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Self-Study Portfolio: Sandra Montanez

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Final M.Ed. Self-Study Portfolio

M.Ed. Teacher Leadership

College of Education

Self-Study in Teacher Leadership

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Table of Contents

1. **Abstract**

The school administration believes that we are all collectively responsible to not only form a partnership with our families and interested stakeholders in support of their children's academic achievements but also, to develop a sense of community. Prior to the pandemic, our school hosted various events throughout the year and will continue to do so in the future. I noticed the higher the grade level, the less parental involvement in student education. This is a problem of practice that began my inquiry project to answer why this is happening. As the Hispanic population continues to grow, there is a growing consensus among my colleagues that there is less and less parental involvement. My inquiry project endeavors to answer: (1) How to increase parental involvement of ELLs? (2) How to change the mindset of ELL parents? and (3) What are strategies for educating parents as to the importance of family involvement in education? The expectation is that my inquiry project will result in strategies for educating parents as to the importance of their involvement in the education of their children as well as strategies to bridge the gap between school and home.

Final M.Ed. Self-Study Portfolio

2. **Introduction**

I am a Spanish teacher at a K-4 elementary school as well as an adjunct professor at a community college. I have an ESL certificate and teach ESL adult literacy to ELL parents in the community. My journey into teacher leadership began with my problem of practice that fits in with Domain VI of the standards with regard to parent outreach. I understand that families and every stakeholder involved in a child's life has a major impact on student learning and achievement. Through my parent outreach, I am able to connect with the families, the culture and the community. All of these components are essential to educating a child. Since I speak Spanish, I am able to serve as liaison between the school and the ever-growing ELL community. Through collaboration with my colleagues, collectively we are able to engage in collaboration with all interested stakeholders (families, administration, teachers, the community etc.) in order to heighten student learning and increase academic achievement.

3. **Portfolio Assignment 1 Reflection: Domain I**

Portfolio Assignment 1 Reflection

Domain I: Fostering a Collaborative Culture to

Support Educator Development and Student Learning

Sandra Montanez

Rowan University

July 13, 2021

1. *Utilizes group processes to help colleagues work collaboratively to solve problems, make decisions, manage conflict, and promote meaningful change.*

I am a Spanish teacher in a K-4 district. As I continue to progress and grow into a teacher leader and in order to support professional development as well as student learning, I must do what is necessary to foster and nurture a collaborative culture. In this domain, the purpose of the teacher leader is to work with colleagues to solve problems, make decisions and encourage meaningful change. A teacher leader leads discussions, is a good listener and is sensitive to the needs of others

I read an article that relates to this domain with regard to how to encourage meaningful change. I found it to be a useful source because it specially details 8 steps, we can apply to change how things are done. As a teacher leader I can use the findings in this research to improve instruction and tackle organizational and instructional change. This article provides valuable insights on ways I can influence others and lead change. (Cooper, Kristy S et al, 2015)

Evidence of collegiality, trust, and respect is reflected in a PLC group project completed for a class assignment. Addressing each stage of group development allowed our group to establish a professional learning community that enabled us to work collaboratively, trust each other in completing our portion of the project and respecting each other personally as well as professionally.   My reflection on this course details what I have learned about the importance of collaboration in order to be the change we want to see in our school. (Montanez_MA3)

2. *Models effective skills in listening, presenting ideas, leading discussions, clarifying, mediating, and identifying the needs of self and others in order to advance shared goals and professional learning.*

In a PLC for a previous class, it was vitally important to not only work together for the good of the group but we also had to be sensitive to the needs of others in order to accomplish our goals and complete the group project. There have been times in my current position and involvement in school project/events, when I may be feeling under the weather or tired after a long stressful day. However, I know I need to set that aside and model effective listening and speaking skills, present ideas, and lead discussions in order to accomplish the task at hand. Another example would be when I know a colleague may have a struggle either on a personal or professional level. I realize that I have to demonstrate genuine concern, compassion and empathy in order to create a positive environment that would foster a collaborative culture. Encouraging a collaborative culture is extremely important in order to be productive, build self-efficacy, exposure to different perspectives and of course, two or more minds are definitely better than one. According to Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2020, there are five important reasons to collaborate with our colleagues, "… when conducting research, develop fluency in teacher talk that is important for student learning, there is safety and strength in numbers, and it builds teacher efficacy." When I am involved in my parent outreach PLC, I am forever cognizant that my role is to work with my colleagues in order to bring about positive and meaningful change. I feel that being a life-long learner, mentor and peer coach are all things that facilitate the educational development of not only myself but that of my colleagues. As a teacher leader, I am a role model and believe in presenting myself in a professional matter which includes modeling not only effective leadership skills but effective listening and speaking skills as well.

3. *Employs facilitation skills to create trust among colleagues, develop collective wisdom, build ownership and action that supports student learning.*

It is important for a teacher leader to build trust and ownership among their colleagues in order to support student learning. The motto in my school is that everyone is collectively responsible. When interacting with my colleagues in group settings or in a PLC, as a teacher leader I am required to model effective skills, be empathetic and show genuine concern for my colleagues. This is important in gaining trust and ensuring a collaborative effort that will ultimately be productive in heightening student learning. Hispanic Heritage Month celebration is an annual event that I created and spearheaded at my school. Again, this is an opportunity to create a PLC wherein committees are formed and meetings are held in order to collaboratively solve problems of where to get food, flyer and program design, interpreters, and crowd control just to name a few. Along the way many decisions need to made and you have to expect there will be times when the need for conflict resolution arises. This event has a positive effect on our ELL population which is an important element in promoting meaningful change in getting our ELLs involved in the education process. The involvement of my colleagues in putting together the Hispanic Heritage Month celebration is a labor of love where we all claim ownership of our part in bringing this event to fruition.

4. *Strives to create an inclusive culture where diverse perspectives are welcomed in addressing challenges; and*

The function of a teacher leader is to appreciate cultural diversity and is an advocate for equity and social justice. Participation in parent outreach in my school is a passion of mine that began at my school and is now a district wide initiative. As a teacher leader, this program requires me to collaborate with my colleagues on a monthly basis in order to promote parental involvement

of our ELL community in the educational process. Because of my ethnic background, I understand our ELL population and I am able to impart this knowledge on my colleagues. In addition, the knowledge I have gained in the teacher leadership program has helped build my own self-efficacy as a teacher leader which allows our collaborations to be more productive. The parent outreach committee is a group of colleagues from different cultures and diverse perspectives that is conducive to addressing the many challenges our district faces. Furthermore, to leverage my social position as a teacher leader in order to build more equitable practices and structures in my school, it is important to conduct observations and engage in reflective meaningful discussion with my colleagues and administration. As a result, collectively we will be able to be culturally responsive to our students' needs and build equitable practices and structures. Although the creation of a district-wide parent outreach is relatively new, it has already proven to be an effective way to create an inclusive culture with diverse perspectives that addresses current challenges in our district.

5. *Uses knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, and languages to promote effective interactions among colleagues.*

Although our district has a large population of ELLs, our staff is not diverse. My involvement in parent outreach is not only to increase ELL parental involvement in education, it also provides an opportunity to expose our faculty and administration to the increasing cultural diversity in our district. According to the most recent NJ Performance Report, 70.7% of our student population are Hispanics and only 11.7% of our staff. The ratio for Black or African American students is 20.8% with 16.7% teachers in our school. The ratio of white students is 6.3% however teacher percentage is 68.3%, (rc.doe.state.nj.us). These statics prove the need for me, because of my own Hispanic heritage, to impart my knowledge and understanding of different backgrounds and

ethnicities to promote not only effective interaction among my colleagues, but it enables my

colleagues to considers various perspectives as well as value and respect cultural diversity.

