My Narrative 1
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Theme One: The Learner and Learning (Standards 1-3)

"Candidates demonstrate their ability to thoughtfully examine, critically analyze, and insightfully reflect upon their readiness to use an understanding of learning theory, learner development, and learner differences for the design of effective learning experiences in a variety of settings with diverse learners."

Description: Theme one starts with the learner. I will look at three parts of the learner and learning in this first part of the narrative. First, all learners grow in knowledge and understanding and there are a number of generalizations about learner development that are backed by research, such as: cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical patterns that help guide us as teachers to better understand the learning process of our students. For example:

 John Dewey's Theory suggested that students learn best when they are actively involved in their learning process. He believed that learning should be applicable to real-life situations, stimulating learners to understand and then apply their knowledge, thereby strengthening their cognitive skills. His work paved the way for the development of constructivism and problem-based learning, both of which are hallmarks of cognitive learning theories. (Pappas)

Besides recognizing patterns in the learning process, there are also an unsurmountable number of factors to consider when looking how students grow and develop, because not all students learn in the same way, and with each factor considered, learners will respond individually and differently, especially when it comes to their cultural upbringing and beliefs towards education. Moreover, in the last section of this first part I will look at the learning environment that I create as a teacher, along with others, of critical importance in helping provide students with opportunities for positive social interaction, individual and collaborative learning experiences, and self-motivation to help each learner achieve their goals and be the best student they can be.

Likewise, with standards charts and WIDA language developmental charts, we can also look at grade or level descriptors of what students should be able to achieve and adjust our teaching to where are learners are at, and bring them to the next level target. In 2L learning a common theory is the Krasen $i + 1$ model, that takes students from the level they are at and brings them to the next level by not introducing too much at one time. As a teacher I need to look at the various theories of learning and general patterns of development and use them as tools to help understand how my students learn, while also take into consideration learning differences that are presented in Standard 2 as I apply them to my teaching on a daily basis to meet the variety of individual needs that each learner has.

As long as I can remember, I grew up believing the best way to learn something was by doing it. It wasn't until I was in college and started learning about learning styles that I realized I was a

kinesthetic learner, and that other students might be audio learners, who learn best by hearing, and yet some students learn best by seeing, because they are visual learners. This has long influenced my teaching over the years, and helped me to understand that others learn differently. Knowing this, I need to be aware so that I don't teach to my style of learning preference, but to all styles of learning. Besides these learning differences, there are cultural differences, prior knowledge and experiences that are different for each student, and many different strategies that learners use to help them develop language proficiency.

> Each of these choices or strategies offers particular advantages or disadvantages, and the use of an appropriate learning strategy can enhance success with the learning task (Richards and Lockhart 63).

Creating a welcoming learning environment that welcomes diversity and fosters ownership is so important for students. They need to know the importance of self-motivation so they can set goals and take charge of their learning. There needs to be a sense and balance of individual and collaborative learning, where every voice matters, and group learning and problem solving together is praised. We need to model and champion local and global causes and demonstrate respect for all differing backgrounds and perspectives as together promote and encourage social interaction in our communities.

In conclusion, all three of these areas need to be in balance and understood in order to meet each learner's complex needs in the learning process, providing an overall environment where each student can succeed. This is an area as a teacher that I am always cognizant of the ongoing learning curve I am on as I receive new students, learn new ways to make learning exciting and meaningful, and help students excel as individual and collective learners.

Standard 1: Learner Development

"The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences."

Performance Criterion 1.1
> *"Candidates use an understanding of learning theory (in areas such as cognitive, linguistic, social emotional or physical) to design appropriate learning experiences."*

For my first piece of evidence I chose PC 1.1b which is a Constructivism Learning Chart. The reason being is that I often refer to this philosophy of education constructivism chart to remind me that kids learn in many ways, and that it isn't just cognitively. Students also learn through experiences, social interactions, and often build on their prior knowledge as they are engaged in learning. For them, learning is an active process and happens in stages. It is not something that is passive. "A constructivist classroom would encourage discussion and ideas, students work independently, in groups, or with partners, and look at real-world scenarios."

"The application of constructivism in the classroom revolves around the 5Es:

- Engage – Help in identifying the necessity for learning new concepts
- Explore – Learn more about the subject
- Explain – Build explanations and definitions
- Elaborate – Utilize prior knowledge and practical skills
- Evaluate – Evaluate how learning relates to the objectives" (Ravi)

As I create lessons and work with my students, I constantly come back to this chart to help keep me focused as a teacher and incorporate this theory in the learning process. I have found out over the years in teaching that it is good when the rhetoric of my classroom helps kids to engage, explore, explain their ideas, and use skills that help them elaborate their answers, and is multifaceted when it comes to assessments. I want to make sure I am giving students experiences in the classroom that will match what they see outside the classroom and will be practical, so that when they experience language outside the classroom in real life situations, they will be prepared to participate and respond accordingly.

