time about what exactly I should be observing, I nevertheless took various notes about the content of lessons, students’ behaviors, and my mentors’ teaching strategies. I used these notes to complete various assignments within the MAT program, and later referred to them during my own student teaching.

For the spring semester, I became a full-fledged student teacher at Carrboro High, taking on the teaching responsibilities for the classes I had observed. Three times during this experience, Dr. Jim Trier (my university supervisor) sat in on my classes to observe my own practice and offer his thoughts. For two of these observations, he asked that I complete written reflections in which I discussed my objectives for each lesson and how well I thought they were achieved.

[analyze]

These documents are relevant to Disposition 2 because, quite simply, they chronicle my own process of inquiry and reflection. My observation notes relate particularly well to inquiry. They reflect some of my earliest thoughts that strongly relate to teaching in an investigative, academic sense. In these notes, I

took the first steps toward connecting the theoretical information from my university courses and the actual high school setting they discussed. These notes also represent the precursor to the relationships I formed with my students. In my observations, I begin documenting student behaviors and—more importantly—considering why they happen. Overall, these notes are a kind of snapshot detailing a fumbling young teacher taking his first pedagogical steps, asking himself “Just what am I doing here, anyway?”

I began to form an answer to this question in my written work for Dr. Trier. Writing these reflections forced me to carefully examine the way I had prepared and taught a given lesson, and prevented my experiences from quietly drifting into the recesses of memory after the bell had rung. Moreover, these reflections were not simply a rehashing of the day’s events, a 50-minute play-by play; rather, they considered the vital issue of whether my objectives and my teaching practice were supporting one another.

The key commonality between my notes and reflections is their consideration of what went wrong. It may seem negative or depressing to dwell on unsuccessful events—and this may in fact be the case if done to the extreme—but healthy consideration of failure is the only way practice can improve. Without understanding what went wrong and why it did so, changes can never be made to correct it. These notes and reflections, then, illustrate my concerted efforts to improve my teaching practice.

[appraise]

I believe these documents were effective because they arrived at specific, concrete conclusions. In my observation notes, I collected examples of effective teaching practices that I later assimilated into my own teaching—procedures for using journals in class, for example, or how to introduce literature through the use of an anticipation guide. These notes also informed my classroom management as I watched my mentor teachers handle issues like disruptive or off-task behavior that arose in class.

I gathered even more specific feedback from my own reflections. Through this focused writing, I considered the successes and failures of lessons I myself had designed and implemented, and made recommendations to myself about how to improve them in the future. As a result of my reflections, I now know I need to improve my skills not only in purely pedagogical areas like classroom management and guiding discussion, but also with more practical concerns like preparing technology prior to a lesson.

Whatever the conclusion, though, the fact remains that I now have a greater body of knowledge to use in improving my practice than I did prior to the reflection process.

[transform]

I feel little transformation, if any, is necessary for my reflective process in terms of content. Instead, I will have to transform my own habits so that I continue to engage in this process. During my student teaching, there were external motivators forcing me to do so—my grades, the responses of my professors. Once I enter the profession, though, there will be no explicit demand for me to reflect on my own practice. Instead, I will have to cultivate the reflection process within myself until it becomes

habit. These reflections may take a more informal form—journal entries, for example, or notes scratched on lesson plans—but they will remain a central part of improving my practice as a teacher.

observation reflection 01

Observation date: 18 February 2009

Class observed: English III (period 2)

[objectives]

My objectives for this lesson were straightforward ones:

- discuss several broad, provocative questions relating to *The Great Debaters* as a review of the film itself;
- review the concepts of theme and tone by discussing those found in the film;
- model the oration project by doing a dramatic poetry reading and explaining my process.

The purpose of viewing of *The Great Debaters* was as a kind of anticipation for the Black History Month Oration Project they would later be completing. For this project, identifying the theme and tone of a given oration was key, so I wanted to make sure students would be able to do so.

My final, less significant objective during this class period was to give students time to brainstorm famous black orators (both historical and contemporary) that they might later research and ultimately borrow from for their oration performance.

[analysis]

Overall, I thought the lesson went fairly well. After giving students time to complete the discussion questions (a task they were supposed to accomplish for homework—see below), they seemed to respond actively to the discussion. Their active participation was my principle criterion for success, as they were not going to be tested on the film; I merely sought to ensure they engaged with the film on some level deeper than gazing at moving pictures on a screen.

