

Professional Development Written Reflection – Joseph Miller

2013-2014 and 2014-2015 School Year

Over the past two school years, my professional development has been a continuous process. I have attended a number of in-service programs as well as teaching conferences to improve my performance as an educator in the classroom. The one teaching conference that sticks out in my mind is the IARSS Susan Brookhart teaching conference titled *Balancing Formative Assessment and Grading*. This particular conference challenged me to rethink my grading process and to reemphasize assessing the goal of the assignment rather than the behavior or effort exemplified by the student completing the assignment or assessment tool. The conference highlighted the proper structure of classroom rubrics reiterating objectivity in utilizing this type of assessment tool. Additionally, the conference challenged my perspective of grades and a goal/standard-based educational system. Ultimately, the purpose of the educational system is to put in place procedures to allow students to obtain and demonstrate knowledge of classroom goals. However, the grading system currently creates an environment of extrinsic motivation on the part of the students, and, therefore, the students start figuring out ways to “play the game of school.” The conference communicated the idea that a goal/standard-based educational system in which students are allowed to utilize their creativity to fulfill classroom objectives rather than constantly take test-like assessments and complete basic homework assignments changes the motivation of the learner.

Apart from teaching conferences, my professional development over the past two years has emphasized pedagogy more than anything else. The more content knowledge I obtain the more applications and examples I can share with the students which increases their understanding of the content. The majority of my study in this area comes from reading *TIME* magazine and utilizing other news sources from *Flipboard* – an app via *iTunes*. Additionally, I find the *Freakonomics* podcasts to be great resources for content in Psychology and Sociology.

After reflecting upon the last two years of teaching here at EHS, I am confident I am providing the students a high quality service and contributing to their progression in educational development. The challenge for me is to continuously find ways in which I can change not only instructional material but also teaching strategies to help students better relate to the content of the classroom and consequently develop an intrinsic motivation to improve themselves as a student and learn more about life and the culture around them.