Running Header: COMPREHENSIVE PROJECT: COPLEY-FAIRLAWN MIDDLE SCHOOL

Comprehensive Project:

Copley-Fairlawn Middle School

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**Abstract**

Using the Ohio Department of Education's annual report cards, I have chosen Copley-Fairlawn City School District as my future school district in which to teach. Having attended Copley High school, I am aware of their highly diverse student body and skillfully trained teachers, making the school district an excellent example of the environment in which I wish to teach. Using the report cards my paper will describe the District's and the Building's ratings and the meanings of those ratings. Then using my fictional class, I will discuss the cognitive development of my students and how their level of ability and ease of learning affects my classroom surroundings and teaching methods.

**District Profile**

According to the District Report Card, the Copley-Fairlawn City School District was designated *Excellent* for the 2010-2011 school year by the Ohio Department of Education (ODE, 2011a). The District met 26 out of 26 of the State Indicators which means that the schools in the district meet or exceed the goal of:

* 75 percent proficient or above in, reading, mathematics, and science in the grades 3 through 8th grade, Reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies on the Ohio Graduation test(10th grade) (ODE, 2011a),
* 85 percent proficient in Reading, mathematics, writing, science, and social studies on the Ohio Graduation test(10th grade)
* 90 percent Graduation Rate
* 93 percent Attendance Rate

The Copley-Fairlawn City School District earned 103.9 out of 120 as its Performance Index (ODE, 2011a). The Performance Index is based on all students enrolled in the district for the academic year. Students are divided into groups and labeled by percentage as: Untested, Limited, Basic, Proficient, Accelerated, and Advanced. The percentages in each group is then multiplied by a given value, least to greatest, with Untested getting multiplied by zero and Advanced being multiplied by 1.2. Copley’s highest percentages were, in order, Advanced, Accelerated and Proficient coming in third (ODE, 2011c).

Next on the Report Card is the Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). The Copley-Fairlawn City School District AYP was considered *Not Met* with the description of *At Risk* (ODE, 2011a). The AYP is determined by which subgroups meet the targets by percent Proficient in Mathematics and Reading and the subgroups that meet the targets by percent Tested in Mathematics and Reading. The subgroups are as follows: All Students; Economically Disadvantaged; Asian/Pacific Islander; Black, non-Hispanic; American Indian/Alaska Native; Hispanic; White, non-Hispanic; Students with Disabilities; Limited English Proficient. All requirements used to determine the AYP have been met with the exception of proficiency in Mathematics by the students with disabilities (ODE, 2011c). The Value-Added Measure is considered *Below Expected Growth* for the Copley-Fairlawn City School District (ODE, 2011a). The 4th grade met expected growth in both Mathematics and Reading. The 5th grade met the expected growth in Reading but was below the expected growth in Mathematics. The 6th grade was above the expected growth in both Mathematics and Reading. The 7th grade was below the expected growth in both Mathematics and Reading and the 8th grade met the expected growth in Reading but was below the expected growth in Mathematics (ODE, 2011a). A score of “Above” means that the district has achieved more one year of progress since the previous school year, “Met” means that one year of progress was made, and “Below” means that less than one year of progress has been made (ODE, 2011c).

The Copley-Fairlawn City School District is made up of both Copley Township and the City of Fairlawn. The School district is considered a Suburban/Rural mix. As of the 2000 census, the median household income for Copley, population 13,641, was $55,195 and the median household income for the City of Fairlawn, population 7,287, was $62,180 (SchoolFinder, 2011). The average daily student enrollment for the district was 3,156 (ODE, 2011a). According to the District Report Card, the Racial/Ethnic composition of the students is as follows: 14.0 percent are Black, non-Hispanic; 0.3 percent are American Indian or Alaska Native; 5.7 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander; 1.1 percent are Hispanic; 3.9 percent are Multi-Racial; and 75 percent are White, non-Hispanic. Other non-Racial classifications are as follows: using the Socioeconomic Status (SES), 17.3 percent are Economically Disadvantaged; 4.2 percent are Limited English Proficient; and 10 percent are Students with Disabilities (ODE, 2011a).

**School Profile**

Copley-Fairlawn Middle School, the only middle school in the district, received the designation of *Excellent* on their Report Card for the 2010-2011 school year (ODE, 2011b). The grade levels at Copley-Fairlawn Middle School are 5th through 8th. The School met 11 out of 11 State Performance Indicators. The 5th grade had on average, 10.7 percent more students at or above the proficient level when compared to the state percentage. The 6th grade was an average of 9.6 percent higher, the 7th grade was an average of 14 percent higher, and the 8th grade was an average of 11 percent higher that the state percentage (ODE, 2011b). The Middle School earned 102.1 for their Performance Index. The top three percentages were: Proficient (30 percent), Advanced (29.7 percent), and Accelerated (26.9 percent). Copley-Fairlawn Middle School AYP was designated *Met* with the School’s Improvement labeled as *OK*. The school’s Value-Added Measure is  *Below Expected growth*. The Average Daily Student Enrollment is 1,077 with 19.8 percent of the students classified as Economically Disadvantaged. The Racial/Ethnic diversity is as follows: 14.1 percent are Black, non-Hispanic; 6.5 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander; 4.0 percent are Multi-Racial; and 74.4 percent are White, non-Hispanic. Other non-Racial Classifications are as follows: 3.3 percent are Limited English Proficient and 12.0 percent are Students with Disabilities (ODE, 2011b). When it comes to lunch, 17 percent of students are eligible for free or reduced price lunch program (SchoolFinder, 2011).

