

## FOUNDATIONS (1, 2)

To act as a professional inheritor, critic and interpreter of knowledge or culture when teaching students.

## FEATURES

- Situates the discipline's basic benchmarks and points of understanding (concepts, postulates and methods) in order to facilitate significant, in-depth learning by students.
- Adopts a critical approach to the subject matter.
- Establishes links between the secondary culture set out in the program and the secondary culture of the students.
- Transforms the classroom into a cultural base open to a range of different viewpoints within a common space.
- Casts a critical look at his or her own origins, cultural practices and social role.

## LEVEL OF MASTERY

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to:

- understand the subject-specific and program specific knowledge to be taught, so as to be able to promote the creation of meaningful links by the students;
- exhibit a critical understanding of his or her cultural development and be aware of its potential and limitations;
- exhibit a critical understanding of the knowledge to be taught, so as to promote the creation of meaningful links by the students;
- Establish links with the students' culture in the proposed learning activities.

How have I developed this competency during this course or professional seminar/field experience?

During my field experience, I developed this competency through completing school activities that were related to aspects of culture as well as through discussions in our seminar class. One of the activities I participated in with students at my host school touched upon the unit of celebrations and the different types of holidays, namely Christmas, Hanukkah, Kwanzaa, and Diwali. Throughout the activity, I made an effort not to impose or emphasize my personal beliefs about celebrations and culture. Instead, my focus was to let the students tell me everything they knew about the celebrations and to interpret this information correctly in order to ask them questions about what they did not seem to know. I encouraged them to inquire about the celebrations they knew little about and to carefully listen and accept each other's ideas. In order to do so, it was important to determine what they already knew about the four celebrations to be able to question them and push them to think about the less-known ones. I felt as though the students should also be accepting of what their group members expressed about the celebrations instead of laughing or saying it was wrong. However, this is not the only activity I participated that discussed culture.

Many of my efforts were directed towards making links between new information and information that the students were already familiar with. For example, one student needed help with an ethics question about signing contracts and about agreements between people. In order to help her understand, I connected this question to something she already knew, which was the "Essential Agreements" that all of the students in her Grade 4 class must sign at the beginning of the year as a way of agreeing upon class rules. Also, there was another question in this activity about the differences between Jewish, Christian and Muslim weddings. As a way of increasing the children's understanding of the types of marriages, my strategy was to ask them about their own culture and make the connection if it was applicable.

Finally, the seminar discussions held during class introduced me to the notion of school culture and student culture as well as its importance. Therefore, this emphasis made me pay attention to my host school's culture while I was completing my fieldwork, which led me to much more in-depth observations and reflections. The class discussion also reminded me to refrain from letting my personal culture or beliefs intervene with my professional identity. In a school like my host school, where there is a rich and diverse student body, this is especially important for teachers to remember.

WHAT IS MY CURRENT LEVEL OF MASTERY? (CHOOSE ONE)\*

ADVANCED

THOROUGH

ACCEPTABLE

PARTIAL

MINIMAL

\*Use the features of the competency (listed above) and the professional competency rubric.

Name: Giulia Lato

ID: [REDACTED]

Date: December 17<sup>th</sup>, 2013

Course Name &amp; Number (e.g. EDEC 253): EDEC 201-001

PS/FE level (circle one) 1 2 3 4

KEEP THESE FORMS IN YOUR PROFESSIONAL PORTFOLIO. YOU WILL ADD TO THEM EACH YEAR.

## FOUNDATIONS (1, 2)

To communicate clearly in the language of instruction, both orally and in writing, using correct grammar, in various contexts related to teaching.

## FEATURES

- Uses appropriate language when speaking to students, parents and peers.
- Observes rules of grammar and stylistics when writing texts intended for students, parents or peers.
- Is able to take up a position, support his or her ideas and argue his or her subject matter in a consistent, effective, constructive and respectful way during discussions.
- Communicates ideas concisely using precise vocabulary and correct syntax.
- Corrects the mistakes students make when speaking and writing.
- Constantly strives to improve his or her own oral and written language skills.

## LEVEL OF MASTERY

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to:

- master the rules of oral and written expression so as to be understood by most of the linguistic community;
- Express himself or herself with the ease, precision, efficiency and accuracy expected by society of a teaching professional.

How have I developed this competency during this course or professional seminar/field experience?

