

Critique of Practicum Experience

What does it mean to be a lifelong learner? I love to learn which explains a lot actually, since at age 51, I decided to go back to school. Learning has always been in my blood. I was terrified and excited at the same time to be a distance learner and once I overcame that I had my practicum lurking ahead. It has been a great experience! I did my practicum in two places in the public school system in Forest Hills and at the Public Library.

Knowing my background will help to understand the experiences I choose for my practicum. I graduated from a 3 year RN program and decided I wanted to teach so I went back to school—University of Akron to get my BSN. I spent about 16 years in nursing—13 of it in teaching. When we moved to Cincinnati from Florida I decided to take a year off while my three kids adjusted to their new schools. I was PTA President at a brand new middle school, where my son went to school and I got asked to join the middle schools media/tech team as a Media Secretary. The principal said he would work this into another title once we got the school up and running but he left and I was still a secretary so I decided to go back to school to become a Media Specialist. Dr. Kovalik talked me into going into Instructional Tech with Media Endorsement—thank goodness because the tech classes and experience is highly sought after in the schools today. Everyone is after 21st century literacy skills which technology plays a huge part. I worked as a media secretary for 9 years and last year I decided to look for a Media Specialist position as my school now does not want to hire a media specialist. So I applied, interviewed three times with the Wyoming School District and landed a Media Specialist's position.

When I looked at the suggested activities for Instructional Tech and Library Media Endorsement there were many jobs that I did on those lists as part of my job. I would like to give you some insight into those activities. I took care of the collection development—I have built a 15,000 resource collection that meets the curriculum needs of the middle school staff and students. I researched, ordered, selected, processed and inventoried all materials. I also have a pretty good handle on the

equipment such as: LCD projectors, ELMO's, video cameras, digital cameras, speakers, mikes, overhead projectors, laptops and desktop computers. We had another secretary who scheduled equipment and labs since we were a school of 1200 students. We never had subs we always knew each other's jobs so we could cover if one of us was off. I had no help in the actual library so I worked through PTA to get volunteers to cover both am and pm shifts. I trained the volunteers on building a cart and shelving materials. I encouraged them to assist students whenever possible as long as they felt comfortable. Volunteers were also trained at the circulation desk. I also managed my part of the \$10,000.00 Media Center Budget. I took care of all print resources, periodicals and instructional supplies. The other secretary handled the equipment and technology budget.

As I looked at the suggested activities I decided to focus on the collaboration, training teachers, and instruction with students. Since I work full time I have been working on my practicum over the last year. I think I have done some really neat projects and co-teaching with middle school students and staff. I also decided to spend some time working with the public library over the past summer. I think in order to be truly a lifelong learner you need to be a library user. So I hooked up with the teen librarian for a really neat summer program.

Last spring I signed up to do a District Teacher Workshop on using web tools in the classroom. I worked with a 7th grade social studies teacher named Pat Grove. Pat is about the same age as me and I think that it was really easy for me to collaborate with her on teaching a workshop for teachers. Pat guided me through the process of getting our workshop on the district summer schedule and then she turned it over to me. We met briefly to discuss what we wanted to teach and then she went on vacation! When she got back I had it all planned down to the hand-outs. We met two days before the workshop and she seemed pleased with my plan and the handouts. I thought it went really well except that we ran out of time for the last tool—I Picassa3. I worked with some teachers individually over the summer. Teachers got CEU's for our workshop. I did my evaluation online in Google Docs—survey/test. I thought it was really neat since we were talking about using web 2.0 tools in our everyday life. Only 2 or 3 of the teachers actually did the survey. I asked the district for their paper survey they only got 3 as well. There were 8 participants.

There were about 12 choices for the district's free summer workshops. I received positive verbal feedback from those who took the workshop and they were really excited using the tools and talking about ways to use them in their classrooms. I also took advantage of attending 2 other workshops! ☺ I didn't take the hours for our Tech in 20 training that we did in the late spring—somehow in the computer switch with my new job I have lost that paper work. Tech in 20 was four 20 minute tech sessions after school. The technology resource teacher, the gifted teacher and I choose the four classes and co-taught them. Our focus was a lot of 1:1 attention for the teachers that attended. We had eight staff members take part in social bookmarking, flip video cameras, Google tools and big huge labs. So teaching the teacher was one area I had no experience in so that was one of my selections for practicum experience.