**Classroom Profile**

The class in which I teach is one of the two 8th grade Science classes. My class is composed of 20 students per period between the ages of 13-14. The Science subjects that are taught in my classroom are Life Science (with topics like Biology and ecology), Earth Science (with topics like Astronomy and Weather), and Physical Science (Laws of motion and scientific method). My class diversity is on average 14.1 percent are Black, non-Hispanic; 6.5 percent are Asian or Pacific Islander; 4.0 percent are Multi-Racial; and 74.4 percent are White, non-Hispanic. The gender make up of my class is 44 percent female and 51 percent male (SchoolFinder, 2011). On average per 20 students, two are considered gifted and talented, one is considered learning impaired, and 2 are considered ADHD. The room is set up so that all students are engaged in learning. Desks or tables will be set up so that there are four students in each group. The desks/tables will be set up in a manner that all students may view the white board/overhead without having to move. The pairing of students is based on personality and learning type. As the first few weeks pass, I will asses each student using observation and testing to determine learning type and personality. For example, students who like to work by themselves could be seated together at table while students who prefer to work in groups could be seated together. ADHD students are placed with more relaxed and focused students as to promote student helping and awareness. The gifted and talented students are placed with students who are struggling so that they may look to their peers as well as myself when questions arise. The room is decorated with bright colors and diagrams of the topics we are covering in each chapter as well as seasonal items from month to month. Students’ projects are also displayed on one wall and in the hall outside of the classroom. There is a recycling center near the doorway with a spot for paper, plastic, and metal. In addition, there is a donation box with a list of accepted/needed items in the back corner for donations to the local homeless shelter/food bank. The donation box is to help bring attention to the fact that there are those of us less fortunate and that anyone can help, even in small ways. When the donation box is filled a treat is brought in for the class to help promote social awareness. Due to the fact that any student, from any class can donate, big or small, at any time, there is no pressure for a student to feel like they have to participate; all students in every class I teach will get a treat once the box is filled.

**Characteristics of Learners**

**Cognitive Development**

In order to understand the cognitive development of middle school students, one must first understand what cognitive development means. Cognitive development is the “gradual, orderly changes by which mental processed become more complex and sophisticated (Woolfolk, 2010).” In other words, cognitive development is how people develop and mature mentally. There are three different theories involving cognitive development. The first is the Information Processing Theory which describes how the brain retains memory and attention. The second theory is that of psychologist Jean Piaget, which divides human cognitive development into four different stages by age. The third theory is by German psychologist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky. Vygotsky looked at the sociocultural perspective of cognitive development. In order to be a first-class teacher, one must understand the three theories of cognitive development, be able to see the pros and cons of each, and have the ability to integrate them into their classroom so that they maximize each of their students’ potential.

**Information Processing**

Information processing in the human mind is similar to the workings of a computer. Information is taken in or entered, altered to fit, stored, and then retrieved as needed (Woolfolk, 2010). However, the mind is more complex than the computer with the ability to tie new ideas to old. When compared to the ideas of behaviorists, information processing views learners as more active in their own learning; they are seen as the source of aspirations and ideas, not just the receivers of information (Woolfolk, 2010). The information processing theory can be broken down into three parts: sensory memory, working (short-term) memory, and long-term memory. Sensory memory has a large capacity to take in large amounts of stimuli; however, the information only lingers in sensory memory for about 1 to 3 seconds before it disappears. Therefore, perception and attention are very important to remembering. Perception is the process of detecting stimuli while attention is the process of taking that stimuli and moving it into the working memory. These processes explain why learning one concept at a time is better for students (Woolfolk, 2010). When there is outside stimuli, whether from other students, noise, issues at home, or if a student has a learning disability, the need to bring their attention and focus to the teacher and the lesson is crucial. Using bright colors, visuals or pictures, changing the lighting in the room, incorporating music, and using different teaching methods throughout a lesson can help gain and keep a student’s focus.

Once a piece of information has caught the student’s attention, it moves to working memory. The working memory is the “workbench” of memory (Woolfolk, 2010). Here the memory is processed and organized, usually connecting the information with knowledge from long term memory, and is then retained in long term memory or is dumped (book). Working memory has a very limited capacity, only 15-20 seconds. In order to keep things in working memory, rehearsing the information can keep it fresh so that it does not decay and is then lost. Maintenance rehearsal or repeating the information in one’s mind is useful if the information can then be dumped once it is used, like a phone number or location. Elaborative rehearsal connects the information to something that is already known, like connecting a new name with that of a friend or family member (Woolfolk, 2010). Elaborative rehearsal helps move information into long term memory. Where working memory is low in capacity, long term memory has a seemingly unlimited capacity. Once memories have been processed they can be retrieved at any time (Woolfolk, 2010).

For the benefit of my eighth grade class, my room has been decorated with bright colors and diagrams/images of the topics described in the chapter that is being discussed. There is a weekly calendar in the room that lists what is due during the week and next to it is a small white board that lists new assignments. Lectures are paired with visuals involving Power Points, videos, music, and slideshows, in order to gain the students’ attention. At the start of each new chapter, students will take a short assessment involving the topics to be discussed. The assessment will not be graded and will be composed of multiple choice and short answer, and the last question is an opinionated question about the students’ interests in the topic. By giving the assessment, I am seeing what my students already know and what topics they seem excited about. The assessment could be used to rearrange students by interests, or by putting those who already have an understanding of the topic with those students who seem to struggle. When writing notes on the board or on an overhead, I will try to make important words or phrases stick out with either a different color, underlining or highlighting. In order to help students incorporate terms and ideas that are important in their future learning of science, I will have a section of every quiz or test that has questions pertaining to past ideas/terms. When reviewing, I will have the student play “around the world” which is a game where every student stands, going one by one, and is asked a question. If answered correctly, the student gets to sit down. If answered wrong, they must remain standing for the next round. This repetition of terms will help move the definitions into the students' long term memory. When testing newer information, like reviewing for a test, I will use a combination of: independent study in the form of worksheets or using clickers (which are handheld devices that allow students to answer questions and see the answer without being called out as a “failure” in front of the group), and group study in the form of group worksheets, review games and labs.

