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University Honors Program

Senior Portfolio Proposal

November 12, 2014

*How Educators Are Made: The Shaping of a Teaching Philosophy*

When I first came to college, I was registered as a Political Science major with a minor in criminal justice. I aspired to be a lawyer and had envisioned that belief for most of my life and on into my first semester at UNC-Charlotte. After moving in and getting acquainted with my roommates, my classes, and the school as a whole, I began to get the sense that I no longer wanted to be a lawyer, however, I knew I wanted to help people. Most of the students that lived in my dorm (Witherspoon Hall) freshman year consisted of members of the University Honors Program, Teaching Fellows Program, or were Levine Scholars. I was fortunate enough to be placed in Witherspoon Hall because I was accepted into the University Honors program, but I noticed right off the bat, that the mixture of students living there were an interesting group of people, me included.

Living with two Teaching Fellows and becoming friends with numerous others freshman year, I began to hear about everything that was going on in their classes and things that they had been doing outside of school. I can't say that I knew I might teach someday when I was younger, but you can say I was predisposed to the job, being my mother had been a teacher for quite sometime at that point. Throughout the semester, I continued to contemplate whether or not staying a political science major would be best for me. I also was uncertain about whether or not I should transfer from Charlotte after my freshman year to UNC-Chapel Hill. By the time second semester came around freshman year and after much prayer, soul-searching, and
conversations with my friends, I decided to change my major and become a history teacher. I have always had a passion for history and it was always my favorite subject in school, I am fascinated with history and learning how we came to be what we are and why things are the way they are today. Needless to say, changing my major and pursuing a history degree with teaching licensure in 9-12 Social Studies, was one of the best decisions of my life but until now I have yet to take a look back and see how I got to this point in my academic career and what I truly aspire to do as a teacher moving forward.

Since becoming an Education major, I feel as if I am already a teacher, or at least a “teacher in training.” Everything that I do now revolves around training to be a teacher and developing the necessary skills for the job. I have gained so much experience already through my clinical experiences spanning across three counties and five schools. Along with my clinical experiences, I have taken numerous classes concentrated on secondary education and teaching adolescents. I have been shaping my teaching skills and philosophy for three full years now and can say for sure that I have come a long way. Coupled with the education classes, comes my experience in history classes. My history classes have been a focal point for attention at this point, because of the knowledge I am gaining on the proper way to teach history to students and what key events to focus on in the classroom. Another big contribution to my “teaching philosophy,” has been my experience with the club basketball team here at Charlotte. I have wanted to be a basketball coach for as long as I can remember. I love playing basketball, but now that my opportunity to take that skill to the next level as come to pass, I will be looking to coaching moving forward. I hope to gain coaching experience while being a teacher and my involvement with the club team here at Charlotte was great experiences that will be beneficial as well when the day comes I begin coaching. I look forward to the transition from player to coach,
as well as mentoring young men to be better basketball players, but more importantly better men. Together all of these things have made me better prepared for my career ahead, and have provided me with many unique opportunities I never thought could have happened. Throughout college I have been preparing to be a teacher, and at times it was right in front of me and I didn’t even notice. My overall philosophy as a teacher moving forward, is to inspire and mold the minds of the students I teach, but more importantly, help them become better citizens and find their own passions in life, just like I have during my four years here at UNC-Charlotte.

My focus for this project will be outline and emphasize what key events and artifacts have shaped my current teaching philosophy, and what skills I have gained along the way that will help me to become a better teacher and person. When it comes to defining a “teaching philosophy,” I tend to think of it as the belief system in which is developed overtime through experiences and for the good of future students. Many factors go into this philosophy such as upbringing, religious beliefs, college experiences, influential people, and leisure activities to name a few. I believe that a teaching philosophy is what you make of it and can help provide you with the goals and objectives at hand to push to obtain as a teacher.

My artifacts will be grouped by focusing either on courses or assignments that have been completed here at UNC-Charlotte, or artifacts that have been completed outside of my coursework. Both groups have yielded amazing results and this portfolio wouldn’t be possible if I was not to include those that were developed and executed outside of my coursework.

MDSK 2100 was my first education class in which I was required to create a lesson plan. In this class, I had a lot of freedom of what I could do for my plan and which topic I would like to discussed. My teacher was very helpful and influential in my studies moving forward. This class relates to my theme because of the foundations it helped to establish pertaining to my topic.
This was my first education class and first class outside of general education classes as well as political science classes for me. This helped me get my toes wet in the possible career path of becoming a teacher, but after it was all said and done I was ready to jump all in. The class served as a “weeding out,” class to see if teaching was right or not for you, and I find out very quickly I was in the right place. This class will be represented by my final clinical report, which encompassed my time spent at my former high school and everything I was introduced to in the course.