Therefore, it is imperative that as a teacher leader, I foster and nurture a school culture that

respects diverse cultures and perspectives in order to promote social equity. I am able to

promote effective interactions among my colleagues through parent outreach, the Hispanic

heritage annual events, and cultural workshops that have included the history of Latin music and

dance lessons. Workshops have also included immigration lawyers in order to educate our ELL

families of their legal rights. These types of events are educational and informative for all who

attend including my colleagues.

6. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

7. *References – (See Reference Page)*

4.   Portfolio Assignment 2 Reflection: Domain II

Portfolio Assignment 2 Reflection

Domain II: Accessing and Using Research to Improve Practice and Student Learning

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July 19, 2021

1. Works with colleagues to access and analyze research to inform teaching strategies

Involvement in parent outreach in my district requires me to access and analyze research. I have had to work with my committee members in developing surveys as well as obtaining data from NJ Performance report in order to be informed as to our demographics, teacher-student ratios, testing results as well as a multitude of informational data. This is critical data that drives our decisions regarding instructional material and practices that ultimately determine where we need to be focused regarding our teaching strategies.   As a teacher leader, I understand how research can impact one's practice and student learning because new information gathered through research is informative, guides our practice, keeps us abreast of best practices in our field of expertise which in turn improves our pedagogy. In addition, teacher leaders help colleagues analyze and interpret data in order to improve not only their learning but that of the student.

In analyzing the data for Fundamentals of Curriculum course, in terms of the implications for my school, I first looked at data for the town of Lindenwold. I work in the district however; I do not live in the town and was curious to learn about its population. I discovered that the population has declined by -2.20% since their most recent 2010 census at a rate of -0.25% annually. I am led to believe that the Hispanic population makes up most of the "Other Race." In comparing the population of the town with that of the school, I was confused since according to the data, our school is approximately 70% Hispanic. I quickly realized, however, that many of those students are undocumented.   Immigration is an important issue in our district as well as the fact that most of the school population, in general, tends to be transient. The research shows that although many school districts are well funded, have made efforts to address the concerns of our ELL community and have the necessary resources, disorganization still exists. Investigating my district revealed disorganization in our Title I district and the fact that we are not maximizing our

available resources. In addition, as a teacher leader I have a duty and obligation to question

problems of practice and conduct research on a regular basis in order to satisfy my inquiry. My

function is to impart this knowledge onto my colleagues if we are to be student advocates,

promote instructional strategies and increase student achievement. This aligns to this domain as

it demonstrates my understanding that this is a critical component of a teachers' ongoing learning

and development. The ability to access and analyze research and share this knowledge and

information with my colleagues, I believe develops a climate of trust and a willingness to

collaborate and exchange teaching strategies.

Another field of research was in my Teacher Leadership & Learning Communities. Extensive

research proved invaluable in establishing and maintaining professional learning communities

(Montanez_MA2). The research collected in this course has been and will continue to be a

frequently used resource tool. Research arms me with the tools I need to be an effective leader

in order to inform my colleagues on a variety of instructional strategies. I have learned about the

power of teacher leaders, how to influence others, shared leadership, and ingredients for an

effective PLC just to name a few. We are all aware of how the Covid19 Pandemic has thrown

everyone into uncharted waters, so it was research regarding virtual PLC that facilitated remote

teaching. Analysis of this research not only validated but confirmed that much of what I have

been doing is appropriate.   For example, integrating technology as a collaborative tool, utilizing

virtual platforms such as Google Suites and conducting surveys. This is something I was able to

use in order to conduct a survey of our ELL families in connection with parent outreach,

(Montanez_Assignment2-Artifact 3).

   2.   *Collaborates with institutions of higher education to improve teaching and learning.*

I actively seek professional development and opportunities to grow in my profession through participation in professional organizations, i.e., Foreign Language Educators of NJ (FLENJ) as well as attending webinars and workshops in my field. Two recent collaborations involved attendance at a workshop entitled "Honing your Language Leadership Skill Set." This was an excellent opportunity to engage and collaborate with the facilitator of the workshop, an educator in higher education as well as peers from various levels of education who were in attendance. The objective of the workshop was to, "articulate the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of a successful language leader, set goals for leveraging the influence they have in their roles, practice instructional coaching skills, access resources for building skills as an instructional leader, and reflect on their leadership journey," (FLENJ 2021). Professional development allows me to continuously collaborate with my colleagues in order to improve my teaching and learning, gain new knowledge and best practices, and also engage in dialog that exposes one to varying perspectives.

Another collaboration was a workshop entitled "Ignite Fires to Create Future-ready Critical Thinkers." This informative workshop explores ways to encourage and develop critical thinkers and problem solving in the context of the world language class. Professional development enables me to expand my own knowledge, allows me to collaborate and share knowledge with my peers, obtain strategies for best practices in my field as well as obtain various teaching materials that enhances my pedagogy and builds my self-efficacy. I am a life-long learner which is evident in my desire to pursue an advance degree as well as continued professional development in my content area.

   3. *Informs policies and practices and improves teaching and learning.*

This domain resonates with me, as it should with other educators, since we are always put to the

task by our administrators to review the latest research with regard to best practices. Continuing

education regarding policies and practices, not only keeps me abreast of best practices in my

content area, but as a teacher leader, I am able to impart new policies, ideas and best practices

with my peers in order to improve on instructional materials as well as learning and

implementing new teaching strategies.

The research of Arias and Morillo-Campbell (2008) addressed an inquiry of mine on how to

promote ELL parental involvement. They recommend implementing programs that are

culturally relevant and provide language support through the use of native speakers or

translators, fund programs that reciprocate school/parent community involvement, and support

teachers who recognize "community funds of knowledge." To that end, I was able to utilize this

and other research to support my request, to administrators and faculty, as to the need for

bilingual instructional resources if we are to promote ELL parental involvement in education of

their children. An example of this was when I convinced my school to give our ELL families the

Spanish version of our math books that were collecting dust in the closet, bookshelf or hidden

away in a corner. As a teacher leader, I believe active research is a critical component of the due

diligence necessary to support any type of inquiry stance if I am to inform my colleagues of

policies and practices that can improve our teaching and learning.

   4. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

   5. *References (See Reference Page)*

5. Portfolio Assignment 3 Reflection: Domain III

Portfolio Assignment 3 Reflection

Domain III: Promoting Professional Learning for Continuous Improvement

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July 26, 2021

1. *Collaborates and facilitates for team approach to professional development with colleagues and school administrators to address learning goals using technology.*

As a teacher leader, I understand that professional development is never ending. As indicated, the very nature of our profession is constantly evolving due to new advances in technology. My need to participate in a global society requires me to constantly educate myself and my colleagues in order to develop 21st century skills. This not only benefits our students but as educators, we are also put to the task of being able to compete and be productive members or become obsolete. That being said, it is imperative for teacher leaders to collaborate with all stakeholders in order to plan professional development/learning wherein everyone is on board (team effort) with regard to our professional learning. Professional learning needs to be sustainable and aligned to content standards as well as to the goals and mission of the school district. Teacher leaders continue to collect, disseminate and analyze data regarding the effect that professional development has on teaching and learning.