I also want to get the students involved by getting them up to the board to answer questions, have them draw their own version of the diagrams, and have them help teach their fellow classmates. By getting the student involved, they have a better chance of moving new ideas from their working memory into their long term memory.

When examining my students who are considered gifted/talented: Student A is gifted in the area of music, with sensitivity to rhythm, pitch, melody and tone; Student B is gifted in the area of logical-mathematical, with the ability to calculate, quantify, hypothesize and to recognize patterns above the proficient levels of their peers (Smith, 2010). For Student A, I will try to tie in music wherever I can whether it be having the students create a song to help them remember vocabulary terms or playing music during tests to help the students relax and focus. For Student B, I will try to incorporate a pattern to words, definitions, or diagrams to help move their knowledge from working memory to long term memory.

Three to five percent of elementary students are diagnosed with ADHD and of those students; two to three times more of them are boys than girls. Students who have ADHD differ in structure and activity of their brains when compared to the “normal” or “average” students (Smith, 2010). Parts of the brain are smaller, have lower blood flow, or different levels of electrical activity. The differences create a problem with their working memory. Problems often occur in areas such as math and reading (Smith, 2010). One way to help their information processing is by giving them time to “play”. The brain develops via stimulation and play helps create that stimulation. Play unites the mind, body and spirit, reduces tension, helps develop social skills, and the student feels less overworked (Smith, 2010). By creating ways to bring play into the classroom, I can help my students with ADHD relax, focus, and therefore, learn more. Many of the ways I have developed my classroom benefit my students with ADHD. For the purpose of this paper, I will call them students C and D. Student C may have problems with organization that cause them forget or get lost in the discussion. For this student, taking time out of class to check notes and go over definitions with them, having them highlight definitions they often forget will help move ideas into the working memory and into long term memory. For Student D who has issues keeping his/her attention on the lesson, having the student sit in the front of the class where I can walk by and check that he/she is taking notes or doing his/her work is important. I may also have a sign, such as putting my hand on the corner of the student's desk, that the child can identify as me trying to regain his/her attention. Students with ADHD can learn; it is getting and keeping their attention that can be problematic.

Student E is learning disabled with an underachievement in reading. Because this student had a reading disability, he may also have problems with written communication (Smith, 2010). One way to help the student is by asking questions verbally, maybe using the clickers to evaluate, rather than using a handout. Furthermore, giving the notes partially written with spaces to fill in may allow for the student to concentrate more on what is being said while they follow along in the notes.

**Piaget’s Theory**

Jean Piaget (1896-1980) was the creator of the theory of cognitive development. The theory of cognitive development describes how people make sense of the world around them. To Piaget, children take an active role as motivated learners, not just passive recipients of information (Woolfolk, 2010). Children build their knowledge from their experiences as they explore and manipulate their world as well as from their physical and social environment (Woolfolk, 2010). Four factors influence changes in thinking: maturation, activity, social experiences, and equilibration. The human brain is preprogrammed to change biologically as children grown; this process is maturation. Activity is acting on the environment and learning from it while social experience is learning form others. Equilibration is the process where the actual thinking takes place. Piaget recognized that people learn through two complementary processes: organization and adaptation. Origination is the tendency to organize thinking into "schemes" or mental categories and adaptation is the ability to adjust the environment. There are two subcategories to adaptation. Assimilation takes place when people use what they already know to make sense of the world around them (Woolfolk, 2010). For example, a child may look at a moth for the first time and say "butterfly". The child is trying to connect the new animal to one it already knows. Accommodation must then occur when new information causes change or the creation of a new scheme. Once the child learns that the butterfly is actually a moth, they must adjust their thinking and their scheme on butterflies, adding one on moths. Assimilation and accommodation work back and forth, people are exposed to something new; they assimilate it to something they already know and then accommodate it into their schemes (Woolfolk, 2010).

Piaget thought how people process information changes throughout their life time. This change in thinking is divided into four groups: sensorimotor (birth until 2 years), preoperational stage (2years until 6-7 years), concrete operations stage (6-7 years until 11-12 years), and formal operations (11-12 years through adulthood) (Woolfolk, 2010). The first stage is called sensorimotor because young children base their knowledge on their senses (seeing, hearing, touching, tasting). Infants also develop object permanence during this stage. Peek-a-boo is fun for babies because once you hide your face behind your hands or an object, you are literally gone to them, and you no longer exist. But once they gain object permanence, they understand that you are still there, just hiding behind the object (Woolfolk, 2010). Children also start to have goal-directed actions during this stage. For example, a child might see that a box contains their favorite toy. Once they have mastered the sensorimotor stage, they know to go to the box, remove the lid and either reach in and take the toy or dump all the toys onto the floor to get the one they want (Woolfolk, 2010).

In the preoperational stage, children ages 2-7 years gradually develop the use of language and the understanding of symbols. For example by understanding the use of symbols, they are preparing themselves to further their knowledge into the field of math and science where symbols are commonly used. The ability to connect an image or object to a word or meaning is called semiotic function. Children in this stage have a difficult time seeing someone else's point of view and they use preoperational egocentrism (speaking without considering their audience) and centering (seeing only their side of the situation) (Woolfolk, 2010). In the concrete operations stage one can start to see the understanding of conservation; for example the same amount of water is still equal even when put in two different sized glasses (Woolfolk, 2010). Problems are solved in a logical fashion and classification, or the grouping of objects, is also seen in this stage. Children start to see that they can be wrong and seek validation via performance goals (Woolfolk, 2010).

Finally there is the formal operations stage. Since my students are between the ages of 13 to 15 years old they will be, for the most part, in the formal operations stage of their cognitive development. In this stage my students start to be able to solve abstract problems in a logical fashion, and become more scientific in thinking and develop concerns for social issues (Woolfolk, 2010). In the contents of my class, my students will use the ability to use hypothetico-deductive reasoning to answer abstract questions such as "What would happen if the earth stopped spinning?" Abstract thinking is also used in the chapters covering physics, "Assume a train is going 125 mph, how long will it take to get to a city 50 miles away?" Inductive reasoning is an important part of scientific study; listing cause and effect, using the scientific method, and problem solving all use inductive reasoning (Woolfolk, 2010). One of the final characteristic of the formal operations stage is adolescent egocentrism. My students can now see others' the points of view and beliefs which is important when discussing controversial topics such as the big bang, evolution, and global warming (Woolfolk, 2010).