The next artifact that I came upon in my excavation was my research paper for HIST 2600. This was my first challenging course as a History major is 2600. This was a writing intensive course and required a research paper to be written. As a student in high school I always hated how little amount of time was spent on WWII in class, but for my 2600 with Dr. Lansen, I got an in-depth look at WWII and in particular the Holocaust. This class provided me with a thirst for knowledge to learn more about historical inquiry and World War II in general. I discovered how to research history, assess valid sources, and create substantial argumentative papers to encompass all of the skills I had learned in that class. In the end, this class helped to shape my teaching philosophy by providing me with good examples of how to research history, so that I may have my own students one day do research papers on things that interest them in history, while knowing what direction to steer them in. To represent my research paper, I will provide writings from multiple stages the assignment process to show my progression and historical research expanding.

In my READ 3255 education class we had one day set aside to teach a lesson to the class at our assigned high school. For my lesson, I taught Civics and Economics to two classes accompanied with a PowerPoint and activity. This was technically my first time “teaching
students,” and needless to say it was an eye-opening experience. This assignment helped prepare me for improving my teaching more than anything else I had been exposed to at that point. It was my first real look and chance to teach inside the classroom. This correlates with my theme in two aspects. In relation to my theme, this helped me to develop my teaching philosophy in regards to what schools I feel I can offer the most too, as well as what school could I myself benefit from working in to help students.

I am currently in my final round of education classes. This class is defined as a methods course, meaning we get hand on training while in class. So far this semester we have been tutoring students for 50 minutes every Wednesday at Central Cabarrus high school. This has been a great experience thus far, but I can’t lie that I foresee some rough days ahead of me in the teaching field. Some students at the school are very good about seeking help for tutoring while others aren’t and with my classmates and I getting full discretion on how to run the tutoring, it has been difficult so far. Though it has been difficult getting used to since we know longer have a class teacher or assistant there to help us, we are becoming better teachers and learning how to work with actual students, not just learning about how to work with them by taking notes from a PowerPoint in class. In relation to my theme this has been one of the most influential experiences I have gained due to the success I have seen from the students I have tutored and it has and currently is shaping how I will teach a year from now. My course syllabus will serve as my representation for this artifact.

The first C I ever received in my life came in my Global Connections class sophomore year. This really hit me hard, but also served as a wake up call to work harder in class and improve my organization skills. I have always been good with my organization skills, but that semester I got sloppy and slacked off. I greatly regret not reading as much and giving my best
effort in that class. This relates to my theme because being a teacher requires great organizational skills as well as hard work, which I feel were strengthened following my struggles in my Global Connections class. To be a good teacher you need to have good preparation and be efficient as well as effective. Since taking that class two short years ago, I have seen my organizational skills improve as well as my overall preparation for classes, both in history and education. In relating to my theme, this class served as a personal example of how not to succeed in school, which I will be able to convey to my own students down the road. This class will help me to relate with those struggling with organizing their things as well as helping those to cope with failures and helping them to realize nothing is bad enough that it can’t be overcome. To represent this artifact I will use my mid-term and final essays to display my struggles.

I have been fortunate enough to take Professor Jonathan Perry for two of my honors courses during my career at UNC-Charlotte. My first class with Mr. Perry was a University Honors topic class that focused on Capitalism and free markets, and I am currently in his Honors topic class related to “American Exceptionalism.” Both of these courses dealt primarily with civics and economics, and helped open my eyes to the possibility of teaching Civics and Economics in high school. Before taking these courses I was set on teaching only U.S. History once hired as a teacher, but after my experiences in Mr. Perry’s classes as well as my political science minor, my teaching philosophy has been reshaped towards being more open to teaching Civics and Economics. To represent these classes, I will be using a PowerPoint presentation dealing with Economics that was completed as a group in my free markets course, and my “Find a founder” PowerPoint for my “American Exceptionalism” course that I am currently in.

My sophomore year, I made the Club Basketball team here at Charlotte out of over 40 people who tried out. This was one of the greatest experiences I have had at Charlotte.
Basketball is one of my biggest passions and I hope to coach high school basketball one day on
top of that. The guys I played with on the court and got to know off, were great and a lot of fun
to be around. I got to see a lot of the East Coast from Wilmington, to James Madison, even
Princeton in NJ. This experience helped to fuel my passion even more for basketball and will be
a great learning experience for me coaching going forward. This activity related to my theme
because being a teacher and being a coach is very similar, and that is why most teachers are
involved with sports. You approach teaching the same way as you would coaching, you assess
what skills your students or players have, you help those who do not have the same skill set to
catch up with the others, and once everyone is on the same page, you create a game plan or
guidelines for how you are going to play or learn and what are the main goals for the class or
team. I look forward to first and foremost becoming a teacher to help my students and mold
them to become better students and people, but second I want to do the same for those playing
basketball, whenever I get the chance to coach. This artifact will be represented a picture of my
jersey.

This past semester I was required to do clinical observations at Cox Mill high school in
Concord, NC. This was my assigned school for my READ 3255 class and the same class in
which I taught my first lesson. This school was one of the nicest and most prestigious high
schools I have ever seen. I was so blessed to get to work with an amazing staff at this school and
had a wonderful time meeting the students there. Not only did I get an extended stay observing
at Cox Mill compared to my past clinical, but I got to see a school that was very successful and
that liked very much. I would very much like to work at a school like that someday, because of
how willing the students were to learn and the excellent staff put into place there. A picture of
the school will represent this artifact. I have began to feel as of late that I would feel very
comfortable in a teaching situation such as the one at Cox Mill, but I also feel that I may have more to offer to struggling schools in this area, and feel that I could benefit even more in those environments. I am still torn between what exact school I want to teach at and what schools I need to teach at, but again this goes back to your teaching philosophy, which is prone to change and develop more overtime. I will represent this artifact with a picture of the school.