Probably the most engaging part of the lesson (for the students and myself) was the poetry reading. I enjoyed reading the poem for the students, and they appeared to enjoy hearing it. More importantly, their enthusiasm translated into a productive discussion of how tone is created through effective speaking. I was particularly pleased that the trio of young ladies in the front of the class who have a habit of engaging in their own conversations were among those most engaged by the modeling exercise.

This trifecta, though (comprised of three young women named Shane'I, Na-Sama, and Nicole), remains one of my primary concerns. During the class discussion of the movie questions, I had difficulty focusing their attention; consequently, my own was divided between leading a productive discussion and mitigating their distracting influence. I'm afraid the former suffered due to the latter. Though I did my best with classroom management (specifically through the use of name-dropping and direct appeals), I believe I need to improve my management in general and my approach to these students specifically.

I was also unhappy with the fact that most students had not completed the homework I assigned. Perhaps this is a result of my new authority in the classroom; the assignments I give may not yet carry the same weight in their minds as Mr. Donaldson's. Based on my previous observational experience,

however, the completion rate did not seem unusually low. A perpetual question for myself, then, is how to convince students to actually do the homework I assign, as well as how to adjust my lesson when they do not. I don't think this is a situation I'll ever completely be rid of, but I need to develop strategies for dealing with it.

I also need to improve my time management. Due to the constraints of my agenda, I had to skip the final two discussion questions—those that directly related to theme and tone, and thus had the most direct bearing on the coming project. In hindsight, it would have been better to begin the discussion with those two questions, then move on to the others if time allowed. Still, I think the modeling exercise helped make up some of what otherwise went unmentioned (specifically in relation to tone).

Finally, a minor technological hiccup disrupted the latter half of my poetry reading model. I had planned to show my own annotated copy of the poem on the document camera so that students would be able to see both my own thought processes and my notation style. Without being able to use the document camera, this portion of the lesson became much less effective. Still, I think I effectively managed the situation by taking a different, non-technological approach (copying some of my notes on the board) rather than fighting with the camera and wasting class time. In the future, this type of disruption could easily be avoided by simply prepping the technology ahead of time.

observation reflection 02

Observation date: 5 March 2009

Class observed: English I Honors (period 5)

[objectives]

My primary objective for this lesson was to expose students to some of the themes they will encounter as they read *Animal Farm*. Moreover, I wanted students to engage with these themes on a personal level so that said themes might resonate more deeply and seem more meaningful during later discussion. I believe that after considering their own reactions to the themes, students will be more willing and able to discuss themes in the broader contexts of the novel.

In addition, I wanted my students to continue their ongoing practice with reflective writing. While they primarily practice this type of writing through journaling, I thought brief written responses to each statement would further develop this skill. The intended homework assignment—an expanded, half-page response to one of the given statements—also addressed this objective.

[analysis]

Overall, I felt this was a successful lesson. The students seemed to be engaged in completing and discussing the anticipation guide, and there was little confusion over procedural issues that could have otherwise slowed our progress as a class.

I feel the success of this lesson was due in large part to the students' prior experience. While they may or may not have previously encountered the content of this particular anticipation guide, they have been exposed to the general format several times before during other units. These students know what an anticipation guide looks like, and they generally (perhaps with some brief reminders) know what to do when presented with one. Because of this, we could spend less time as a class on logistics and more time on substantive discussion.

In addition, these students have proven themselves capable of animated, active class discussions. During our short story unit, we spent nearly half a period on a debate about the relative functionality (or dysfunctionality) of the families in two different stories (Raymond Carver's "Popular Mechanics" and T. C. Boyle's "The Hit Man," to be specific). The discussion during that class period was among the best we've had all semester, and I expected similar success with the anticipation guide. Indeed, past success was the reason I thought this lesson feasible to begin with.