With regard to collaborating for team approach, according to the article, <u>Shared Leadership: The Essential Ingredient for Effective PLCs</u>, (Wilhelm 2018) the focus should be on shared leadership. This is a very useful book that, although it is a principal's guide, focuses on shared leadership. I believe it is important to work as a team and principals do not always have to be the sole leader. Although it is important for administration to nurture and support PLCs, I feel the idea of teamwork and shared leadership is equally important. In addition, as a teacher leader, it is important to remember that collaborating and facilitating team work can be met with resistance. That being said, I researched an article entitled <u>How teacher leaders influence others and understand their leadership</u>, (Fairman & Mackenzie, 2014) which I found to be very useful because it provides a framework on how to influence reluctant colleagues.

The following are ways I can apply my findings:

- Build relationships with my colleagues in order to help increase not only teacher learning but sharing ideas to increase student achievement.

- Model professional attitudes (i.e., commitment to my own professional learning, openness to different ideas & teaching approaches

- Coaching colleagues

- Collaborate with colleagues in planning, curriculum and instructional practice

- Advocate for change by engaging with administrators, colleagues, parents, community and at the governmental levels

- Engage in more informal leadership collaborations

2. *Provides constructive feedback to colleagues linked to school/district for increased academic performance of students.*

The Analysis of Classroom Teacher Behavior course provided a great opportunity to provide constructive feedback on the pedagogy of classroom teachers in the book. A major assignment was answering questions regarding the pedagogy style through the use of vignettes of classroom teachers and discussion of how the integration of technologies could enhance the lesson. (Montanez_MA1). This class was excellent in that we had to conduct a kind of "peer lab" because not only did we have to read and visualize someone else's teaching style, but we had to question it and reflect on what we would do differently. It taught me how to provide constructive feedback to my colleagues in the real world. I welcome my peers into my class and solicit their feedback in order to increase the academic performance of our students. This class required me to be very specific, detailed and purposeful in my observation of my colleagues. I had to look at the teachers strengthens, weaknesses and their importance. Finally, this particular

assignment forced me to critique every aspect of someone else's pedagogy and my contribution of how I could make it better through constructive feedback. (Montanez_Assignment 3 - Montanez_MA1, Artifact 1).

In my Agency in Teacher Leadership course, we were required to gather data for the final project of the course. I shared data with my colleagues as noted in this assignment regarding technology. "The results of this survey prompted me to have a conversation with our IT department. Feedback from the IT department is that the system was not designed to handle the current demand of distance learning." (Montanez, S., 2021) (Montanez_Assignment1-Pt.3-Artifact2) The function of a teacher leader is to provide constructive criticism/feedback to their colleagues in order to help them become better educators. In order to maintain continuous improvement, it is very important that teacher leaders use newly acquired information and knowledge when planning with and aiding colleagues in professional learning. Therefore, sharing information regarding the limitations of the schools' technology was vital information since students relied upon school issued "chrome books" for distance learning and as educators, we relied on technology in order to increased academic performance of students. I feel this is a perfect example of constructive feedback to colleagues and administrators as to the limitations of our own technology that we were relying so heavily upon. This of course facilitates increased academic performance of our students.

When the pandemic made it clear that we switch to distant learning, I had to educated myself in every way possible regarding various platforms needed for distance learning. My own professional development included but was not limited to: listening to webinars, podcast and attending virtual workshops. In turn, I continuously imparted my knowledge to my colleagues because it is valuable, useful and needed information that is linked to our school/district if we are

to increase the academic performance of our students. The result of my own education and after

much discussion with colleagues and administration, the need for professional development in

the area of distant learning proved fruitful, (Montanez_Assignment 3-Artifact 3 "Email from Dr.

Marc Mancinelli). Our district promoted professional learning when they purchased copies for

all the teachers of a book entitled The Distance Learning Playbook (Fisher, D., Frey, N., &

Hattie, J. 2020). We were required to read and collaborate with our peers at an upcoming teacher

in-service day. It was engaging, interactive and everyone learned something new to improve our

professional learning. I was happy to learn that I was already using a lot of the engaging tasks

indicated in the book.

3. *The teacher leader understands the evolving nature of teaching and learning, established
   and emerging technologies, and the school community. The teacher leader uses this
   knowledge to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning aligned
   with school improvement goals.*

The Distance Learning Playbook mentioned above, is an easy read and includes many resources

that, much to my surprise, includes strategies and interactive activities I already utilize.

Functions and Tools is a section in the chapter that details engaging interactive activities utilizing

technology, i.e., Kahoot, Quizlet, Google Suites, and Flipgrid. These are not only effective tools

to achieve learning goals through the use of technology but is critical for differentiation in order

to heighten student learning. I find these activities have had a positive effect on my student's

ability to remain on task and engaged, especially with our growing ELL population. In addition,

it has expanded my instructional repertoire and some form of these interactive activities is

incorporated in all of my lessons. This is just one of many resources I have used to facilitate my

learning and improve instruction to promote student learning and increase student achievement.

As a classroom teacher and as I continue to grow as a teacher leader, it is apparent to me that our profession is in a constant state of flux and as a teacher leader, I have kept abreast of developing technologies that facilitates instruction to all our students. It is because of this knowledge that I am constantly looking for ways to differentiate. This brings me to another example of the use of technology and that is my use of Choice Boards to deliver my lessons virtually (Montanez_Assignment3 - Artifact 4). This is an opportunity to attempt to meet all students at their academic level through various activities that are academically appropriate. The use of a Choice Board within Google Classroom (Montanez_Assignment3 - Artifact 5) has been well received by my colleagues as well as administration. My attempt to promote, design, and facilitate job-embedded professional learning through the use of a Choice Board is aligned with the goals of my school as is evident by the administrative comment in my teacher observation, (Montanez_Assignment 3- Artifact 6 "Areas of Strength"). Distance learning has been an incredibly hard journey for all involved. I am passionate about my profession and all that it entails and because of it, I will always endeavor to find new and interactive activities that are fun, engaging and informative for our students. Distance learning has only heightened my need to promote and design lessons that are aligned with improving our school and that will result in increased student achievement. This pandemic and the new distance learning platforms that developed as a result, forced me to reflect on my passion. As a teacher leader, it is my duty to be role model and influence my colleagues formally or informally any way I can. This is no minor task when I know the future of our world rests with the education we impart on our students. As a result, whenever I am tired or feel what is the point, a nice quote from this book snaps me back. "Your passion did not change because you are teaching from a distance. Make sure that your students know that." (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2020, p.75)

Moreover, with regard to facilitating job-embedded professional learning, <u>The Teacher Leadership Process: Attempting Change Within Embedded Systems</u> (Cooper, Kristy S et al. 2016) is a useful article that as a teacher leader I can utilize to facilitate learning aligned with school improvement goals. As a teacher leader I can apply the following:

- Get everyone involved in order to form a guiding coalition (i.e., admin, teachers etc.)

- Communicate my vision at faculty/specialist meetings, in my conversations, basically anywhere and everywhere I can in order to get my colleagues to try new ideas.

- I can also make sure everybody involved (coalition) especially the powers that be in administration, provide the support needed regarding funds, professional development training etc.

Finally, with emerging technologies we must be reminded that, "integrating technology … motivates, it can be used to introduce a lesson and it would help with classroom management. The expectation is that the use of technology is to enhance a lesson not replace the teacher." (Montanez, S. 2020)

4. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

5. *References (See Reference Page)*

6. Portfolio Assignment 4 Reflection: Domain IV

Portfolio Assignment 4 Reflection

Domain IV: Facilitating Improvements in Instruction and Student Learning

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August 2, 2021

1. *Serves as team leader, mentor, coach, or content facilitator to harness and enhance*

   skills, knowledge, and reflective dialogue with colleagues as they collectively address

   student learning needs.