This competency was in my mind all throughout my field experience because communication skills are extremely important to me. My host school provided me with many opportunities to develop this competency. For example, during French class, or while I was with the French pre-k class, my goal was to communicate with the teacher and my fellow student teachers in French as much as possible in order to serve as good language models for the students. Of course, I also made it a point to speak to the students as much as possible in French, but had to resort to English when they didn't understand. In French class, some sixth graders and I were working on a verb conjugation center. Wanting to push and challenge them, I conducted this mini lesson without letting conjugation errors slip by or go unnoticed. My goal was to make them correct their mistakes until they understood why a certain verb was conjugated in a certain way. During this activity, I feel as though I actively developed this competency because I was observing French grammar rules and correcting the students' mistakes. Moreover, the teacher in the pre-k class provided me with a very effective communication strategy that fosters the development of the French language. When students asked me a question in English, I only answered if they asked me in French, which I helped them articulate. Nevertheless, I also developed this skill in English contexts.

During my last week with the fourth graders, they were working on their written responses to a book. My role was to assist them in editing and correcting, as well to provide help when typing these responses on the computer. My attention was solely on their spelling and grammar rules while I was reading these responses. Instead of giving the child an answer to a spelling question, I encouraged them to utilize the dictionary whenever they could. It was also important and crucial to refrain from using inappropriate words or language with students, staff members and colleagues. This aspect led me to pay careful attention to my vocabulary and grammar while speaking to students individually and as a group. Finally, my communication skills were important in terms of the level of difficulty of my vocabulary. It is necessary to use understandable words if one wishes to communicate ideas effectively to students, thus requiring teachers to adapt their vocabulary to the grade level.

Finally, the seminar course reaffirmed the importance of good communication skills, a notion that really spoke to me. As a former public speaking competitor, I've always enjoyed developing different communication skills, which I think teaching requires.

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## SOCIAL AND EDUCATIONAL CONTEXT (7, 8, 9, 10)

To cooperate with school staff, parents, partners in the community and students in pursuing the educational objectives of the school.

## FEATURES

- Collaborates with other members of the school staff in defining orientations, and developing and implementing projects related to educational services in areas falling under the responsibility of the school.
- Informs parents and encourages them to become actively involved.
- Coordinates his or her actions with those of the school's various partners.
- Supports students involved in the administrative structures of the school or in school activities or projects.

## LEVEL OF MASTERY

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to :

- situate his or her role in relation to that played by other internal or external resource persons;
- adjust his or her actions to the educational objectives of the school and contribute to the attainment of these objectives by becoming personally involved in school projects;
- Start building a trusting relationship with parents.

How have I developed this competency during this course or professional seminar/field experience?

The Leadership program at my host school took a few students from Grade 5 on a trip to the town hall to serve lunch to elderly citizens, which I got to participate in and be actively involved. Throughout the activity, I supported and encouraged the students to get involved as much as possible with the guests, by greeting them at the door and helping them with their coats. During the actual serving, my efforts were directed at coordinating and supervising the students as they served the food. I thoroughly enjoyed participating in this project, where the students had a chance to give back to their community. On top of this, the opportunity was also given to me to attend a staff meeting about the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, during which I observed some teachers write their report on the latest unit of learning and begin to plan the next unit for the students. The IB coordinator took time to teach me about the IB program and what it entails, which allowed me to gain a lot of knowledge about this program.

Furthermore, because it is important to communicate and collaborate with parents, some of my professional attempts were directed at parents and at greeting some of them in the morning as they dropped off their children. I spoke to one parent in particular who was late in bringing his children to school and after I informed him of the time of the school bell, I suggested he leave his home a few minutes earlier in order to arrive on time.

Another project that was taking place in the school was an art project, in which the art therapist was making Christmas trees to decorate the gymnasium for the Christmas breakfast. While the students painted cardboard paper, the art therapist had to do the rest of the work, which included transforming those cardboard sheets into trees and assembling them. It was very enjoyable to help with this project, especially when I got to help the students actually paint their trees. This was especially rewarding for me because I actually attended the breakfast that took place the week after our fieldwork ended, which allowed me to see all of the Christmas trees on display.

Finally, seminar class discussions led me to understand the idea that teaching is a job that requires the cooperation of many professionals, especially if one wishes to carry out educational projects that fulfill the objectives of the school. I've learned that working with different types of people, like parents and resource teachers, is in the best interest of the children. The teachers at my host school have exemplified this aspect of teaching very well and the observations I've made about their cooperation and collaboration has given me a good idea of how a real teaching staff works together.

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## PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY (11, 12)

To engage in professional development individually and with others.

## FEATURES

- Takes stock of his or her competencies and takes steps to develop them using available resources.
- Discusses the relevance of his or her pedagogical choices with his or her colleagues.
- Reflects on his or her practice (reflective analysis) and makes the appropriate adjustments.
- Spearheads projects to solve teaching problems.
- Involves peers in research related to the mastery of the competencies targeted in the programs of study and to the educational objectives of the school.