My gifted/talented students are well into the formal operations stage of their cognitive development. Therefore my job will be to challenge them. For Student A, I will challenge him/her with the topic of waves because music and sounds produce waves. I may also ask the student to do a project where he/she brings in an instrument and plays a musical scale and then explains to the class how the different notes might look like as waves. By connecting his/her interests with the topic being taught, I can challenge and advance his/her level of cognitive development. For Student B, I may produce more challenging problems or when creating projects, encourage the student to take on a more difficult topic of interest.

My students with ADHD are most likely average in terms of their cognitive development. My problem as their teacher will be to challenge them to stay on task when dealing with multi-step problems. One way of minimizing this stress is by dividing up tests and projects into smaller sections.

Student D will most likely have a lower level of cognitive development due to his/her underachievement in reading. Allowing Student E to have more time on quizzes or test, maybe even sending him/her to a tutor so that the test could be read to him/her, is one way to help advance his/her cognitive development. When asking large, complex questions on test, quizzes or project, dividing up the questions into smaller, step by step, questions might help Student E follow along.

**Vygotsky’s Theory**

The third understanding is that of Vygotsky, the socioculture perspective of cognitive development. There are three themes which help explain how thinking and learning are developed via social process. The social sources of individual thinking is describes as complex mental processes beginning as co-constructed interactions, helping to create an understanding or solve a problem (Woolfolk, 2010). Children gradually begin to utilize these processes on their own. The roles of cultural tools in learning and development uses: material tools such as paper, pencils, computers and the internet; and psychological tools such as language, concepts, signs, art, maps and symbols. The use of tools is passed from "adult to child and child to child through formal and informal interactions (Woolfolk, 2010)." The third theme is the zone of proximal development. The zone of proximal development is the gap between the child's currant level of development and the level of development the child could achieve (Woolfolk, 2010). Children can perform tasks in the zone of proximal development with guidance of someone who is more highly developed. Thought and language is also an important aspect of Vygotsky's theory. He believed that children's self talk and privet speech played an important role by guiding children in their thinking and action, leading to self regulation and silent inner speech (Woolfolk, 2010).

In order to help all my students, I will give them subject related tools to help them add to their knowledge base. Tools like: websites, books, computer programs, games and study/note taking tips. I will also have group projects to help develop their social skills and interactions. The actions that I list to help Students A, B, C, D, and E will not only help that specific student but when applied, help all of my students. No one student should be singled out or favored, but all students should get an equal opportunity to learn and further their knowledge

**Personal Development**

School involves more than just learning and obtaining knowledge (Woolfolk, 2010). School is a place where friendships grow, change, and sometimes break. It is a place where student learn more about themselves as human beings, what they view as right and wrong, and where they belong in the world. And it is our job as teachers to help mold and encourage the personal development of our students. Erik Erikson developed the Eight Stages of Psychosocial Development to explain the relation to the individual’s emotional need to the social environment throughout different stages of life (Woolfolk, 2010). Erickson’s theory emphasizes ones “self” and how relationships, culture and experiences affect our identity. Erikson recognized that during development, there are a series of crises and organized each stage around a crisis (Woolfolk, 2010).

Psychosocial development starts at birth (birth to 12-18 months) with the Trust versus Mistrust stage. At birth the basic form of conflict is trust. At this age the child is learning cognitively that they are “separate from the world around them (Woolfolk, 2010).” This leaves them vulnerable to those with control. If the infant is cared for, feed, diaper changed, and held, the infant will grow to trust its care taker. However, if the infant is ignored and forgotten by its care taker, that infant will mistrust the care taker and in future experiences, may have a tendency to mistrust others as well (Woolfolk, 2010).

The next stage, ages 18 months to 3 years, is Autonomy versus Shame/doubt. Think of it as the “being a big kid stage.” Is this stage, children are learning to be self-confident, self-reliant, and responsible for self-care (Woolfolk, 2010). Children are potty trained during this stage as well as learn to dress themselves and feed themselves. Parents still have to be protective, making sure their children get what they need, helping when needed. Never the less, parents need to let their children figure things out for themselves, encouraging their efforts to “master basic motor and cognitive skills” (Woolfolk, 2010). If children are not given the chance to try things for themselves, they may feel lacking in some way and carry that lacking throughout life.

As children reach the age of three, they enter into the Initiative versus Guilt stage. This is a stage of gaining independence (Woolfolk, 2010). Children in this stage become more assertive and take more initiative. Again, if parents do not give their children the chance to try things for themselves, they may develop a sense of guilt, that they are always wrong or what they do is not good enough and this view may follow them throughout their life (Woolfolk, 2010).

Around the time children enter school at age six, they enter the Industry versus Inferiority. At this age their cognitive development is growing quickly (Woolfolk, 2010). Children are learning faster, and remembering more. In this stage they must combine all the stages, leaning to trust new people, be independent, and assimilate into new environments. If they cannot deal with the difficulty of these new situations, they risk feeling inferior, fault, or stupidity (Woolfolk, 2010).