This domain is specific with regard that as teacher leaders we need to be role models, mentors

and peer coaches. We need to be able to take advantage of the skills and knowledge of

colleagues in order to address the needs of our students and the expectations of our school

district. We have to continue our education in order to be effective and ensure that our

instructional practice is aligned with the school's mission and goals.

Teacher leader standards do overlap as we can see throughout the various domains. The

continued importance of being knowledgeable in all aspects in order to guide our colleagues in

facilitating heightened student learning. My inquiry project for the Teacher Leadership in

Practice and Agency in Teacher Leadership courses, required me to do much research with

regard to increasing parental involvement in education. Because of my parent outreach, it was

critically important to share this information with my colleagues. I truly appreciate this

particular "Consideration" prompt since sharing my newly acquired research knowledge and

skills required me to not only serve as a team leader with regard to the extant literature and best

practices, but I was the content facilitator. A review of the literature/research addresses factors

influencing ELL family involvement in their children's education. These factors include

language barriers, teacher perspectives of Latino culture, expectations on both sides of the

spectrum, family inhibitions, and cultural responsiveness. (Montanez, S. 2021)

(Montanez_Assignment4) Although our school is aware of the language barrier, there are so

many other factors that contribute to student achievement when addressing student needs. The

knowledge I have shared with my colleagues has encouraged reflective and engaging dialogue with them frequently.

   2.   *Collaborative learning of diverse learners using research based best practices.*

A common theme in these domains is the importance of collaboration, the use of research, analyzing data in order to find ways to improve not only our teaching and learning but to improve curriculum, assessment, and the organization of the school, as well as its culture and climate. This domain reminds us that teacher leaders need to engage in reflective discourse with our colleagues that is supported by observation as well as assessment data. It also focuses on the importance of teacher leaders appreciating diversity and promoting instructional resources and strategies that address this issue. I am guided by this Domain with respect to collaborating with colleagues regarding equity in instructional materials and best practices as well as advocating the use of research and data in order to facilitate improvements needed. This leverages my social position as a teacher leader in order to build more equitable practices and structures in my school. In my opinion, as a teacher leader, the feeling of leverage is reached when you feel confident in the facts you have obtained through research, data collection, assessments and the like. Bottom line, it is important to have knowledge of facts if you are going to have an impact on the collaborative learning of diverse learners. The collection of data and analysis affords us the opportunity to see where we can level the playing field in order to meet students where they are academically. It is important to conduct observations and engage in reflective meaningful discussion with our colleagues and administration. As a result, we will be culturally responsive to our students' needs and build equitable practices and structures as a result of research-based practices. "As a teacher leader, our knowledge of research, best practices as well as classroom

data enables us to make informed decisions that will ensure equity in our schools." (Montanez, S.

2021) (Montanez_DQ6)

With regard to collaborative learning, I reflected on a video (Hub, Leading Improvement in

Challenging times 2021) from my Teacher Leadership in Practice course, wherein I was

reminded that leading change is a challenge. This video is a good resource as it details a

framework for honing leadership skills and following a framework if we are to be productive in

dealing with all interested stakeholders, i.e., administration, educators, parents, students. We are

truly living in challenging times, in every sense of the word. The social unrest during the

summer of 2020 has forced the world to face inequity throughout every institution. The

pandemic has changed our lives and as teacher leaders, it would be a good practice to be mindful

of the leadership framework indicated in the video if we are going to be effective as teacher

leaders. Since my goal is to serve my students and collaborate with my colleagues to effectuate

change and improve our conditions, I always need to continue in my due diligence with respect

to research-based best practices. This is why I am a firm believer in continuing education as it

only aids in sharpening my leadership skills.

Furthermore, as a teacher leader, research has shown me the importance of considering the

perception of the educator as well as that of our ELL community when collectively addressing

student needs. Personally, this is a significant factor if we are to engage in "collaborative

learning of diverse learners..." This is of the utmost importance to me since my inquiry projects

focuses on the ELL community and their involvement in the education of their children. This is

an important factor with regard to not only academically diverse learners, but the cultural

diversity that exists in our school, especially since the goal is to heighten student learning and

increase academic achievement. Research has shown "…if we are to foster a relationship that

supports student learning and confront the social inequities that exist in our school district,

teachers, supervisors and administrators need cultural training in order to change their

perceptions as well. Challenging and opposing the issue of social inequality that exists in

education is paramount if we are to increase family involvement and change teachers'

perceptions about the Latino family and the community." (Montanez, S. 2021)

(Montanez_Assignment 5)

3. *The teacher leader demonstrates a deep understanding of the teaching and learning*

   processes and uses this knowledge to advance the professional skills of colleagues by

   being a continuous learner and modeling reflective practice based on student results.

Teacher leaders understand the educational process and use their knowledge to facilitate the

professional development and skills of their colleagues. Only through educating ourselves, will

we be able to help our students navigate the internet and social media in order to connect with a

vast array of resources and the global society. With that being said, I think back to my

Fundamental in Curriculum course and my reflection on Bruner, (1977) and the chapter on

Readiness to Learn. (Montanez_MA3) Because I personally work in an elementary school and

because of my content area, I teach all students at the K-4 level and am considered a

"Specialist." This requires me to have a deep understanding of the teaching and learning

process. According to Bruner, … "any subject can be taught…to any child at any stage of

development." (pg. 33) and there are three ideas we must take into account, i.e., intellectual

development, act of learning and spiral curriculum. Bruner helped further my knowledge

regarding younger students and this information proved enlightening when I shared this with the

other specialists. Because I consider myself a life-long learner, I will continue to share

information acquired either through continued education or professional development in order to

advance the professional skills of my colleagues. As I continue to grow as a teacher leader, I am

reminded that because of my years of teaching experience at this grade level, I am more than

qualified to model reflective practices based on student results.

A function of a teacher is to look for opportunities to improve curriculum, instruction and

assessment. My major curriculum project for this course required me to create a real curriculum.

(Montanez_MA2) This process enabled me to identify areas of improvement in my own content

area. I had an epiphany when I realized that our own curriculum had been in existence for more

than a decade and needed to be revamped. Due to the growth of our ELL population, I saw the

need for cross-curricular curriculum in regards to social studies. "It is crucial to take advantage

of cross-curricular opportunities in order to bring awareness to the current events that affect our

students every day and in every way." (Montanez, S. 2020) (Montanez_MA4) Developing

curriculum in my content area deepened my understanding of the teaching and learning process

because of all of the components to writing curriculum. This project entailed philosophical and

psychological perspectives, curriculum framework, methods of evaluation, the role of key

players and of course, lessons that incorporated social studies and foreign language.

4. *The teacher leader works collaboratively with colleagues to ensure instructional*

   practices are aligned to a shared vision, mission, and goals.

I am fortunate to work with a fine group of educators who share my vision, mission and goals.