If there is a quote to describe my philosophy on life it is by far going to be “Keep Moving Forward.” Yes, you may recognize this from the Disney movie “Meet The Robinson’s,” but I truly believe in it and I think it applies to anything that we as humans could go through in life. In the context of the movie, it is a quote said quite often within the main family’s lives anytime they fail or are struggling with something. This quote is there to always encourage them and help them stay positive. No matter the situation good or bad we keep moving forward, growing our knowledge and understanding and developing into a new person overtime that continues to improve. I think this is very important to my theme as a whole and encompasses all of the other artifacts that I have. I think it is important not to waste one day whether that be in the classroom, on a basketball court, or on the weekend with your friends and family, it is important to always be productive and to keep improving what you do. I have to remind myself to keep moving forward when I get complacent and comfortable in my surroundings. I just feel that if you want to continue shaping a teaching philosophy you have to keep moving forward through new experiences and practice. Throughout college, we all as students, myself included, have been through so much and pushed to the limit at times, but that is one reason why college is such a great place. In college we grow our knowledge far beyond we ever could imagine and discover who we want to be the rest of our lives and what we want to do. College has shown me that if you “Keep Moving Forward,” work hard, stay focused, and actual enjoy life you will reach your
goals and possible even exceed them! I will be using a picture of the movie "Meet The Robinsons" to symbolize this quote pertaining to my theme.

"If you stop moving forward, you start moving backwards"

My portfolio will explore my journey through college and in detail how it has shaped my teaching philosophy. A teaching philosophy is more than just how you plan to teach or what interests you the most, it is about how all of your past experiences came together to form your ideals and skills moving forward. After much deliberation, I was able to compile a list of eight strong artifacts that adhere to my teaching theme and that are the most meaningful to me, during my career at UNC-Charlotte. These artifacts have consisted of lesson plans, basketball experiences, and even a simple quote, but the process and reflection involved in choosing them was no easy task. Reflective practice has been and will be a key concept moving forward when finalizing my portfolio. The idea of exploring the why by laying out the what and how, is an excellent way of truly reflecting upon experiences and I believe that I have a good foundation moving forward to do that. In choosing my web platform to help illustrate my theme, I spent most of my time comparing the positives and negatives between the web platform Weebly, and web platform Wix. I plan to use Weebly for my website to post my portfolio, due to the fact I have experience with this website and feel comfortable using it for this assignment. I do admit that Wix may have been the more flashy and eye-catching choice, but I do not believe this to be a major factor in illustrating my work. I also have had a good experience with Scribd, which is a website that allows you to integrate Word Documents or PowerPoint’s into website generators such as Weebly, so that you may put your work on display in its original and authentic format. Overall I plan to continue my work refining my artifacts and reflecting upon them in a manner that is satisfying not only to my readers but myself as well.
For my thesis advisor, I plan on working with Dr. Oscar Lansen of the history department. I have taken two classes with Dr. Lansen during my time here at UNC-Charlotte and he has been one of the most influential professors, I have had the pleasure of taking. With a background in history, Dr. Lansen adheres to my theme, seeing as I plan to teach history once I become a teacher, just not necessarily at the same academic level. His courses have helped shape my teaching philosophy and given me great insight to historical research and analysis. If all goes according to plan, Professor Jonathan Perry will serve as my thesis reader. Professor Perry has been my teacher for two honors courses here at Charlotte. His classes have focused on political science principles and have helped shaped my teaching philosophy. This is due in large part to my recent interest in teaching Civics and Economics in high school, and his own teaching philosophy and approach. Together I believe that my advisor and reader will work great with my theme and help develop and expand it into a portfolio that is strong and provides clarity to my overarching objective.

Bibliography

Images


Documents


Other


Schedule

January 12-16 Begin writing reflections for portfolio/Meet with Advisor and Reader to outline semester
January 19-23 Continue writing reflections>Create e-portfolio on Weebly
January 26-30 Meet with Advisor and Reader and give update on work and provide completed work at that time
February 2-6 Complete reflections and upload artifacts to Scribd
February 9-13 Meet with Advisor and Reader with rough draft of writing components
February 16-20 Finish web platform and organize files
February 23-27 Revise writing and reflections
March 2-6 Spring Break—begin uploads to web platform and Scribd
March 9-13 Finalize uploading to web platform/Meet with Advisor and Reader
March 16-20 Work on revisions and finalizing web layout
March 23-27 Meet with Advisor/Reader for reviews and edits
March 29-April 3 Work on revisions and upload any edits or remaining works
April 6-10 Meet with Advisor/Reader for final reviews/reads/editing
April 13-17 Make final revisions and presentation practice/Review web platform
April 20-24 Thesis Presentation and Defense