Performance Criterion 1.2
"Candidates use an understanding developmental theory (in areas such as cognitive, linguistic, social emotional or physical) to design appropriate learning experiences."

My second piece of evidence that I picked for 1.2a is Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. I decided on this article, because it explains how kids go through different stages of development. When kids are younger, they think in concrete ways, and aren't capable thinking in the abstract like teenagers can.   Looking at Piaget's theory I can see the stages of development clearly, which in turn has helped me as I craft lesson plans geared at different student grades and levels, since I teach K-12 ELL learners on a daily basis.

This theory is significant because it gives a clear framework for the ways in which children at different ages and stages are capable of learning.   This theory proposes that children move through four different stages of mental development. This means that how children acquire knowledge is important. He was one of the first in his field to do research, and to this day his applications are still being used by educators. (Mcleod)

Analysis: In Standard one I have looked at cognitive development theories and constructivism in the classroom. In my common core there are a few other pieces of evidence that I used with students that touch on both of these ideas. One was an activity where students in sixth grade watched a video and then did three experiments in a group and noted their findings. The rationale was to demonstrate the power of experience in the learning curriculum, instead of just reading the results of a test. The other evidence I used in my common core standards was related to David A. Kilpatrick, Ph.D's book, "Equipped for Reading Success." His book has one-minute activities to help young learners struggling with phonemic awareness. I had reached out to the district instructional coach and she had recommended these one-minute activities to use with a few of my younger students who struggled still with beginning, middle, and ending sounds for one syllable words.

In my analysis of 1.1 I can see how constructivism is the classroom is critical to overall learning for all kids, because kids all learn in different ways. A key take away for me is to remember to focus on prior knowledge and build upon that for my students. Taking kids from what they already know, and bringing them to the next level. This isn't always as easy as it sounds, and there are teaching days that I look back in retrospect, where I could have been more deliberate in connecting student's prior knowledge to a new unit of study.

Standard 2: Learning Differences

"The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards."

Performance Criterion 2.1
"Candidates use an understanding of individual differences to design inclusive learning experiences."

For this performance criterion I picked evidence from PC 2.1b where I made and used flash cards with color photos to use with my entry level 1 students to make a connection with knowledge or experiences they already had in their first language, so I could introduce new vocabulary to our lesson. We were able to do a couple of different exercises, but still stay on the same thread, and focus on teaching one thing a few different ways. Using key visuals like this has many benefits. Mary Ashworth wrote, "Key visuals lower the language barrier. They help students with low attention spans to focus on the Lesson. They present information in a clear and direct way. They provide context for pre-teaching the vocabulary needed for a full understanding of the content to follow." (116)

These flash cards helped lower my students' anxiety level, and created an activity that brought smiles and good memories of different foods they enjoyed in their home country. With two of my younger students, it helped them to stay focused on the task, because their attention span was limited by their age. By learning what foods they were used to having, it helped me to understand their culture better. By asking what their favorite foods were, it helped me to focus on their individual likes and dislikes. And by using pictures, it helped me to do some pre vocabulary exposure activities with my students.

Performance Criterion 2.2
"Candidates use an understanding of diverse cultures and communities to design inclusive learning experiences."

For my next piece of evidence in PC 2.2a I selected a book called, "Tokyo Friends," that introduces two different cultures in a fun and friendly way for learners of all ages, but I specifically used it for a segment I did in a 1ˢᵗ grade class on cultural awareness. This was a great way to introduce diverse cultures and communities as we touched on the languages we use,

the greetings we use, the ways we eat food, how kids go to school, and other different customs. The kids enjoyed learning to bow, count to five, and take their shoes off as we sat on our area rug. We also learned that different isn't wrong, and that we need to embrace differences. With older kids I might have them do a Venn Diagram comparing this book to their own culture. Using a book about kids I think is a great way to introduce kids to different cultures in a non-threatening environment. "Literature can foster a sense of self and community for both individuals and groups." The Power of Literature: How it Shapes Society and Culture. (Ardaa)

Analysis: In looking at 2.2a and the power of a good book to teach lessons in cultural diversity can be an immeasurable tool when used to create a learning environment that welcomes diversity, culture, and community values. There are so many good books available for teachers to access. The biggest struggle I have is finding time to intentionally look at and read newer books coming out on the market. This has been a favorite of mine for a while for younger kids, but I'm sure there are other books that also have great cultural values.

Where can one find good books that teach cultural values? One place where there are usually many resources available are at state and international TESOL conventions. The booths have lots of materials available as well as some of the sessions, where sometimes copies are given away. In evaluating my evidence for the book, "Tokyo Friends" it might not be a good choice for teenagers, so I need to consider other age appropriate materials that represent the importance of incorporating learner experiences and different culture awareness values for my older students. Working with such a range of ages on a daily basis, I wonder if it would be a good idea to make a list of certain books for different age groups that teach about cultural diversity and inclusiveness.

Standard 3: Learning Environments

"The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation."

Performance Criterion 3.1
"Candidates design learning environments that support individual learning marked by active engagement."

