**Knowledge & Understanding**

There is more to student learning than just a student sitting in the classroom. A teacher needs to look at the whole picture. A student's home life, developmental stages, experiences, and ways of learning all play a part in the learning process. It is the teacher's responsibility to use the knowledge of these different factors to offer the student the best education possible.

I have learned that when a student is having problems at home or is nervous about something, it is almost impossible for that student to learn. I experienced this during my student teaching. I had a student in my math class that was brilliant, but struggling in math because of problems at home. He never knew where he was staying at night, at home, at his grandma's, or at his aunts. He frequently would forget his homework at one place or another. Because of this situation my cooperating teacher and I came up with a new plan for him so that he was able to finish his homework and bring it back to class. He was in a program called Engage, in which students could work on homework that they had trouble finishing. This program worked great for him because he was able to do his homework there and not have to take it home where it would get lost and not brought back. Since my cooperating teacher and I took the time to talk to him and find out about his problem we were able to find a solution for him that worked.

All students in a classroom are at different developmental stages. Teachers need to recognize these differences and accommodate for the students. In my 3rd grade student teaching classroom, I had readers at the 1st grade through 6th grade reading levels. When students had assignments in their workbooks the lower readers would have a lot of troubles reading and understanding the questions being asked. My solution to this was to go through the assignment as usual and let those who would understand it start working and then I would work in a small group with those students that had troubles reading and understanding the questions. This kept the higher readers from becoming bored and could move onto another planned activity, while I could help the lower readers. I also held individual conferences with students to plan goals. I found this helpful because I could discuss with the students areas that I thought they were having troubles in and they could share their concerns with me. I would ask the students if there was anything I could do to help them and what they could do as well. Creating this kind of a relationship with students is important in student learning because students need to feel comfortable with the teacher and know that the teacher cares.

Providing students with direct experiences is essential to student learning. Direct experiences engage students and stimulate student learning, whereas verbal experiences such as lectures provide a less stimulated learning. In science I was able to provide my students with many direct experiences. One example is from the bones unit that I taught, we took apart owl pellets to find the bones of mice and other rodents. The students were then given a comparison sheet with the different bones that they might find so that they could compare what they did find and name it. This was comparable to the bones in the human body that we were studying because many of the bones are the same just different sizes.

Students all learn in different ways, therefore, it is important that we are actively assessing our students throughout the lesson in addition to pre and post assessments. The students will each respond differently to the techniques and theories teachers use to encourage student learning. By assessing throughout the lesson, the teacher is able to review or make changes to the lesson to be sure that the objectives of the lesson are being met. During my

students teaching I found many different ways of assessing the students throughout the lesson. Some of these strategies included the show-me strategy, tell a neighbor, quick write, and walking around the room quickly to check work.

**Evidence**

My first piece of evidence is a math lesson that I taught during my student teaching about how to solve number models that contain parentheses. For some of my students this was a hard concept to grasp and for others it was quite easy. This lesson shows that I monitor student learning throughout my lesson and not just at the beginning and the end. I started my lesson by reviewing problems from previous lessons. I assess students by giving them a problem and they write down the answer on their individual white boards to show me. I can then look around the room to be sure that all students figured out the right answer. Then while I am teaching the lesson and giving students practice problems I do the same thing. This allows me to see which students are struggling and whether or not I need to walk through more problems with the students before moving on to another topic. At the end of the lesson I assigned a homework assignment that would be due the next day for my post assessment. One of the problems with using the white boards for an assessment is that some students look at their neighbors' answers so I cannot always be sure that all students understand the topic. This is why the post-assignment, or homework assignment, is still so important.

My second piece of evidence is a picture of two of my students during science. This picture shows my students learning through direct experiences. I was teaching my students a unit on light. In this picture the students are using a D-cell battery, wires, and a light bulb. I began the lesson by telling students to try to figure out how to make the light bulb light up, without giving them any further instructions. The students were very engaged during this lesson and learned a lot through discovery.

**Goals**

I believe that class discussions are an important part of using higher-order thinking skills. One of my goals for my classroom is to further the abilities of my students to have student led discussions. During my student teaching I was able to attend some teacher study sessions in which this was one of the major topics being discussed. I would like to research this further and implement it into my own classroom. Discussions would require my students to use higher-order thinking skills.