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FACS 170 Introduction to Early Care and Education: A Three Year Analysis and Peer Review of College Teaching/Learning

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II. UNL’s Peer Review Process

The purpose is to improve college teaching and “make learning visible” by:

- Carefully describing course objectives and structure and investigating teaching strategies and student understanding and performance
- Reflecting on the connections of teaching and learning in the course and the links between teaching and the learning achieved or not achieved
- Documenting the process in a course portfolio
- Putting the portfolios on the web to be shared among the ratemates in the Peer Review of Teaching Committee (Nebraska, Indiana, Kansas State, Michigan, and Texas A&M)

Ten Steps in Doing an Inquiry Portfolio

Step 1: The instructor writes a memo in response to prompt for Interaction #1 (Stating an Issue or Problem to investigate, e.g. “We wonder if students are really learning about X through this course?”)

Step 2: Shares memo with “pairs” on faculty team

Step 3: Meets with faculty peers to discuss each other’s memos

Step 4: Writes an addendum to Interaction #1

Step 5: Sees student comments to publicly share their work

Step 6: Repeats Step 1-4 for Interaction #2: (Determining a Methodology for Investigation, “How will we find out if students are learning about X?” What data are needed? What kinds of student work need to be collected?)

Step 7: Repeats Step 1-4 for Interaction #3: (Analyzing and Assessing Findings, “Did the students learn about X? What do the data say about it?”)

Step 8: Edits/Summarizes Interactions 1-2, inserts into a final course e-portfolio, highlight student learning and faculty development

Step 9: Solicits external peer reviews from off-campus

Step 10: Considers questions for future inquiry in this course or other courses you teach.

III. FACS 170: Introduction to Early Care and Education

Format: Two class meetings per week in 2 small sections

Objectives: Students will learn different philosophical and educational approaches to working with young children (birth to grade 3) with a range of abilities and their families in a variety of professional settings. The core concepts of the course are: Professional Developmental Appropriate Curriculum: Sensory, Sensational, Social, Scientific; Cultural Knowledge and Sensitive: Inclusive, Early Childhood Education

Required: For Inclusive Early Childhood Education certification students. Elective: open to other students interested in the early years.

Teaching Methods:

- Lectures and question-and-answer
- Small group and individual activity
- Practitioner presentations
- Parent panel
- Online quizzes
- Nongraded classroom assessments
- Fieldwork and Field Practicum
- Texts and Textbook

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IV. Peer Reviews for FACS 170:

Year #1 (2002): Dr. Edwards taught the course for the first time (with Dean Kostelnik) and participated in the Peer Review project.

At the end of Year #1, the benchmark portfolio was presented in a panel at the national conference on Making Learning Visible: Peer Review and the Scholarship of Teaching, held in Lincoln, Nebraska, March, 2004.

Year #2 (2004): Dr. Carolyn Edwards and Toni Hill-Menson taught the course together.

Year #3 (2005): They taught together again, and Dr. Edwards was part of an advanced peer review team.

What was discovered in Years #1 and #2:

- All students gained basic knowledge about specific facts and concepts, especially when material was covered in both textbook and class.
- Students were given the place less weight on the final exam and more even on all the graded activities in the course.
- Parent panel found it more effective in transmitting knowledge than any other method of inclusion.
- Unit on culturally sensitive education was very stressful for students.
- Practitioner presentations were appreciated by students but may not have been enough enough about how they institutionalized the concept culturally appropriate functioning.
- Minute papers and final reflective class activity were good ways to assess student attitudes and what they are learning.

Sample Student Comments, Final Reflections in Year #1:

- “The things I learned in this class was that especially interesting was…” “the true stories from the running”
- “The part of my teaching philosophy that was most affected it…” “that a teacher needs to teach all children depending on their intelligence level or their disabilities”
- “Something I learned that surprised me was…” “how the ethics play in [dealing with] children.”

Year #3 Plans for a Classroom Assessment Plan (Fall, 2005)

Learning Goals: In assessing their teaching, the instructor wants to focus just two of the central concepts of the course (1) the core concepts of the three basic approaches to teaching early childhood education (2) the awareness of what it means for an early childhood professional to use developmentally-appropriate practices in working with young children birth to age 8. Students will be more able to articulate these two concepts and relate them to their key concepts (themes) of the course.