My own belief as indicated in my Mission Statement for my Agency in Teacher Leadership

course, is that, "If I am to instill good habits and teach best practice strategies, I need to pursue

professional development in order to be the best at what I do." Also in my statement, I indicated

that as teachers, we are "in a constant phase of planning, goal setting and metacognition." It is no

different as a teacher leader…perhaps more so. Collaborating with my colleagues develops my

own self-efficacy and in turn, I exhibit confidence in my skills and abilities not only as a teacher

but as a teacher leader. (Montanez, S. 2021) (Montanez_Assignment 2) My colleagues have

inspired me and vise-versa with respect to instructional practices and our respective goals in

increasing student achievement. Our monthly faculty meetings provide collaboration with other

"Specialists" who believe in the importance of continuing education and professional

development which results in a productive and stimulating exchange of ideas. The motto in our

school is that we are all "collectively responsible" and therefore it important that we are on the

same page with regard to the alignment of our instructional practice

5. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

6. *References (See Reference Page)*

7. Portfolio Assignment 5 Reflection: Domain V

Portfolio Assignment 5 Reflection

Domain V: Promoting the Use of Assessments and Data for School and District

Improvement

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August 9, 2021

1. *Domain V- The teacher leader is knowledgeable about current research on classroom- and school-based data and the design and selection of appropriate formative and summative assessment methods. The teacher leader shares this knowledge and collaborates with colleagues to use assessment and other data to make informed decisions that improve learning for all students and to inform school and district improvement strategies.*

My professional development enables me to expand my own knowledge, allows me to collaborate and share knowledge with my peers, obtain strategies for best practices in my field as well as obtain various teaching materials that enhances my pedagogy and builds my self-efficacy." (Montanez, S. 2020) (Artifact-Montanez_MA3) As a teacher leader, I am knowledgeable of the current research because it is my duty to keep abreast of not only the data but best practices in all aspects of my profession. In my Analysis of Classroom Behavior class, our Systematic Self-Study assignment required me to analyze my teaching using the Danielson Framework Domains. With regard to Domain 1 subsection d, Demonstrating Knowledge of Diverse Resource, I indicated in part that "I actively seek professional development and opportunities to grow in my profession through participation in professional organizations, i.e., Foreign Language Educators of NJ (FLENJ) as well as attending webinars and workshops in my field. This is imperative if I am to design and select academically appropriate assessments not only pertaining to my content area but necessary if I am to share this information with my colleagues across other disciplinary areas.

The Applied Theories of Learning course gave me the opportunity to analyze key points in the course textbook by Dale Schunk. For me, key points in a particular assignment (Montanez_Assignment3) were the techniques of cognitive modeling in the classroom

environment. Because I teach at the elementary level, this was of particular interest to me. According to Schunk, researchers found that younger children (ages 4-6) did better with verbal modeling because it involved both a verbal explanation and visual demonstration as opposed to older children (ages 7-9) who learned just as well with either. (Schunk p.138) The knowledge I have garnered from reading Schunk in this course "has proven to be quite effective in motivating and building self-efficacy in students." (Montanez, S. 2020) As a teacher leader, my function is to share this valuable information to improve instructional strategies in order to increase student achievement. Using various types of instructional strategies, (i.e., voice-over slides, charts, modeling) are necessary to incorporate as it facilitates in the design and selection of formative assessments. "It is better to use more than one mode of presentation than a single mode." (Schunk p. 162) In addition, the importance of using the instructional strategy of cognitive modeling is vital in order to improve student learning. As described by Schunk, "… cognitive modeling involves not only explaining and demonstrating but verbalizing the thinking process, researchers have confirmed this is a better way to learn. (Schunk p. 136) Also in the instructional application section in Schunk (2020), he identifies worked examples as a visual model. These are graphics showing a step-by-step process for problem solving." (Montanez, S. 2020) According to Schunk, "…worked examples do not have to be limited to the math or science disciplines. (pgs. 161-162) I refer to instructional applications here in my reflection, because as a teacher leader, I understand and know the importance of not only being knowledgeable about current research on classroom and school-based data, but knowledge of instructional strategies will help us design and select appropriate assessment methods across the curriculum. Teacher leaders are aware and knowledgeable of current research on classroom and school-based data and share this information with their colleagues in order to make informed decisions that will

positively impact student learning and advise the school district as well as others, as to suggested improvements. Teacher leaders collaborate in order to interpret data and implement strategies that will increase student engagement and achievement. My awareness of the current research on school-based data, design and assessment methods has been as a result of my review of the extant literature for the numerous courses throughout the Master of Education in Teacher Leadership program.

This domain also resonates with me as it reminds me of an article that is a case study about teacher experiences in a preschool PLC and the important role of documentation (student work). The many uses of data i.e., sharing it with families and other stakeholders, informing instruction, engaging in assessments, and stimulating children's thinking. (Damjanovic & Blank 2017) According to Damjanovic & Blank, various forms of assessments can be defined as "observing, recording, interpreting & sharing through a variety of media in order to deepen learning" (p.568). Damjanovic & Blank state that producing documentation "shifts conversations from sharing fun activities to deeper examination of children and their learning." This can only be done by the collaboration and review of all documentation that includes formative and summative assessments, observations etc. Incorporating and combining documentation and instructional strategies is the foundation that enables us to make informed decisions that will improve student learning and inform all interested stakeholders as to improvement strategies. As a teacher leader, the significant findings in the Damjanovic & Blank article that I will be able to apply when creating and developing professional learning communities are as follows:

- Get in the habit of sharing student work, the "documentation" because it makes teaching and learning visible

- Reflect on my work and other teachers in the PLC

- Provide opportunities to interpret student work

- Think about the importance of the work

- Engage in more in-depth discussion about children's learning, raise questions and engage in group problem solving

2. *Consideration- Promotes the use of assessments to increase the capacity of colleagues to identify, score and implement multiple assessment tool aligned to state and local standards.*

As a teacher and as I continue to grow as a teacher leader, I have and will continue to utilize and promote various forms of assessment methods especially because of our ELL population. This demographic presents to us at varying academic levels, some with and without exposure to formal education. Therefore, in order to level the playing field and in order to make informed decisions that improve learning and instructional strategies, this domain is one that cannot be taken lightly. In this domain, as a teacher leader, my function is to always be mindful of the current research and best practices, if I am to be the advocate my students need me to be and to uphold the integrity of the profession. Collaborating with my colleagues presents opportunities to exchange interdisciplinary content as well as the use of varied assessments and other data in order to make informed decisions that will increase student learning and academic achievement. A few assessments (measures) I use are pre/post assessment benchmarks, traditional (summative) paper-based and formative assessments. During collaboration, I promote the use of alternate/formative assessments that includes work students have completed in various activities before administering the summative assessment. As a world language teacher, I am guided by standards that require me to select culturally authentic material based on a student's proficiency levels. In my context as a Spanish teacher and as a teacher leader, collaboration in the language

department affords me an opportunity to make sure the K-4 elementary schools within the

district are on the same page with regard to the design, implementation, scoring, and

interpretation of student data. World language standards involve three modes of communication,

(i.e., interpersonal, interpretative and presentation) with language proficiency levels of novice,

intermediate and advance. (New Jersey Department of education) Collaboration with my

colleagues ensures that world language standards align with Common Core State Standards for

ELA, History, Social Studies, Science and technical subjects in the areas of reading, writing,

speaking and listening. (Sandrock, 2012) My function is to make sure aspects of the above-

mentioned standards align as follows:

- Interpersonal – includes speaking and listening

- Interpretive – includes listening and reading

- Presentational – includes speaking and writing

The Fundamental of Curriculum Development course provided me an opportunity to submit

examples of multiple variations of assessments. In Artifact - Montanez_MA2 there are examples

of several assessment tools used for an assignment that are aligned to the standards, and serve to

increase the capacity of my colleagues as well. An example of this would be alternate/formative

assessments along the way based on teacher's observation in group activities, response to

discussion questions, research projects, class participation, individual reading assignments and

results of interactive games. I feel this is the best way to evaluate based on students' varying

levels of competencies. "Employing the same metric ignores that students are diverse, unique,

and differing in abilities, interests, values, beliefs, anxieties, dispositions, and often language."