Children reach the fifth stage, Identity versus Role Confusion, during adolescence. In this stage, children must achieve their sense of self. There are many factors that play a role in one’s identity: occupation, gender, politics, religion, physical appearances, culture and parenting. My eight grade students are currently in this stage of their personal development (Woolfolk, 2010). My students are trying to figure out who they are and they need the opportunity to explore and reflect different ideas. They have to make choices ranging from diet, to who to sit with, who to be friends with, which classes they will take next year, what clubs will they join, do they have time to get a job, and where to get the job. The relationships my students create will help foster positive growth. I want to have a relationship with each of my students. I want them to know that I am there to help them and guide them whenever they need me. My goal as their teacher will be to help them think positively and grow their own sense of identity. Throughout my room and in my lectures, I will try to incorporate role models, bringing in professional speakers, college students, and maybe even high school students to share experiences and different ideas. I will try give feedback and support to my students, privately pointing out where they need to grow and where they have excelled. I will remind my students often of our rules about respect, proper classroom behavior, and what I expect of them. I will provide a list of resources for classroom use and personal use. The list may be a poster with information about different hotlines or resources that I know they can trust and use privately if they wish. Culture will also play an important part of my classroom. I want to encourage my student to be proud and share in their differences. Only through understanding of others, can we be respectful. That does not always mean we have to agree with the ideas of others but we have to respect their different views and that is what I wish for my classroom. I will also encourage self-expression through projects and papers in which the students can choose their topic.

For my students with ADHD, it will be important to re-enforce concepts about behavior and reminding them not to disrupt the class. The pressures of middle school and the impending move to the high school may also be hard on my students with ADHD as getting used to new environments and assimilating into their place can be hard for a normal student let alone students who already have a hard time keeping track of daily assignments. Piling homework and activities can stress out anyone, however, my students with ADH, as well as my learning disabled student, may be more susceptible to that stress so making sure they stay on task in class and making sure they are turning in homework and not falling behind with me an important practice for me. As for my students who are gifted and talented, helping them get involved in groups or clubs that will encourage their talent, will better their development. I want nothing more than to better each and every one of my students, help them in any way I can and to better them as people and as part of our society.

A big part of my students’ personal development is what goes on at home. Parenting plays a major role in personal development. There are four main types of parenting: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive, and rejecting/neglecting/uninvolved parents (Woolfolk, 2010). Authoritarian parents are like the drill sergeants of a household, the “Because I said so” parents (Woolfolk, 2010). The parents are almost cold in their interactions and very controlling. They give high expectations and often strict punishments with failure. These parents still love their children but show little emotion and show limited affection (Woolfolk, 2010). Authoritative parents are like authoritarian parents in the way that they have set specific expectations for the children; they enforce these rules and expect maturity. The difference is that they are more open, often explaining the reasoning behind each expectation and the reasoning for the punishment upon failure. They guide and help their children versus push them. The downfall is that children may feel guilty or depressed, afraid to let their parents down, or not feel up to par with their expectations. Permissive parents may come off as being even more caring than authoritative parents but what they possess in warmth and nurturing, they lack in discipline (Woolfolk, 2010). They have little expectations when it comes to maturity “because they are just kids (Woolfolk, 2010).” These students may have trouble interacting due to the fact that they are used to getting what they want. Finally there are the rejecting/neglecting/uninvolved parents. They do not seem to care at all about their children; they let them run wild as if it is not their job to be worrying about the nonsense of teaching their kids (Woolfolk, 2010). These are the parents teachers dread. In the case of the other parents, if a teacher were to contact them concerning their child’s behavior or grades, the parent would be engaged and want to be updated or get help. In the case of the rejecting/neglecting/uninvolved parents, they could care less about the child’s problems, leaving the teacher and the student without support. Parents are with their children from the day they are born, they are the first influencers on their children, and they create the back bone for the child’s personal development.

**Social/Moral Development**

Each of my students is at their own stage of moral reasoning due to diverse intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The ability of my students' perspective-taking develops over time and enables them to understand that other people have different feelings and experiences (Woolfolk, 2010). At this stage of the students’ lives, they are refining their moral reasoning, taking into consideration distributive justice and morality cooperation. These two forms of moral reasoning, along with their stage of cognitive development, permit the student to evaluate questions of right and wrong through moral dilemmas. It is also with these two means of moral reasoning that I am able to understand my students’ moral and social needs through the context of Kohlberg’s Theory of Moral Development, to view the importance of peer groups and how negative foundations of social and moral development can lead to bullying. Knowing the dynamics of the above mentioned social and moral reasoning needs, I am able to promote pro-social development amongst my students (Woolfolk, 2010).

From the time my students are born, until the time they are about nine, they are in the Preconventional Morality level. In this level, judgment is based off of personal needs and other's rules. Stage one is punishment where rules are followed to avoid punishment. Stage two is personal reward where personal needs determine right and wrong (Woolfolk, 2010). Think of the second stage as "I'll scratch your back if you scratch mine (Woolfolk, 2010)." About the time the child turns nine, it enters the Conventional Morality level. In this level judgment is based off of other's approval, and expectations. Under stage three is the "good boy/ nice girl" orientation. It is determined by what others view as "nice." They believe that people should live up to the expectations of the family and community and behave in "good" ways; good behavior means having virtuous motives and interpersonal feelings such as love, empathy, trust, and concern for others (Crain, 1985). The fourth stage is Law and Order. This is when authority plays a big part. Authority and the laws must always be maintained (Woolfolk, 2010). Children are concerned with maintaining social order and with society as a whole. The emphasis is on obeying laws, respecting authority, and performing one's duties so that the social order is maintained. My eighth grade students are in level two and it will be my goal to help them move into the next level. Level three, or the Postconventional Moral Reasoning level, occurs during adulthood. Stage five is Social Contract Orientation and is similar to the U.S. constitution because in this stage, good is determined by socially agreed upon terms (Woolfolk, 2010). The final stage is the Universal Ethical Principle Orientation. This stage is more complex because what is "good" is determined by the individual conscience (Woolfolk, 2010).

