

My Internship Experience
Michigan State University College of Education

In the fall of 2007 I began my year-long experience as a student intern in a second grade classroom at Midway Elementary in Holt, Michigan. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience and learned many best-taught practices from an experienced teacher and mentor, Denise Schaffer. Mrs. Schaffer guided me in learning new instructional practices and gave me a lot of freedom to use these practices in her classroom. The most important thing I learned while student teaching was about classroom modifications and differentiation. While student teaching I spent a lot of time working with an individual student who needed more academic support in reading instruction. I worked with this child during the school day as well as an hour after school twice a week. I created many challenging literacy games and activities as well as gave him different strategies to use to read accurately and build comprehension. I assessed his progress on reading fluency, accuracy and comprehension using instructional level books and Fountas and Pinell Running Record Assessments. I attended Holt professional development meetings and followed the guidance of my mentor teacher to learn these instructional techniques.

As well as working individually with my students, I also worked with nine talented and gifted second grade students, teaching “Equations Club” every Monday during our math block. During this time I created activities to push their thinking and mathematical reasoning. These second graders developed strategies to fluently memorize their multiplication and division tables, they learned and practiced the “Order of Operations” and worked as a group to solve challenging story problems dealing with money. I was amazed at these students’ abilities to tackle challenging problems and answer open-ended questions.

Both of these experiences, as well as my everyday classroom experience taught me the importance of differentiation and classroom modifications. As a teacher I work hard to accommodate all of my students’ needs, whether that means giving students more scaffolding or extending an activity to make it more challenging. Whether my students are academically struggling or exceeding classroom expectations, I always challenge them within their Zone of Proximal Development. I developed the foundation for this understanding during my year of student teaching and continue to practice this belief in my own classroom today.

During a year of student teaching under Michigan State University’s College of Education program, I also attended classes and earned 9 Master level credits that I have now transferred towards the MAED program. In these classes I learned best-taught practices, behavior management techniques, and developed a carefully structured portfolio, which helped me organize my work and gave me the skills to tackle the competitive job market and earn my first teaching job. I am extremely grateful to my instructors, as well as my mentor teacher, who all gave me the knowledge and experience to make me the teacher that I am today.