(Ornstein, p.297). Another example would be prior to beginning a unit, there can be a Pre-

Assessment Benchmark rating sheet for both the teacher and the student in order to determine

their knowledge of the subject matter and proficiency in various skill levels.   The end of the unit

test can be a traditional paper-based summative assessment on a unit. Students can also

complete the Post-Assessment Benchmark portion of the rating sheet.

3. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

4. *References (See Reference Page)*

8. Portfolio Assignment 6 Reflection: Domain VI

Portfolio Assignment 6 Reflection

Domain VI: Improving Outreach and Collaboration with Families and Community

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August 9, 2021

1. *Domain VI- The teacher leader understands that families, cultures, and communities have a significant impact on educational processes and student learning. The teacher leader works with colleagues to promote ongoing systematic collaboration with families, community members, business and community leaders, and other stakeholders to improve the educational system and expand opportunities for student learning.*

Teacher leaders understand that it "takes a village" and that includes not only the families, but community and business leaders, political leaders and organizations and cultures. It all impacts the whole process of education and student learning. As a result, the teacher leader collaborates with colleagues to improve outreach with families and the community at large. Again, teacher leaders recognize the cultural diversity within the school and promote effective ways for engaging the community, promoting positive interaction that is not only effective but sustainable over time. Teacher leaders and colleagues are role models who can also effectively teach various skills (i.e., communication and technology skills) to families and the community. Teacher leaders help colleagues take a retrospective look at their own perspectives, beliefs and cultural awareness in order to resolve and understand the educational needs of the school's ethnic population. In turn, such retrospection will help colleagues with the outreach needed to bring about positive change and develop resources and strategies that will address the needs in the community.

This especially resonated with me since I have spearheaded the parent outreach in my school that is now throughout the district. We have been able to break the language barrier due to more bilingual staff and our families know that we are their advocates. We provide adult ESL classes for families within the district as a result of surveys that revealed the adults wanted like to learn English. Our ELL families are learning valuable skills in order to help their children for

example, with distance learning.   We instruct them on strategies for creating simple libraries in

their home using shoe boxes. Delegating an area in the home dedicated to homework. The

importance of creating a "homework time." Homework time should be considered "sacred" and

but for some unforeseen circumstance, homework time should be respected by all in the

household. We have posted instructional videos and various resources to enable them to support

us in educating their children. As a teacher leader, I recognized the need to address this

demographic and administration was totally on board. Parental outreach is an ongoing process

that requires us to continue to look for ways to improve our community outreach and

collaboration. Continuous or "ongoing" interaction and engagement are key because the goal is

for our ELL families to be involved in the education process of their child. This domain informs

us that a teacher leader understands the positive impact that families have on student learning

and academic achievement. My impact project details research, data and strategies that will

enable us to not only be effective, but sustainable over time in order to achieve this goal.

2. *Consideration - Collaborates with colleagues to promote practices designed to foster*
   understanding and interactions of diverse cultures among families, colleagues, and the
   community, of the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures, to develop shared visions
   of the needs for all.

The literature review reveals the importance of not only educating families but equally important

is educating teachers in multiculturalism in order to change their perception of the Latino

community and appreciate cultural diversity. (Montanez, S. 2021) (Artifact 2-

Montanez_Assignment 5). As indicated in my impact project for Agency in Teacher Leadership,

"I have gained an incredible amount of new knowledge to impart on my colleagues in order for

us to be more deliberate and effective in our efforts to promote parental involvement."

(Montanez, S. 2021) (Montanez_Assignment 1-Pt3)

In order to foster understanding and interactions of diverse cultures, I can reflect on my Applied

Theories of Learning course. In this course we had to respond to a discussion question regarding

cultural differences (i.e., roots, language) between teachers and students. This particular

discussion was in regard to the implications of Vygotsky's Social Constructivist Theory.

Knowing there are substantial cultural differences in my district, my suggestion stated in part

that, "Teachers should continue their education and keep up to date with best practices." In

addition, "We need to attend professional developments, engage in peer collaboration and attend

workshops in order to keep abreast of the latest developments in our field. We need to plan

lessons to meet students where they are academically and challenge them to rise above."

(Montanez, S, 2020) This particular "Prompt Consideration" is the foundation of my inquiry

project as it involves strategies to foster understanding and interactions of diverse cultures

among all interested stakeholders. Once I became aware of this domain, I knew it was going to

be the basis of my inquiry project. As a teacher leader, the indicators within this domain remind

me that my function is much broader than just collaborator and facilitator. I must encourage and

nurture a positive culture/climate in and out of the school environment and remain cognizant of

the factors included in this Consideration. The indicators within this domain have been the

catalyst that motivates me to continue to follow my professional passion and commitment to

family outreach. As a teacher leader, I understand the importance of sharing knowledge,

collaborating, modeling and teaching the skills needed if I am to develop a shared vision that

ultimately brings us to fruition in our quest to increase student learning. An assignment in my

Teacher Leadership in Practice course required me to relate my problem of practice to this

domain. In that reflection I indicated that, "I understand that families and every stakeholder

involved in a child's life has a major impact on student learning and achievement. Through my

parent outreach, I am able to connect with the families, the culture and the community."

(Montanez, S. 2021) (Artifact- Montanez_Assignment3) Research supports the fact that family

involvement, collaboration and all the indicators it encompasses, has a huge impact on the

educational process. It is also the reason why I endeavored into my inquiry project entitled

"ELL Parent & Family Involvement in the Education Process" that will become part of my

portfolio.

3. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

4. *References (See Reference Page)*

9.   Portfolio Assignment 7 Reflection: Domain VII

Portfolio Assignment 7 Reflection

Domain VII: Advocating for Student Learning and the Profession

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August 16, 2021

1. *Domain VII: The teacher leader understands how educational policy is made at the local, state, and national level as well as the roles of school leaders, boards of education, legislators, and other stakeholders in formulating those policies. The teacher leader uses this knowledge to advocate for student needs and for practices that support effective teaching and increase student learning and serves as an individual of influence and respect within the school, community, and profession.*

A teacher leader is aware of and understands how educational policy is made at various levels of government. In addition, is aware of the important roles that school leaders have in the creation of these policies. A teacher leader has a seat at these tables and is a participant at the inception of any new rules and policies. Personally, participating during the formation of policies in our district has allowed me to share my knowledge with colleagues, advocate for student needs and collaborate regarding best practices to increase student learning that are aligned with any educational policies implemented at various government and administrative levels. Knowing these roles enables a teacher leader to be a student advocate which is not only our job but our duty and obligation. Knowledge of educational policy is vital in order to be viewed as a person of respect and whose knowledge has the ability to influence others and that includes colleagues, administration and community stakeholders. This domain clearly emphasizes the function of the teacher leader is to advocate for access to various educational support, professional resources, financial support, instructional material, and professional development. In addition, teacher leaders are advocates for continued higher learning…we respect our profession in and out of the classroom.