For my first evidence I used 3.1b to focus on individual learning by active engagement. I made a power point presentation on reading and writing goals to help "Student A" take ownership of his learning and help him set measurable goals. The rationale for using this metacognitive strategy was to help motivate him on the importance of setting goals, making a plan, and working to reach his goals. Part of the reason for doing this was to find ways to use intrinsic motivation in classroom. I wanted him to see the value and satisfaction of accomplishment for the joy of what it is. In an article called, "Intrinsic Motivation: How Internal Rewards Drive Behavior, the author writes," People are more motivated when they pursue goals with personal meaning and when attaining the goal is possible but not necessarily certain. These goals may also relate to their self-esteem when performance feedback is available" (Cherry)

With this student it was important to check in along the way as offer feedback and make adjustments as needed. When students reach goals it also important to recognize their achievement and then work with them on what their next goals should be. Another student who I see every day has a goal on my whiteboard that he checks off every day when he comes to see me. The sense of self pride he has at the end of the week is so rewarding. We have increased his goal three times now in the last six months and he has made improvements in leaps and bounds. Experiencing this in my classroom on an ongoing basis makes me more aware of the importance of designing lessons that incorporate an individual learning component.

Performance Criterion 3.2

"Candidates design learning environments that support collaborative learning marked by positive social interaction."

Where the first part of Standard 3 looks at individual learning environments, the second part looks at the importance of learning environments that support collaborative learning with positive social interaction. The evidence for 3.2b relates to an intensive summer program for Asian high school students, preparing for a year of studies here in the U.S. This was held at a college campus outside of Madison, Wisconsin and offered through University of Wisconsin.   I taught a 10 day curriculum for 3 summers before Covid-19 that concentrated on cultural awareness, conversational English, and academic readiness. For this evidence I did an activity that is called, speed conversations. We lined up chairs facing each other with ten students on one side and ten on the other side. They started out by introducing each other, asking and answering simple questions to get to know each other, and then ended their conversations. When I called out, one side of students moved over one seat and then they would start over. This was one of their favorite activities, and generated a lot of laughter as they were practicing what we were learning in our classroom.

There are many different components that make a collaborative learning environment one marked by positive interaction with others.   As a teacher I think for me it comes down to building a safe environment with mutual respect and understanding for various different cultural backgrounds, and giving opportunities to students, through the use of different strategies to enable them to rely on one another to help accomplish tasks. From teaching.cornell.edu, "Research shows that educational experiences that are active, social, contextual, engaging, and student-owned lead to deeper learning. " (Center for Teaching Innovation)

Analysis: Performance Criteria 3.2 states," Candidates design learning environments that support collaborative learning marked by positive social interaction."   For this I chose the interactive Speed Conversations I used at University of Wisconsin's summer program for Asian international high school students. This activity supports the performance criteria by creating a fun, intentional way for students to practice conversational skills and small talk with their peers in a non-threating environment. Students afterwards shared what they learned through the experience and there was a sense among all students that this was a helpful activity as well as an enjoyable experience in learning. They also mentioned that it boosted their self-confidence in social interactions.

For me personally, it was an activity that I feel met the performance criteria because everyone got to participate and engaged in an energetic way, with laughter, smiles, and felt it helped them overcome speaking in English with their classmates. It was also successful because it boosted student self-confidence in speaking with others. As I reflect, I wonder if this type of activity could be used with many other categories or topics of English instruction and not just starting conversations and small talk, such as, topics at school lunch tables, weather, or weekend activities.

Reflection:

This has been a good process to remind me once again the various theories of how learners grow and develop, some of the generalizations associated at certain ages and stages in the learning process, what some of the individual learning differences are, the impact of diversity of cultures, and the importance of creating environments that support individual and collaborative learning that promote positive social interaction. I have learned that all are important and need to be in balance to create the best learning environment for students to be able to thrive and succeed. I feel like these standards are similar to a three-pronged stool, where when one leg is absent, the stool will fall over.

Personally, I see my preferences in focusing on certain areas such as learner strategies, or creating supportive and welcoming learning environments for all students, but there are other standards to consider in helping students grow and learn. Making sure as a teacher I continue to learn and stretch my understanding of the learning process through ongoing professional development, collaboration with other teachers, discussions with my supervisor, conference attendance, seminars, WIDA webinar trainings, and state sponsored Zoom meetings with our Vermont representative, Stephanie Vogel has been beneficial in helping me continue to keep on the cutting edge of education, and at times alter some of my previous understandings on language learner development and my willingness to try new things. One such example, was some recent changes with a first grade ELL student struggling still with phonemic awareness. After reaching out to his teacher, my supervisor, and our district instructional coach, we are now trying a new activity with one-minute exercises as I shared in my core standard 1.1c evidence on "Reading Success, by David A. Kilpatrick." Although I am familiar with the Heggerty curriculum, I think that next year for professional development I will focus some of my training on early education phonemic awareness and how to incorporate more activities such as the one I mentioned above with some of my early learners.

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