Collaboration with teachers and co-teaching was also an area where I had not ventured in my role as a secretary. I spent a lot of time on two classroom projects, one was Implementing Web 2.0 tools in the Classroom and the other was the Collaborative Project with Literature. I worked with a variety of teachers, each had different teaching methods and classroom management skills. I think I went into detail in each journal on what went well and what had room for improvement. The nice thing about doing the same class with different teachers was that I had more confidence each time I did the class. All the staff was really easy to work with and treated me as a professional and an equal. I love spending time with students in the instructional and coach mode. One project that I did not write up or take the hours on was the historical fiction that the students read on the Civil War and then I set up a wiki for the students to use to share about the books that they read. That was a cool way to assess students' knowledge collaboratively. I enjoyed my time collaborating with teachers.

I did not do an extensive assistive technology project but a series of small ones. I was frequently sought out by the intervention specialist for ways to adapt learning. These teachers are truly angels—they have to be creative, differentiate on many levels and have the patience of Job. I have in my nursing career spent a lot of time in using technology to overcome disabilities that we encountered. I love the special education students I worked with this year.

Data analysis is definitely not one of my favorite areas but I think I chose a neat one to assess. I chose the TRAILS assessment from INFOhio. It is a great tool to assess information literacy skills with. I met with the 8th grade teacher, set up the accounts and supervised the students taking the online test. The results of this test are not only of great interest to me but also for Language Arts Standards as well. This teacher was out on maternity leave so her actual signature is not on the paper but I sent her the information and she emailed it back to me with her name and comments. This was a great activity to do just before Christmas break. I think the results are very good because it is a ninth grade test that our 8th graders took mid-year. I sent these results on to the principal and discussed with the 7th grade to use this as a common assessment in fall of this year.

The last two projects that I want to talk about are the summer reading programs. The summer 2009 project was an enrichment program open to 7th and 8th graders. Get Connected this Summer @ Nagel was a program I designed and implemented. I had about 30 participants in all. I had a great time doing this program and the kids loved the technology. I wish the kids were more interested in summer reading but I just couldn't coax some of them into checking anything out. I tried to remember that my focus was fun! My strengths are in designing the handouts and brochures and in working with students. This past summer I chose to work with the public library so that I got a better handle on what services they offer to teens, programming, and how schools can support the public library program. When I met with the teen librarian she wanted me to do technology since that is an area she was lacking in. I laid out the program to the teen librarian and her boss and they loved it. I was even asked if I would talk about web 2.0 tools at their monthly Teen Services Meeting. That was great fun meeting 40 other teen librarians. The library works on a much smaller scale than what I am used to working with. Ann was happy with our 6-7 participants that came weekly—I like to work with somewhat bigger classes. This time our technology had a purpose. All the web tools we used we put to making book trailers or posters to promote teen books. This was a great experience for me—I enjoyed the hours learning the roles and responsibilities of a public librarian as well as their mission and vision.

My supervisor was Tracy Varner, she was the Technology Coordinator for the district and oversees the Media Specialist in the district. The Media Specialist report to their principals but support and professional growth comes from Tracy Varner. Tracy was very easy to work with and be very supportive. I am appreciative that the District allowed me as many hours as I wanted and that they treated me with kindness, respect and as a professional. I am glad that I looked outside of the school for some practicum experience because knowing the community helps to know the school stakeholders who might eventually be holding my job in their hands!

I feel my strengths (in relation to the practicum experience I sought out) are in taking risks with new technology, working with students, collaborating with staff, creating, dreaming, designing instructional materials and being innovative. My weaknesses are in the area of lesson plan design and data analysis. I hope with more practice these both will improve.

I believe I am a good example of a lifelong learner but I look forward to December when I have reached my goal—graduation. I know my learning is not over—I love to attend literature and tech conferences and who knows you might just see me in some distance learning workshops and classes through Kent State. Thank you for helping me to reach my goal.

This completes my requirements for ITEC/Library Media Practicum

Respectfully submitted

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Karen J. Reiber