

March 14, 2009

Dear Alverno Student of ED 201,

I am continually astounded by the things I have been able to accomplish through my education at Alverno College. The process of creating my Educator's Portfolio has given me an insight in to how the *Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Licensure* and the *Alverno Education Abilities* have guided my development as an educator. Initially the standards were something I focused on developing in isolation of each other, now I see them as integrated and dynamic aspects of my professional development. I also am able to view the standards not as merely things that educators should strive to achieve but frameworks that will help propel them to greater skills for themselves and their students.

When I first began my 201 field class I thought that the standards were a type of checklist. That an educator had to achieve all the knowledge, performance and disposition skills within that standard to show their ability to utilize that standard in their classroom practice. I now realize that just as it is with our students there are a variety of ways that teachers can show their understanding of each standard. In addition, these skills do not grow and develop in isolation of each other but as one skill develops another can be nurtured. This can only be done if the student of education seriously considers the impact that their learning will have on the student. If we want our students to be dynamic learners then we too must be willing to learn.

I also see the standards and the educational abilities as tools for me to utilize in order to continually reflect on my professional development. If a lesson was not as successful as I had hoped, I first look to the standards and abilities evaluate my performance in light of such understanding. I also consider what I could have done to improve upon the lesson or provide for the students. Only then can I focus on what the students could have done to improve the lesson outcome.

As I am nearing the completion of my coursework here at Alverno College, you are just embarking on what is sure to be an eye opening journey. If I were to offer up advice I could continue this letter for many pages. In short, I would suggest that first and foremost a student of education be absolutely clear why they are interested in teaching and aware of the impact they will have on future generations. Contrary to what some may believe, teaching is work, hard work but work worthwhile. To be a great educator it is imperative to have an understanding of the effective methods and theories that guide the practice. It is also just as important to be ready to adapt and adjust as new knowledge and information furthers our understanding of learning and education. Be aware of the philosophies that guide your educational practice and understanding. Realize that those philosophies may be strengthened, challenged or changed as a result of your development. Above all never let your philosophies stand in the way of a child's education.

By having a clear understanding of the philosophies that have guided my professional development and utilizing the standards and abilities as a self assessment tool, I have been able to see my growth as an educator. This has become even clearer as I am putting together my education portfolio in order to demonstrate my preparedness to teach. By establishing goals for myself in light of the standards and abilities, I have had a focus by which to improve my skills. It has also been a source of great encouragement. If ever I doubt myself or lose sight of my purpose I can look to the goals I have established as a way of reiterating my progress and clarifying my purpose. It has been worth the ounce of effort to consistently reflect on my performance and reevaluate my goals. This little effort pales in comparison to wandering aimlessly never understanding what destination I hope to reach.

I wish you and your classmates well and congratulate you on the first steps in your educational journeys. May you reach the goals you set out to attain and may the students you touch be all the better prepared for your efforts. Remember, know where you were; know where you are now to know where it is you should go.

Happy Journey,

Carrie Elizabeth Reno