2. *Considerations*

    1. *Shares information and works with colleagues within and/or beyond the district regarding how local, state, and national trends and policies can impact classroom practices and expectations for student learning.*

I know teacher leaders are guided by the standards and we must be ever mindful of ways that we can improve our pedagogy. Collaborating with colleagues in order to make the change we want to see will ultimately increase student learning. Continual collaboration with my colleagues and the study of teacher leadership has definitely made me aware of new approaches to teaching that will increase student learning. According to Dana (2020), "Systematically studying teaching strategies and techniques can lead to discoveries that would not have become apparent in the absence of systematic study, and these discoveries ultimately lead to new and significant changes in teaching practice." (p. 25) I am an advocate for my students and for the integrity of my profession.

My professional development enables me to expand my own knowledge, allows me to collaborate and share knowledge with my peers, obtain strategies for best practices in my field as well as obtain various teaching materials that enhances my pedagogy and builds my self-efficacy. Parent outreach in my district has proven to have such a positive impact that we now receive state funding to support our efforts.

    2. *Collaborates with colleagues to select appropriate opportunities to advocate for the rights and/or needs of students.*

A teacher leader advocates the use of data in order to facilitate improvements needed. It is important to have knowledge of facts. This can be done by aiding in the collection of data and

analyzing it to see where we can level the playing field in order to meet students where they are academically. It is important to conduct observations and engage in reflective meaningful discussion with our colleagues and administration. As a result, we will be able to be culturally responsive to our students' needs and build equitable practices and structures. (Montanez, S. 2021) (Artifact-Montanez_DQ6-TLP)

3. *Secures additional resources within the building or district that support student learning.*

As a teacher leader, I will continue to secure resources to support student learning. A connection I can share is when parents complained that most of the documentation brought home by their child was in English and they were not able to read English. That was relayed to not only the teachers but to administration. In order to be equitable, documents needed to be bilingual English/Spanish since over 50% of the school's population is Hispanic. Now, every effort is made to ensure everything that goes out for parents is a bilingual document. The district has hired staff to translate documents from English to Spanish. This has proven effective because when the school sends home documents that need to be completed or information is needed, the response has improved significantly. By the same token, instructional materials have also been provided in order to be culturally responsive to our student's needs. If we want parents to help with math, they will need a Spanish version of the student's math book. (Montanez, S. 2021) (Artifact-Montanez_DQ6-TLP)

4. *Communicates effectively with targeted audiences such as parents and community members.*

My involvement in the parent outreach committee allows me to communicate frequently with the families in the community. I speak the language and therefore am able to serve as a liaison

between the teacher, the families and the school district. This aligns with the standards because

in order to promote "effective interaction," it is beneficial to have knowledge of the Latino

culture, be bilingual, as well as have knowledge of the educational system. The ability to

collaborate not only with our colleagues, but with the families and community at large, enables

us to develop strategies to help students become successful. However, we need the involvement

of the family and other stakeholders. (Montanez, S. 2021) (Artifact - Montanez_Assignment 1-

Pt.1)

Through parent outreach I have learned many things from our families and one hurdle we were

able to overcome was the lack of bilingual material. ELL parents were surely at a disadvantage

if they were expected to help their children with homework when they could not even read the

material. Educating and collaborating with families is a never-ending task if we want them to

see the importance of family involvement in education.

5. *Advocates for access to professional resources, including financial support and*
   human and other material resources.

In my Teacher Leadership and Learning Communities, we were tasked with creating an

annotated bibliography. I discovered an article that detailed characteristics that heighten

professional learning. As a teacher leader this is a useful tool as it demonstrates how I can be an

advocate with access to resources. Reflecting on this article reminds me that my involvement in

parent outreach has already resulted in heightened professional learning for myself and peers on

the committee. We are a professional learning community that has financial support that enables

the outreach to be successful. Currently there is funding to support teachers who would like to

continue their education in order to obtain an ESL certificate. This aligns with the characteristics

mentioned in this article with regard to "financial support and ongoing teacher professional

learning." (Owen, 2014). The new superintendent has observed our dedication, passion and determination in our parent outreach and is very supportive and on board with whatever will benefit our professional growth in an effort to heighten student learning.

      6.   Represents and advocates for the profession in contexts outside of the classroom.

 As I continue to grow as a teacher leader, I understand my leadership role requires me to go beyond the classroom. I believe that attending professional development and continuing education are examples of advocating for my profession that serve as positive influences for my peers, colleagues and other professionals. This is an essential element to teacher leadership that allows one to uphold the integrity of the profession. Prior to beginning this teacher leadership journey, I did not realize that modeling professional behavior by pursuing advanced degrees, attending professional development workshops and sharing new instructional strategies has the ability to influence the people around you over time. Modeling this type of professional behavior is an essential part of teacher leadership if we are to be role models who represent, advocate and serve as an inspiration for the profession. In addition, a teacher leader cannot lose sight of the fact that communicating with families and the community is all part of our professional responsibility that extends outside the classroom. The beauty of teacher leadership affords us the opportunity to not be confined to the classroom. The function of a teacher leader is to facilitate the development of programs, curriculum as well as become mentors or master teachers. These are some examples of various avenues we can endeavor to represent and advocate for the profession outside the classroom.

    3. Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)

    4. References (See Reference Page)

10. Portfolio Assignment 8 Reflection - Inquiry Project

Portfolio Assignment 8 Reflection

Reflection on Impact Project (Inquiry Project)

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August 16, 2021

1. Project Summary

My inquiry project endeavors to answer: (1) How to increase parental involvement of ELLs? (2) How to change the mindset of ELL parents? and (3) What are strategies for educating parents as to the importance of family involvement in education? The expectation is that my inquiry project will result in strategies for educating parents as to the importance of their involvement in the education of their children as well as strategies to bridge the gap between school and home. My project aligns with Domain V because the inquiry projects not only encourage the use of school data and assessment but it is almost impossible to improve conditions that exist in our school without collecting and examining the data. In addition, my project also aligns with Domain VI of the standards with regard to parent outreach. I understand that families and every stakeholder involved in a child's life has a major impact on student learning and achievement. This aligns with the standards because in my context, in order to promote "effective interaction," it is beneficial to have knowledge of the Latino culture, be bilingual, as well as have knowledge of the educational system. The ability to collaborate not only with our colleagues, but with the families and community at large, enables us to develop strategies to help students become successful. However, we need the involvement of the family and other stakeholders. Regardless of socioeconomic background or culture, we want students of all backgrounds to be at an equal footing. Collaborating with families enables the teacher leader to communicate the needs of the community. In addition, my inquiry project aligns with the standards in making sure that parent outreach is a collective process that proves meaningful and productive. As a teacher leader it is important to realize the impact of tying together all interested parties i.e., school, families, community in order to heighten student learning and increase student achievement. I have to continue to be guided by the standards and make it a point to avail myself of available research,

data, observations and the like in order to develop a sense of community that will prove advantageous to all.

   2.   *The Rationale/Basis of Inquiry Project*

I noticed the higher the grade level, the less parental involvement in the educational process of our students. This problem of practice was the impetus that initiated my inquiry to answer why this is happening. As the Latino population continues to grow, there is a growing consensus among my colleagues that there is less and less parental involvement. The issue of lack of parental/family involvement in student education is something that, through a more aggressive approach to parent outreach, I can do something about. This has been an observable problem not only throughout my school, but is a systemic issue throughout the district as our ELL population continues to grow. Another reason why I journeyed into this inquiry project are the myths regarding Latino family involvement in education and the assumption they do not care about their child's education. This is something I frequently hear from my colleagues. It is important to dispel these myths because research shows that Latino families are firm believers in education. Concern over their child's loss of cultural identity or just the feeling of disconnect from the school community are just a couple of factors that influence what appears to be a lack of interest in the education of their children. Latino families "...wanted to be more involved…but felt excluded from the school community." (Quiocho & Daoud 2006) In my parent outreach, we collaborate with families to address their needs any way we can but changing their mindset has been a challenge. Not only are we attempting to increase student achievement, but we are also preparing students for 21st century workplace skills and for that we need educational support to continue outside of school.