## LEVEL OF MASTERY

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to :

- identify, understand and use available resources (research reports and professional literature, pedagogical networks, professional associations, data banks) related to teaching;
- identify his or her strengths and limitations, along with his or her personal objectives and the means of achieving them;
- engage in rigorous reflexive analysis on specific aspects of his or her teaching;
- Undertake research projects related to specific aspects of his or her teaching.

How have I developed this competency during this course or professional seminar/field experience?

With regards to developing as a professional and keeping track of my skills and competencies, the detailed journal I've kept about every day's activities and results has helped me accomplish this. At the end of each week, I also wrote an assessment of the week, in which I indicated my most valuable observations, my most memorable activities and interactions, as well as my contributions to the classroom. This helped me keep track of what I was doing well and what I could improve on for the future. Additionally, it was important to have good communication with the other student teachers who were going through the same type of experience as I was. Therefore, my colleagues and I acted as many professionals would, and engaged in conversations about our responses to certain situations and about any problems or concerns we were having.

Apart from the other student teachers, many of my efforts were directed at seeking out actual teachers at the school in order to ask questions about many different areas in education. Many of these teachers gave me opportunities to ask questions, which I took full advantage of by inquiring about the school's specific philosophy and culture. Another goal of mine was to take note of any good resources that teachers used in their classroom. This goal was accomplished because teachers provided me with several resources for lessons, such as Class Dojo, Tumble Books and Brain Pop Junior. My professional development was also advanced when I spoke to 3<sup>rd</sup> year student teachers who were also in the school. They helped me understand the next steps in becoming a teacher and how their teaching has evolved with each field experience.

In order to develop as a professional, my emphasis was put on self-reflection, which allowed me to think about my teaching styles and teaching philosophy. I believe my reflection skills have greatly improved because I have attributed more importance to reflection that I ever did before. I also reflected on the strategies I observed in the classroom that I could incorporate into my own teacher identity. The idea of reflection has definitely been one of the most important skills that both my field experience and seminar classes taught me. Discussions during class time put an emphasis on professional development and on the idea of ongoing learning at all ages. Continuing to learn allows one to continue developing in professional contexts, which is of high importance to me at this point.

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## PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY (11, 12)

To demonstrate ethical and responsible professional behaviour in the performance of his or her duties.

## FEATURES

- Understands the values underlying his or her teaching.
- Manages his or her class in a democratic way.
- Provides students with appropriate attention and support.
- Justifies his or her decisions concerning the learning and education of students to the parties concerned.
- Respects the confidential nature of certain aspects of his or her work.
- Avoids any form of discrimination toward students, parents or colleagues.
- Situates the moral conflicts arising in class with reference to the major schools of thought.
- Demonstrates sound judgment in using the legal and regulatory framework governing the teaching profession.

## LEVEL OF MASTERY

By the end of his or her initial training, the student teacher should be able to :

- demonstrate sufficient responsibility in dealings with students that one can recommend with no reservations that a class be entrusted to his or her care;
- Answer to others for his or her actions by providing well-founded reasons.

How have I developed this competency during this course or professional seminar/field experience?

In my view, before passing judgments on the actions or decisions of teachers, it is best to analyze the situation and to assess whether or not the teacher or staff member is being appropriate/fair. As an observer, it may be easy to jump to conclusions or to judge others, but one must refrain from doing so automatically. Through all of my observations, I've started to put together my teacher identity and to understand the values that will most likely underlie my teaching.

Also, the key ideas of professionalism and confidentiality that was discussed in the seminar class really stuck with me while I was completing my field experience. I was very aware of the confidentiality required in schools and made sure not to impose on confidential meetings, but to respect them instead. This was also an issue when I was taking photographs of the classroom; I made sure not to photograph any of the children's faces in order to respect their confidentiality. Seeing as how my host school has a very diverse population in terms of culture, it was especially important that I didn't discriminate against any student or staff member for any reason, let alone their cultural choices. In order to do so, I had to leave my personal judgements and beliefs aside and focus on demonstrating my best professional behaviour. In addition, before reacting to any conflicts, I considered how the school might want the teachers to respond, and I acted accordingly. If the school's practices could not guide me in the situation, it was up to me to rely on logic and my best judgment.

One of the aspects of this competency that I always try to practice is that of classroom democracy as well as equality. For example, I read a French story to a group of four students and tried as much as possible to give each of them an equal amount of attention and equal chances to answer the questions I was asking. One girl in particular always had the answer, but I would chose one of the other students in order to let them express what they had to say. Sometimes, it is difficult to give all students equal attention, but I try to do it especially when I am in smaller groups, like the one I described here.

Overall, I've tried to adapt my professional behaviour to the philosophy of my host school in order for my behaviour to come off as ethical and responsible to the school. In doing so, I have taken into consideration what the principal of the school said about providing all students with the same learning opportunities. I realized that I highly value this concept and will incorporate it as one of my most important values in my classroom.

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