

# Personal Growth Plan

## **Professional Development Activities Specific to Content**

During my third-grade general education placement, I had many conversations with my cooperating teacher regarding the reading curriculum. The school district had switched to the Wonders Literacy Curriculum the year before, so she and I discussed the various aspects of it, and what she has done to adapt the curriculum for her classroom. I spent a lot of time reading through the teacher's manual and learning as much as I could about the methods the curriculum uses. These conversations and the research have benefitted me as a teacher because I understand better the "why" behind the methods and can use this information to better deliver instruction. I also have a stronger understanding of how to adapt the curriculum for students who are struggling readers.

## **Professional Development Activities Specific to Pedagogy**

I have had many conversations with fellow teachers during my student teaching experience, but one particular conversation stands out revolving around the use of small groups during math lessons. My cooperating teacher's schedule originally started out at the beginning of the year with math in the afternoon. We quickly realized this was not what was best for our students, as they were mentally exhausted by that time of day. We had also started the year out by teaching math using whole group instruction. My cooperating teacher was able to get her schedule shifted around and had math moved to the morning. She and I had a discussion regarding the way we were teaching math also. She was interested in trying out small groups and asked if I would be willing to take charge of one of the stations. I did not hesitate to say yes. She and I designed the lessons so our students could work in three groups of seven students, and we grouped them based on their ability. After our original conversation regarding this particular subject, my entire viewpoint on math lessons changed. I saw first-hand how much more engaged the students were during math once we broke them into the small groups and got them engaged in every lesson. It made the time pass quicker, they never seemed

bored or “checked out”, and they seemed to pick the material up faster. I will most definitely employ this pedagogy in my own classroom someday.

### **Collaboration with a Colleague**

I had the pleasure of being invited to attend the elementary schools’ Peer Mediator Training. While I was there, I collaborated with the guidance counselors from the two elementary schools in the district. We worked together to train about 50 third and fourth grade students in the Peer Mediator curriculum. The training lasted one full school day and consisted of several small workshops, lunch, recess, and it ended in a culminating activity where the students got to test out their new skills with each other. I feel I benefitted greatly from this collaboration because I learned tools to help the students solve conflict among themselves, as well as tools to help teachers solve conflicts between their students. This translates to classroom management skills and will help minimize distractions that student disagreements can cause in the classroom. The guidance counselors have such a wealth of information and knowledge, so the training was a wonderful opportunity to learn as much as I could about conflict resolution.

### **Utilizing Resources from Professional Education Organization**

After utilizing the school library to research professionally published articles regarding trauma in the classroom, I found the book “The Trauma Sensitive Classroom” by Patricia Jennings. The book is a fabulous resource for any teacher and explains how to recognize students in your classroom dealing with trauma and what role teachers play in helping these children heal. After my first placement in student teaching, I became very interested in this topic, as there were quite a few students in the school dealing with various types of childhood trauma. It opened my eyes up to how common this is, unfortunately. As a teacher, I want to help these students in any way I can and reading this book has given me several tools that I can use someday to achieve that goal.

### **One Specific Goal:**

One specific goal I have is to continue to expand upon my knowledge and use of differentiation in the classroom. As a special education major, I value the importance of

differentiation, not only for special education students, but for the entire population. During my student teaching experience, I came in contact with a myriad of different student-learning types. I feel that my classes have prepared me, but I believe that we never stop learning. I would love to build upon my prior knowledge of differentiation in order to become a better teacher. To achieve this goal, I plan on reading books and listening to podcasts on the subject. One book in particular on my reading list is “How to Differentiate Instruction in Academically Diverse Classrooms, 3rd Edition” by Carol Ann Tomlinson. Based off the reviews of this book, it is a quality book for new educators to learn the value of differentiation and ways to implement the practice in your own classroom.