It is within the context of lacking the above mentioned development of social and moral reasoning and having a difficulty in perspective-taking and reading others’ intent, that bullying arises. Bullies are a subset of aggressive children who regularly harass weaker students and seemingly derive satisfaction from harming others, whether psychologically or physically (Levine & Levine, 1996). Bullying can stem from the maladjustment of the social and moral development, manifesting itself in hostile aggression. While both sexes can engage in hostile aggressive bullying, I have found that the female students generally use a relational form of aggression. This relational aggression takes the form of verbal and other non-physical attacks, and is meant to harm social relationships (Woolfolk, 2010). For a child who grows up into two social worlds (one is the world of adults and the second is the world of peers), their peer group are more influential in regards to social behaviors, adults are influential in matters of morality (Woolfolk, 2010). Children often internalize (adopt) the behaviors of the models they have for both social worlds. Problems effecting the child’s ability to reason morally may occur when a less than ideal model is internalized, thus tainting the child’s moral and social development. As an educator it is my role to teach my students pro-social behavior and model good moral standards. For a student, according to Woolfolk (2010), being liked by teachers can offset the negative effects of peer rejection in middle school.

With trying to be a high-quality teacher, I will try and maintain certain qualities I feel will make me a better teacher. One is to try and have a personal relationship with all of my students; I want to know what is going on outside of my classroom which might affect them in the classroom. I want to keep a comfortable classroom environment by keeping it organized, having a routine that I will try and follow daily, and having smooth transitions during a lesson. I also want my class to be fun; learning should be enjoyable and something that students want to do, not loath. Overall, I want my students to know that I am there for them, that I am a stable entity in their life during a time of change, which is common for most middle school students. Also, in my classroom my students and I have established a list of social conventions along with the school's own guide lines, in which we outlined methods for solving situations that are likely to arise in the classroom (Woolfolk, 2010). For instance, if one student is being disrespectful, there are steps to go through before the situation escalades, including talking to the teacher, telling the fellow student how their actions are affecting others, and finally if needed, going to a school consoler or principle. Along with these set social conventions are rules based on school policy and administrative convenience which we have put as a poster on the wall as stated in my classroom setup. All of the rules are in place to promote the students’ development. In order to support moral and social development, I enforce all rules equally, showing no favoritism. To deal with bullying I have put in place conflict management strategies such as: ensuring physical proximity between students, encouraging feelings of support, acceptance, concern, and commitment. I have a "NO Tolerance Policy" when it comes to any form of bullying, even between friends, and I will remind that to my students often. Another way I can promote social and moral development is through group work. I want my students to be independent and in group work, everyone is responsible for their own portion of the project and for calling out others who are not pulling their weight. During and after group work I will have each member of the group give their fellow members a grade and explain why they felt that group member deserved the grade. This gives them the responsibility for their actions as well as those of others.

**Field Component**

Observations are the first step to becoming a teacher. As future teachers we look back at our observations for ideas, strategies, and insight that we would not get otherwise. Observations are a great way to see which strategies work, which need to been changed and which strategies do not work at all. Every classroom is different and teachers make a big impact on student behavior. The students I observed at Wadsworth Middle School were very similar to those of my future students. The students were eighth graders, the same grade as my future classroom, making them the same age and at the same stages cognitively and social-morally (Betz, 2011). Personally the students were very similar to how my future students may be. The first day I was at Wadsworth, the students had just received their school photos. These were the photos that would be on their high school IDs. Some of the girls were extremely upset with their picture, they thought they looked ugly and wanted to get retakes. The boys for the most part did not care (notes). The idea that the photo would follow them to high school was a big deal to these students because the idea of high school was a big deal to them. They are at a stage in their development that image is important to them, how their classmates view them is important (Betz, 2011). Looking back at my own high school experience I know how they felt, most girls whether they show it or not are self conscience and aware of what others think about them. Sadly, in a few years, as juniors and seniors, most will no longer care, hopefully because they realize that what others think is not important. Seeing the students in my observations acting like this, added to my own memories made me aware that my future students will be thinking the same thoughts, that I will have to be aware of my students self image and help promote self-esteem.

The fact that the students were in the same grade and in a similar content area, a math class has overlapping ideas with my future science class, means that observations could show a real insight into Motivational and instructional strategies that I could use with my future class.

**Motivational Strategies Observed**

While at Wadsworth, I observed a wonderful Math teacher. She wanted her students to excel and to find Math easy, even though they found it difficult. She realized how important it was to understand what she was learning to them because what they learned in her class would be needed in future Math classes. She used many activities to help promote their own motivation to learn. The first example I observed was how she handled homework. She only checked that they tried to do their homework. She gave out completion grades, not checking to see if her students got the correct answers because homework is practice, and everyone messes up during practice at some point. To motivate her students to try hard on their homework, and to complete their homework, she allowed those with three or less wrong answers on their homework to work in groups when completing worksheets (Betz, 2011). This method also motivated student behavior because if the students did not participate when going over answers, or too many students were not paying attention during the class, maybe talking too much, the homework would them be turned in to get graded(Betz, 2011). This was a privilege that the students had to respect and continue to earn. Partner work was also a privilege, it was earned by doing well or behaving well, it the students got too loud or she saw as she walked around that they were not working on the worksheet or their homework, the privilege was taken away and they had to work by themselves. Finally, she gave the students the chance to re-take a test while I was there. Some might view the chance to re-take a test as a way to discourage motivation, that on the next test they will not have to try as hard, well I disagree. First of all, she stated that this was a onetime event, that the reasoning behind the re-take was that the chapter was important later in the year so understanding the information now, was vital. Also, she did not have the time to go back and re-teach the information to those who failed during class time as it would hold back the rest of the class. Next, she told the students they had to schedule a time with her to have a one-on-one study session before getting the option to re-take the test (Betz, 2011). This promoted motivation because the students had to be motivated; they had to care about their grades to take the time to have the study session. When all's said and done, the re-take was the best option and I really liked the idea .I feel that it might be one of those ideas that I keep handy in my future classroom.