Prior experience, however, is not the sole reason this lesson went well; I also took care to design the lesson to allow for cognitive warm-up time. While past discussions like the Carver/Boyle debate have been highly productive, there are just as many (if not more) that stalled or stagnated because the students did not have adequate time to process information. As much as I'd like to have insightful, illuminating comments rain down at the drop of a hat, the fact of the matter is that they rarely will. These kinds of comments can indeed happen, but students need time to develop them first. Knowing this, I planned the lesson so that the discussion moved in stages:

1. **Solo work.** The necessary first step was to give students time to consider, process, and organize their own thoughts by completing the anticipation guide. This silent, individual work makes for an admittedly slow start to the class period—sometimes a difficult circumstance for a class immediately after lunch—but it sets the stage for more active discussion later on.
2. **Pair sharing.** Scaffolding into discussion truly begins when students take time to share their responses with one other person. This pair sharing—or “sharing with your neighbor,” as it’s referred to in our classroom discourse—essentially gives students a kind of dress rehearsal for the full-class discussion to come. Moreover, it helps students transition from the mindset of writing to that of speaking. In almost any kind of full-class discussion scenario, I’ve found this sort of low-key, small-scale sharing to be crucial for later success.
3. **Whole-class discussion.** Once the groundwork has been laid, we’re then able to engage with the anticipation guide as a class. Students have less anxiety about speaking at this point for two reasons: they have their own ideas before them in concrete, written form, and they have developed verbal responses by speaking with a classmate. At this point, it is mutually understood that silence or “I don’t know” are not acceptable answers, so I as the teacher am able to press students harder for responses and push them further in their thinking.

My student teaching experience thus far has made me a firm believer in the effectiveness (and even necessity) of this sort of discussion scaffolding process. Had I not employed it in this instance, I doubt the discussion would have been as active or fruitful.

By and large, I was also pleased with students’ behavior during the lesson. Giving students the opportunity to move around the room could have counter-productive side effects in terms of classroom management—an outcome perhaps even more likely when coupled with dialectic discussion—but students appeared to remain focused and engaged. My mentor teacher did later recommend that, in the future, I make an effort to move around the room more actively rather than stay near the front; he had observed that a few students in the far corners were beginning to stray off-task. I noticed these instances—mostly brief side conversations—but they usually seemed to cause little disruption and resolve themselves quickly. I agree with Dr Carpenter’s advice, though, and will bear it in mind during the next class discussion.

For this type of lesson—indeed, for any instance of class discussion—the one skill I want to develop more fully is my ability to guide the class in their thought and speech. At times during the whole-class discussion, certain students made points that correlated almost exactly to key events or ideas in the novel. When these points arose, I was able to emphasize them through my own interpretation (e.g. “So what you’re saying is...”), explicit emphasis (e.g. “Hang on to that idea, because it’s going to be important later”), or request for student repetition (e.g. “Good point, Andrew; say that again so everyone can hear it”). But while I’m getting a feel for what to do when good points arise organically, what I’m less sure of is how to make (or try to make) them happen. To borrow from the cliché, what I need to figure out is how to lead the horse, whether or not he drinks. I imagine, though, that guiding discussions in such a way is more of a naturally developed art than a skill that can be taught. If nothing else, I think what I’m doing now is at least a good first step in that development.

disposition 2 | reflection 2

“Candidates will exhibit behavior that demonstrates a belief that continuous inquiry and reflection can improve professional practice.”

[interpret]

This disposition emphasizes the importance of constant re-evaluation of one’s work. The world in which teaching occurs is not a static one; from year to year, day to day, or even between first period and lunch, all members of the school community can change drastically. Effective teachers must always seek to understand the nature of this community and change their practice to best serve its needs. Only through a recursive process of inquiry and reflection—directed both inward and outward—can beneficial changes be made.

[select]

To display this disposition in my own practice, I have included materials used at the end of my student teaching experience to obtain feedback from students in various ways. Specifically, the artifacts are as follows:

- Four examples of **feedback surveys** (one example from each class) that my students completed during my final week of teaching. [D2.R2.A1 – D2.R2.A4]
- My own **focus group notes**, taken during lunch meetings with select groups of my freshman students. [D2.R2.A5]

[describe]

During the last week of my student teaching, one of my mentor teachers recommended that I conduct some kind of focus group with my students to assess how well the experience went and what I needed to change. If I selected a handful of students from my freshman classes to meet with, he said, he would provide pizza as an incentive for their participation. I asked five students from both sections of Honors English I (ten students total) to join me in these lunch meetings. All agreed, and the last two lunches I had at Carrboro High were spent discussing my teaching with students and taking notes on their thoughts.

To gather even more feedback, I also created brief surveys to administer to all of my students (i.e. all four of my classes—two Honors English I and two English III). On my last day, I distributed the surveys and asked each class to give me their honest responses so that I might improve the quality of my teaching. I assured each class that their surveys would in no way affect their grade.