Teaching Strategies towards those two concepts:

First, the course was reorganized with three separate units focused on the material related to (1) Professional (2) Developmental Appropriate and Culturally Sensitive: Inclusive, Early Childhood Education and (3) Inclusive and Family Centered. In the first four, students did an activity that showed them how the core concepts correspond to the teaching strategies (competencies) for the Nebraska Early Childhood Education-Unified (Birth to Grade 3) teacher certification, for example:

- Developmentally Appropriate:
  1. Use environmental assessment, individual and group guidance, and problem-solving techniques.
  2. Understand the influence of environmental, cultural, and social foundations of early childhood education.
  3. Establish and maintain physically and psychologically safe and healthful learning environments that nurture children's growth and development and learning.
  4. Understand principles of organization and operation of programs for children birth through age 8

Culturally Sensitive:

- Determine knowledge and sensitivity to differences in family structure and cultures
- Recognize that children are best understood as the contexts of family, culture and society

Results of the Classroom Assessment:

(1) The concept of DAP refers to teaching that is coordinated with a child’s level of development and for which the individual child is ready. Three dimensions must be considered: age-appropriate, individual appropriateness, and social appropriateness. From this perspective of DAP, it is important to note that, as students did research and spoke in front of the class on their research topics, they had to make decisions that were appropriate for their audiences. The students also wrote about their work with children, and it was appropriate for that audience.

(2) The Reggio Emilia approach to education is developmentally appropriate because it:
- Helps children to have the ability to learn and express the way they see the world. They work at their own pace and they are free to express their own ideas.
- Stresses the importance of the teacher’s role in starting with the children.
- Allows children to learn how to do things others do at their age.” “age appropriate
- Works with the children’s developmental delays.” “individual appropriate
- “Understanding is the need for love and sense of belonging.” “cultural and social context

(3) Montessori Education is developmentally appropriate because it:
- Fosters the strengths and interests of the individual child. In this way the child is guiding the teacher as to what they are capable of doing.” “teaching coordinated with children’s learning
- “Children at the age of 3 to 4 want to learn responsibility. Doing work for them is too easy.” “age appropriate
- “Doesn’t put pressure on them to learn at the same rate as others if they are not ready yet.” “individual appropriate
- “Works for children in poverty and problem situations.” “cultural and social context

(4) The High/Scope preschool method is developmentally appropriate because:
- It caters to the specific needs of the child, adapting the child’s level of development.
- “There is shared control between the children and the teachers. This makes the children feel more competent about what they can do.” “teaching coordinated with children’s learning
- “At the age it is a perfect time for the child to learn their visual-spatial principles.” “age appropriate
- “It allows there to be very different ways of learning.” “individual appropriate
- “The continuing relationship between the parent and teachers. Many parents came to participate within the classroom.” “cultural and social context

(2) The concept of culturally-sensitive practice refers to the development and interactions of early childhood education professionals. Students accept that competence includes cultural competence as a core component and that effective educators respect the child, the family, and the community with knowledge of their cultural context.

Assessment (2a): Students completed Pre and Post Tests related to the Multicultural Education sections. Results (2a1): Pre Test: 36% students noted that race and ethnicity are the primary focus of multicultural education. Post Test: 74% noted that race and ethnicity.

(2a2): Pre Test: 72% students could recognize the components of ethnographic interviewing. Post Test: 86% students correctly identified the components. The results demonstrate the increase of knowledge.

Assessment (2b): Students were asked to identify their own cultural issues through the use of exercises involving family pedigrees that students were asked to develop. They then shared their pedigrees with the class and others.

Assessment (2c): Students completed a class activity where they demonstrated their knowledge of professional (cultural) competence by doing an in-depth review of the National Association for the Education of Young Children’s (NAEYC) ethical guidelines. Students completed an online learning explicit and implicit references to culture found in the guidelines.

(2c2): Students showed that they could critically analyze the NAEYC guidelines using their own definitions of explicit and implicit cultural references.

Sample Student Comments at the end of the unit

- “I think multicultural education is vital in connecting children, families, and communities.”
- “Multicultural education is something that allows all individuals to learn about the world around them. It is helpful in helping us to develop our understanding for others.”
- “I believe that multicultural education is extremely important in schools as well as after school.”
- “Every child has a different background, and we need to accommodate that.”