The Math teacher at Wadsworth was very laid back. However, her students showed her great respect and she in turn showed them respect. Even the students, who would normally be labeled as “trouble,” sat down when the bell rang, got out their homework and participated in the lesson. They behaved how she expected them to behave (Betz, 2011). Now, I have no idea if she sat them down at the beginning of school and explained her expectations, but it was clear in every class I saw that this was what she wanted and they behaved without being asked. On the last day of my observations, the teacher went home before her last class. I was there to see how the students reacted with the substitute teacher. Students, who were normally well behaved, talked during the lesson and ignored the teacher. Those who were normally more trouble were downright awful. They interrupted the teacher, asked to be excused, they did not follow along, and were long or refused to answer with called upon. Part of the student behavior was due to the fact that this was not a normal teacher; they took advantage of the situation (Betz, 2011). Another part of their behavior was that the teacher did not have a set of expectations with the students. The normal teacher also showed her expectations involving class behavior with regards to group work. As stated above, working in groups was a privilege in her classroom, one that was earned and probably taken away a few times. Most likely, the teacher sated her expectations at the beginning of the school year, as I plan to do with my future class. Rules, both school and classroom rules, where posted on the walls. Each teacher has expectations of their students, it is showing or explaining these expectations, and following through on consequences, along with respect, that we achieve our goal of student behavior.

**Instructional Strategies Observed**

While observing, I witnessed many types of instructional strategies. Math is a very hands-on subject. Only through practice can someone achieve at math. In the math class at Wadsworth, I observed students going up to the board to work on problems, sometimes the teacher would have different students go up for each step of solving an equation (Betz, 2011). In the Science class I observed at Wadsworth, they played a review game, going over the previous section of the chapter, on the smart board. Each student, whose name was chosen out of a box, went up to the smart board and answered a question, the smart board would tell them if they were wrong, and they were given the chance to re-answer the question (Betz, 2011). The game helped them revise what they knew and help remember what they did not know, while being fun and hands on. Labs are also very hands on activities. At the Science class, they did a lab on genetics and Punnett squares. The students sat at tables of four or five students each. They took turns trading eggs which were bi-colored. Each color represents a parent gene; the students then had to predict the possible offspring by filling in the worksheet on Punnett squares. After all of the students in the group were done, they opened the eggs to check their answers. The activity was hands-on, helped the students to learn to work independently, and promoted respect by having to take turns and share the eggs with the other students at each table (Betz, 2011). While observing at St. Vincent – St. Mary for Introduction to Education, I observed a Chemistry class conduct a lab. The students had to separate different elements from a solution. Before starting the lab, they were put in groups. The groups were given a worksheet explaining what elements were in the solution. Based off of what the students had learned in class, they had to create their own lab, they have to describe each element and its properties and they explain how they would separate it from the solution. By having the students create their lab, the teacher was having the students use their knowledge of the substance and they had to work together, and defend their answers on the worksheet. Next, after having their lab approved by the teacher, who was checking to see if they had the right idea and to make sure they understood the safety procedures dealing with the lab, the students got started (Betz, 2011). The labs themselves where hands on. The students had to use burners, chemicals and other tools to conduct the lab and be safe while doing so. At the end of the lab the students each had to do their own reflection on what happened, did it work, and what they would have done differently. Activities do not have to be hands-on or interactive-collaborative, they can be both. Together, the two work amazingly and help to promote student learning. Students enjoy getting to do hands-on activities and getting to do so with a friend or classmate makes it that much more enjoyable. If we, the teacher, can show the student that learning does not have to be difficult, that it can be exciting, they will want to reach out and learn more.

Of the three days I observed at Wadsworth, the lessons followed the same pattern. Each day, and in each class, the period started by the students getting out their homework. As stated above, the students self-graded their homework. The answers were posted onto the smart board one by one as she asked students to share their answers. If the student who answered was wrong, she would ask the student to explain how they got the answer, sometimes she would go to their desk and look at their work, pointing out where they made a mistake, sometimes she would work through the problem on the board, and sometimes, she would have a student go to the board to do the problem (Betz, 2011). Many of the students raised their hands to answer her questions, they were not afraid to be wrong. This showed that she had a very open and respectful class. They were not ashamed to be wrong or to ask questions. Many students, including those who are labeled as smart are often afraid to answer a question they are not sure is right or ask for help. Only a teacher who promotes respect and understanding in her classroom can have that kind of openness in her classroom. After answering a few of the students’ homework questions she moved onto the lesson (Betz, 2011). The students had note packets that they worked in sometimes. Often the lesson went along with the packet. The teacher had the pages projected on the smart board and she would fill in the pages with her students. After the notes for the day were finished, there would be a worksheet for the students to do. She would ask the students who got three or less problems wrong on the homework, these students were allowed to start the worksheet, working in groups if they choose. The rest of the class started the worksheet with the teacher’s guidance. If the worksheet was short, there would be homework for the students to start, other days; the worksheet was finished as homework. While the students worked on the worksheets, the teacher walked around, helping students who were struggling, reminding students that they should be working quietly, or just having a short talk with one of her students. The teacher I observed had very smooth transitions throughout her class periods, each tasked seemed to flow from one activity to the next (Betz, 2011).

**Assessment**

Assessment is an important mart of education and can be seen every day in every classroom. As teachers, we are required to give each of our students a grade, but it is left up to us on how to assess our students. Assessment is the many methods in which teachers use to "obtain information about student performance (Woolfolk, 2010)." There are many forms of assessment used and a part of many assessments involve measurement. Measurement is quantitative and is often used in the form of numbers. For example, "Student X got nine out of ten questions correct on the quiz," would be an example of measurement. Over all, the term assessment is "broader" than measurement values given from tests and quizzes; assessment takes into account skill, knowledge, abilities and growth (Woolfolk, 2010). In the classroom, teachers focus on four types of assessment: diagnostic, formative, summative, and authentic. How teachers balance the variety of assessment used and how they adapt to student needs shows a true understanding of students and of teaching.