[analyze]

These artifacts show another dimension of the inquiry process in action. While part of this process requires my own introspective reflection, part of it must also involve the students I work with every day. Both the focus group sessions and feedback surveys were created with the goal of gathering and

understanding information about student perceptions of my teaching. My view of the classroom from behind the proverbial desk can be, unbeknownst to me, quite different from the students' view. Because my constant aim is to serve my students as best I can, I have to ask for their opinions so I can respond to them and meet their needs.

Not only do these documents provide an outside perspective on my teaching; they also offer specific suggestions for improvement. Students often told me not only what they wanted changed, but how to go about doing so. Some of these statements were less than realistic—like those calling for the abolition of essay-writing or assigned reading—but others were highly informative. The following statements lifted from the surveys, for example, all provide specific ways I might alter my practice:

- “Give a few prompts for the short story.”
- “Have more concern[ed] thinking for individuals.”
- “Push a little more when it comes to assignment deadlines.”

In the focus groups, as well, students offered such suggestions—give some preparation in speaking (for the *Animal Farm* oration assignment); model peer editing so students know how to make it useful; check more often for understanding during class. Had I not asked for my students' input, I might never have realized any of these topics even needed review. After the surveys and focus group, I now have a plethora of helpful ideas for the future.

[appraise]

By and large, the survey and focus group responses were exactly what I had hoped to receive. As is inevitably the case with any survey of this type, some responses offered little in the way of substantive comments; advice for my future practice frequently included “Keep up the good work!” and “Do what you're doing!” Still, my notes and the majority of the surveys contain a wealth of helpful information. I have yet to do any kind of systematic analysis of the data I obtained, but I can already envision changes in my practice based on the responses I have read.

These sorts of reviews also carry an additional benefit beyond the reflective process: communicating my investment in teaching to students. When I ask students for their feedback, it tells them that I value their opinions, good or bad, and want them to be heard. Conducting these surveys and focus groups, then, also serves to reinforce the classroom community and emphasize the students' role within it.

[transform]

The major transformation I have in mind for these reviews is simply to conduct them more often. Because of time constraints, focus-group-style sessions might only be held at the end of the year, or possibly between marking periods. Surveys, however, could conceivably be administered after every unit. More informal types of feedback—journal responses, notes on scratch paper—could be collected on a weekly or even daily basis. Overall, my goal is to obtain as much feedback from students as is realistically possible so that I can continually re-examine my teaching.

How was the transition from Dr Carpenter's teaching to mine?

smooth transition – kind of the same

I grade somewhat tougher – short stories, eg

What was your favorite activity in class this year, and why?

handicap activity

short stories – freedom

drawing activities (propaganda, beasts of England)

laureate activities

seminar

anticipation guides – like a debate; also could move around; could connect with other students

What was your least favorite activity in class this year, and why?

speeches – give some preparation in speaking

short story quizzes – used up class time for reading, stories not discussed before quiz

reading “on writing” didn't help, nor did index cards

allegory powerpoints – kind of already knew communism; topics too broad

Talk about the short story unit. What worked and what didn't? Did you feel prepared to start writing? Was the assignment too broad? Did you feel you got helpful feedback during the writing process? Did I give you enough time to write and revise?

freedom was a good thing – no restrictions

felt prepared to write

conferences are helpful, peer edits not as much – students don't want to read the whole thing; “laziness is going to overcome”

had enough time

didn't like reading out loud – no one pays attention, gets boring

In a single word (or short phrase, at most), how would you describe my teaching style?

original

creative

fun

interactive

open

quirky

relaxed

interesting

extensive

Do you think the way I presented material in class catered to different learning styles?

Did you find the class activities interesting? Engaging? Were they challenging enough, or too easy?

in the middle

How independent did you feel in my class? Did you feel like assignments let you make your own choices?

choices good, like on animal farm essay

How did you feel about my feedback in class and on assignments? Did it encourage you to do better and help you see how to do so, or was it more negative?

Did you find the occasional mini-lessons (about grammar, topic sentences, etc) effective?

Were the guidelines and expectations for assignments clear?

Did I give the impression that I had all the right answers, or did I try to involve all students in the learning/teaching process?

Overall, how do you think things went while I was teaching?

If you could change one thing about the content of the class, my teaching style, or anything else, what would it be?

check more often for understanding

use cup with sticks to pick people in class (similar to deck of cards method)