

Cultural Diversity Capstone Experience

Katelyn Hemmingsen

EDU 390 Dr. Taylor

Introduction

In this practicum course, I have had the options to go out and be a part of different opportunities. I have been able to go out in the Bismarck community and go visit the Saint Bernard Mission school twice. These are things not only options for students at University of Mary but were things that I very much enjoyed going to and experiencing. All of my experiences had similar characteristics that tagged along with the culture and diversity that was needed to be observed. During my time at my practicum opportunities, I have witnessed and experienced an opening to wanting to be more culturally diverse and aware. Thankfully, all of my opportunities went very smoothly and made a positive impact on me and my future self.

The opportunities that I got to experience for my practicum was going to the Saint Bernard Mission school twice, participating in YESS community game night, Adult Life Education brunch at University of Mary, and also a field trip led by my group in the course EDU 367 at Fort Lincoln National Park. These were all offered through my courses at University of Mary. In this paper, I will be talking about the demographics, environmental adaptations, instructional adaptations, interventions, and as well as what I took away. Doing a practicum is new to me, so I can now tell my experience with this paper on what I did, saw, and took away. This is a good experience as well as something I will be using in the future.

Demographics

With each practicum opportunity that I was able to be a part of, there were all different types of demographics. Having the chances to go to the Saint Bernard Mission school had me observe ages four to fourteen. This is a big age gap, but their school has many children who are put together by age or grades. On the field trip to Fort Lincoln, I was able to only be with fourth grade students. This was helpful because most of them are at the same learning spot and pace as

each other. The YESS community group is adults in the community, so high school and up. This was a big range in ages and I did not know exactly how old most people were. Lastly, the Adult Life Education group has a focus on eighteen through twenty-three age range. This might be flexible, but all of the members are either about to graduate high school or already have. Each group was a mixture of gender, so there was never a specific gender that was focused on in any of the events/opportunities.

Ethnicity is one part that I knew for some of my areas in the practicum, but not all. The trips to Saint Bernard Mission School was all students who were Native American. This is what I knew from learning about the school and how they implement lots of their learning and format of the school to fit into their cultural background. I think that this makes the students who are a part of the school feel more comfortable and get a better learning experience because of this. With the other groups, like the field trip, board game night, and brunch, I did not know their ethnicity. I could take from a personal opinion and view that most were white, with a few in the class who were Native American or non-white. This was common with the events not related to the SBMS.

Each group had their own personal aspect. With their socioeconomic background, it was very hard to tell. Students or people who I encountered during my experiences never talked about what they had, did not have, or home lives. So, this area is kind of unknown. From what I could see or judge by is that most of those who were from the Bismarck/Mandan area were from the middle class. While from class discussions and what I have learned is that many from the SBMS are lower middle class. There is no right or wrong from where the group members or students are in their background, this is just more of an observation on what was exposed to me.

Lastly, were the physical or cognitive limitations of what I saw. All of the ALE and YESS community groups had some sort of physical and/or cognitive limitations. There were quite a few who had wheelchairs that they had or had another physical limitation. With the fourth grade at Fort Lincoln, my group of students had no physical limitations. From what I saw though, there was some students with cognitive limitations. At SBMS there were some cognitive limitations in some students that I witnessed. With that, there was one student I saw who had a physical limitation with her arm, but other than that there was not any. From each area that I participated in, all of the limitations were worked with in order for the students or group members to be included and worked with. I thought that it was awesome that no matter what limitations a person might have, I saw them be included and helped without a worry.

Environmental Adaptations

At the SBMS, there were adaptations throughout the school that implemented the Native American culture with American culture. This was noticeable largely at the Catholic church on the school grounds. The church is created to represent a teepee shape as well as artifacts and decorations that go with the traditional Native American culture. This was such an awesome thing to see since it connects with the students who go to school there. With this, the classrooms also implemented their Native American culture through learning the language as well as what they learn with their subjects. I think that this was super great to see and be a part of.

With the other groups, their environmental adaptations were a bit different. This was more for the way the areas were set up for those who had physical limitations to be able to move about without having to struggle. This was most common at the board game night. They had different levels of tables so those who were in wheelchairs could still participate. The other

events/opportunities, there was nothing really that was adaption since it was in the café at University of Mary with the ALE group and the Fort Lincoln Park with the fourth graders.

Instructional Adaptation

During my observations, there were different instructional adaptations each group had. With the groups of individuals who had disabilities, the YESS and Adult Life Education groups in particular, they would treat them as though they are regular people but ask questions on if they needed help. This could ensure that the individuals who might not be able to speak up as well or at all can still get the help and assistance they need by the consistent helping and understanding. As with the Fort Lincoln field trip, many students were able to ask good questions as well as have a discussion as a group that is guided with multiple questions. This was very helpful for when our group needed to adjust and adapt to the schedule changes and time fillers.

At the SBMS, the instruction that the students I observed had was guided through questions and walkthroughs the teacher gave. The teacher would be there to assist the students after instructions were given to ensure that these students could get their work they needed done. The teachers at SBMS were always helpful and available for questions from students. This helped with any confusion on assignments or activities that the students were doing. With the kindness of the teachers and the good guidance, the students could finish their work with a good understanding and the comfort of being able to ask questions or for help.

Successful Interventions

These interventions that were used were part of each opportunity that I was a part of. With the SBMS trip on December 11th and 12th, parents got to come and see their Christmas program. There was surprisingly many parents, cousins, aunts, grandparents, siblings, and friends who showed up. The children were so excited that they knew their loved ones were

coming to watch them. In Appendix A and B, there are two photographs from the Christmas program that the children performed in. This was a great opportunity for them to show their community and family what they have been practicing and focusing on.

The other groups, such as YESS and ALE, are community groups that these individuals can be a part of. They can get community resources and activities to do all the time because of the programs. This is very helpful for those who need programs like these in order to get out and about in the community. Lastly, Fort Lincoln field trip was able to happen because of the families who agreed, the teachers who put it together, and the students who were able to be involved. In appendix c, there is a photograph the shows the students who were on the trip. This was a great opportunity for the students to have and the teachers worked hard to make this happen. The National Park really gave the schools a nice day to explore and learn, which really helped with the areas that the rangers knew most about.

Conclusion

The areas that I worked with were all different. This caused me to be exposed to different types of groups. Even though they were not all the same, had different locations, and students/participates had various backgrounds they had the same standards. The *Standard III: Diversity*, was the biggest one that matched each area. In the course, all most all of the standards met each other, but this standard was the biggest influencer. The events/opportunities were all diverse and included students who did have exceptional needs. This was important for this practicum, and it met each area. The other standards such as the Initial Common Specialty Items, all related to each group that I was a part of as well. This was especially shown at the SBMS with how the culture of Native Americans were shown everywhere at the school, which is awesome.

I will be able to take away from this experience that creating an environment that includes all students' physical limitations, cognitive limitations, cultures, religion, and traditions in one classroom is very possible. This has been a great opportunity for me to see multiple different areas of learnings and people. I have seen the teachers and workers be able to adapt for their students and participants to create an environment that includes all students and makes them feel comfortable. This is exactly what I would like to have in my classroom. I will be thinking back to the SBMS mostly with the fact that I can make my classroom include all cultures of my students to ensure they feel safe and comfort.

Appendix

A. This is a group photograph of the children during the program.



B. This photo is showing the parents taking pictures and videos of their children/grandchildren



C. This photo is from the Fort Lincoln field trip.