**Diagnostic Assessment**

Diagnostic assessment is used before and during instruction to help assess students existing and prior knowledge on the subject to be taught (Woolfolk, 2010). Some states, like Ohio, require teachers to use diagnostic testing. In Ohio, teachers teaching kindergarten thru third grade give diagnostic tests in math, reading, and writing for three reasons. One reason is to screen students. Screening is when the test is used to measure the student's current understanding and background knowledge of key concepts and to determine if they are behind schedule on meeting state standards. Screening gives the teachers, school and parents an idea if the child will need intervention, for example, a tutor, in order to catch up. Observation is used throughout the year to reassess and track students' improvement. And finally, diagnostic reasons in order to calculate students' strengths and weaknesses (ODE website).

Though Ohio does not require teachers of middle schools to give diagnostic test, it is always beneficial to know what your students already have a background understanding of. In my classroom, at the beginning of the year and before each chapter, I will give a diagnostic test; no grade will be given, to see what terms and ideas my students might have an understanding of. I might also give those same tests later in the year to see what information was actually kept once we moved on to the next chapter. I can use these tests to see if I can move at a faster pace if they already have a base of understanding the topic or if I may have to go into greater detail. The later tests can be used if I should go back and re-teach topics that will be used in later classes and on Ohio State Proficiency tests or the Ohio Graduation Test.

**Formative Assessment**

The next form of assessment is formative assessment. Formative assessment is similar to diagnostic in that it happens before or during instruction and is often not taken for a grade (Woolfolk, 2010). Formative assessment is used not only to assess where and how the students are progressing from lesson to lesson but also gives the teacher good feed back in planning and improving his or her lesson plan. For example, by looking at homework (not necessarily taken for a grade) or practice tests, a teacher might see that a group of students or the whole class does not understand or is having difficulty with part of the lesson and therefore, the teacher might need to back pedal and re-teach the lesson. Formative tests and other assignments also allow teachers to assess students who get nervous or tend to do poorly on tests by not exerting the real stress of a "normal" test (Woolfolk, 2010).

In my classroom, the use of notebook checks, homework collection, and study guides and practice tests will be used as forms of formative assessment. By checking their notebooks I can see what tends to be missing, am I lecturing too fast or not giving them decent enough visual aids? I can also note who is taking more notes, are they doing better on the tests than those who are not taking all the notes? Or do I have a student who takes notes, does their homework and still seems to be having a problem on the tests; therefore showing me they may have a learning disability? By collecting homework, I am awarding those who took the time to try the homework but not punish those who may be struggling with a new topic. The homework also allows me to see which questions I should go over with my whole class. I may also add in chapter outlines as a form of the students own personal form of assessment in which they outline what they feel is either difficult or more important to them, or use it as a way to help them reinforce what was already taught to them. What comes after formative assessment is summative assessment.

**Summative Assessment**

Summative assessment is the opposite of formative assessment. Summative assessment is the stereotypical final exam or end of chapter test. It is a "summary" of accomplishments (Woolfolk, 2010) and usually happens after instruction. Tests are a big part of summative assessment and teachers really need to think about how they make their tests. Are the questions valid? Do they use a language all of the students will understand? Will the test be fair?

In my classroom I will use both chapter tests and section quizzes. The section quizzes as well as worksheets, and even home work could be seen as both formative and summative. One big way I plan to use summative assessment is to have my students create a portfolio of their tests and quizzes. Every student will have a folder and in that folder they will place each quiz and then the chapter test, after the test they will write how they felt about the chapter, compare their grades to their last test, discuss why they felt they did well or badly, should they have tried more on their homework? Did they not study this time? Did they play video games instead of working on their outline? Then they will make a goal for their next test. The portfolio is a great project that lets the student track their own assessments and set goals to better their education. The portfolio combines formative and summative ideas.

**Authentic Assessment**

Lastly there is authentic assessment. Authentic assessment asks students to apply skills that they have learned to real life situations (Woolfolk, 2010). For example, in my classroom we will discuss conversions so we may change the mileage from their house to the school from miles to kilometers. Or we could take what we learned about recycling and implement a new recycling system in our classroom or even the school as a project.

**My Classroom**

In my classroom I plan to use as many forms of assessment as I can to better evaluate not only my students but to evaluate my teaching. Homework will be used both as a formative and summative assessment, projects and worksheets will be used as well. Section quizzes and chapter tests along with their portfolio will be used and other assessments will add to their assessments.

As for my students who are gifted, they might not need any special assistance but they might not feel challenged so project where they can choose the topic might better challenge them to look deeper into the topic. To help my students with ADHD and other learning disabilities, I will use different forms of assessment and teaching to help keep them engaged. Also, having them outline the chapter or section will allow them to review the chapter and review what has already been taught to them and will reinforce the information. Having tests divided into different parts (multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay) and even splitting the test between two days will take away stress and avoid my students from getting distracted from having to focus on one task for a lengthy amount of time. Finally, having students with reading disabilities or others who may need more time, go take the test with a tutor or in another classroom or at a different time will make them have an equal learning environment that they need to succeed.

**Conclusion**

Over the course of this paper, I have learned a lot about my future career and my future students. I have learned how to read a report card which will be a great tool when looking for the district in which I want to apply as well has know the past scores of the students in which I will be teaching upon receiving a job. Report cards are also a wonderful tool to use in accessing how I am as a teacher and how I want or need to change in my teaching method. I have learned to understand the cognitive level of my students which is key to understanding how they learn and why they preserve information in the way that they do. I have also come to understand how their personal and social/moral development can affect their learning and how I, as their teacher will have to modify my lessons to fit my students needs. Next, I used my observations to transform my ideas of how to teach and how to motivate my students to become better learners. Lastly, I explored the variety of assessment that can be used in the classroom and my views on assessment. I feel that my ideas about how I want to teach and what kind of teacher I want to be will always change. The important thing to remember is that I am there for my students, my goal is to better their future by teaching them what I can, to make an impact on their life any way I can.

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