   3. *How I plan to use the results of my project to impact my teaching.*

My project will have an impact not only on my teaching but will have an impact across the board. As a teacher leader, I understand that families and every stakeholder involved in a child's life has a major impact on student learning and academic achievement. Through my parent outreach, I am able to connect with the families, the culture and the community. All of these components are essential to educating a child. The results of my project will continue to have an impact on my teaching as we return to school in the Fall. Relationships with families and the community will be reestablished and as a teacher leader I can be more effective because I know the needs of our students including our Latino population. My impact project has already been posted on our parent outreach shared Google drive and the reaction from my colleagues has been positive. Results of my research has proven that our efforts have not been for naught. The parent outreach initiative in our district has not gone unnoticed and I am confident we are headed in the right direction. I understand that I am committed to utilizing best practices and strategies in the quest for family involvement in the educational process of our children.

My plan will be to implement activities that will include a parent outreach website (not just a link on the school's website), cultural events wherein families will be part of the planning process and ensure that adult ESL classes for the community continues, (at no cost to them). According to research, these would be considered examples of positive changes that can be implemented that create a warm and inviting environment that facilitates a positive culture and climate within the school.

Since the execution of some activities will require the commitment and participation of my colleagues, it is vitally important to have them buy into my plan. According to Nancy Dana (2020), plan implementation requires a collaborative effort because, … "safety in numbers,

strength in numbers and builds teacher efficacy." This not only demonstrates to the school district but to our families and community as well, that we are united and genuinely committed to making an educational difference. We are all in agreement that the pandemic and distance learning has created a disconnect in school/family relationships. We need our families to feel part of the school community. My plan will definitely facilitate reestablishing school/family relationships that we worked so hard to create prior to distance learning. Developing a rapport with our students and ELL families outside of school, connects to the broader educational plan of increasing student achievement which is another indicator that my plan is successful. According to Poza, Brooks & Valdes (2014), all interested stakeholders at the school level need to be genuinely interested in the community and one of the ways this can be demonstrated is by engaging parents outside of school. Interactions outside of school should include but not be limited to home visits and attending events in the community. Students and families are very excited when teachers show up at their children's soccer or football games or community festivals. This same study mentions that some schools are privileged to have some type of "community/parent liaison" and in our case we are fortunate to have parent outreach.

As I implement the changes in the school, evidence on performance will be more parental involvement which is something that is observable and will have an impact on student achievement. When parents are asked why they want to learn English, hands down the number one reason are to help their child with their homework. Family ability to help their children with homework will have a positive impact and heighten student learning. This is a win-win situation where everyone will reap the benefits. Ongoing developments and evidence of our ELL population performance will continue to guide my inquiry as to what more needs to be implemented going forward.

4. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

5. *References (See Appendix)*

11. Portfolio Assignment 9: Reflection: COGS

Portfolio Assignment 9: Reflection: COGS

Sandra Montanez

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August 23, 2021

1. Introduction

My COGS program was ESL and Bilingual Education. This journey taught me many things and

I can honestly say I really enjoyed each class. I learned acronyms for the different types of

English spoken by the ELL population. First, BICS (Basic interpersonal communicative skills)

which is the everyday, conversational English and takes approximately 1-3 years to acquire.

Another type is what is called CALP (Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency). This is your

academic, content-related English that can take anywhere from 5-7 years to acquire. In addition,

common models of ESL instruction include, CI (Content-based), SIOP (Sheltered Instruction

Observation Protocol), CALLA (Cognitive Academic Language Learning), and SDAIE

(Specially Designed Academic Instruction. The SDAIE model is content-based using various

techniques in order to make content comprehensible. (Echevarria, Vogt, and Short, 2008)

Following is a summary of my signature assignments and a reflection of the many things I

learned as I journeyed into the fascinating world of ESL.

2. List of COGS Courses

- Planning, Teaching, and Assessment in ESL – BLED 40520

- Teaching Bilingual Education: Process and Practice – BLED 40521

- Integrating Language and Content in the ESL/Bilingual Education – BLED 40522

- Issues of Language & Cultural Diversity in ESL/Bilingual Programs – BLED 40510

- Linguistics for Second Language Acquisition for – BLED 40512
  Teaching Second Languages

- Language, Culture and Communication – BLED 40515

- Practicum in Teaching ESL – BLED 40523

3. *Summary of COGS Course Assignments & Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards*

    1. Planning, Teaching, and Assessment in ESL

Since I am unable to identify and match assignments with this course, I will reflect on the course

readings. I will begin with course textbook, <u>Authentic Assessment for English Language</u>

<u>Learners: Practical Approaches for Teachers</u>, (O'Malley & Pierce, 2009) This course and

textbook readings introduced me to the multiple forms of assessments that are consistent with

classroom objectives, curriculum and instruction. These types of assessments reflect what

students are learning, their achievement, motivation and their attitudes regarding relevant

classroom activities. The authors state an important factor in designing assessments is the

purpose of the assessment and the objectives. They suggest a collection of various types of

authentic assessment and adapt them as needed or to just create new ones. Examples of

authentic assessments are oral interviews, story or text retelling, writing samples, projects,

teacher observation and portfolios. In addition to the types of authentic assessment, this course

taught me how to design authentic assessments and the importance of collaboration "build a

team," i.e., teachers, parents, administrators.

In my notes for the course, I had a side note indicating that I liked how the text described the use

of anecdotal records. The chapter on reading assessments regarding reading skills resonated with

me. According to the authors, reading skills should be taught in the context of reading and

writing activities that build on students' prior knowledge and experience (schema). (O'Malley et

al 1996). In my context as a World Language teacher, this is something I have to remember

when creating lessons since my standards should align with the four ELA domains (listening,

speaking, reading & writing) in the Common Core standards.   This chapter touched on what the

professor mentioned in class about "schema" in that learner-centered activities should be based

on what students are familiar with. Finally, I learned that it does not matter your content area, what is important is that there should be collaboration when designing, planning and implementing instruction and assessments. I like how this book separates assessment approaches for various content areas and the list of suggested guidelines for conducting assessments in content areas.

The second textbook was ESL/EFL Teaching: Principles for Success, (Freeman & Freeman, 1998). I found this to be a valuable resource. The chapters in this textbook detail the learning process as well as various methods to teach ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language). The authors have designed the book in a way that each chapter describes how lessons should "…be learner-centered, have meaning and purpose, engage students, develop language and support of first language." According to Freeman & Freeman (1998), an important thing to remember when teaching ESL is described in Chapter Two, *Teaching Language Through Content*. "…reason for teaching language through content is to provide the input students need to develop academic as well as conversational language."

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domain IV & V – The course textbooks align to these standards because they encourage instructional material and strategies that address issues of cultural diversity in the classroom. The Principles for Success textbook defined the importance that lessons need to be well thought out, designed and differentiated. This aligns with this Domain because as teacher leaders our function is to understand that the main focus has to continue to be on the academic levels and learning needs of the individual student. In addition, as a teacher leader, not only am I knowledgeable of appropriate authentic assessments but also the importance of collaborating with my colleagues in the design, implementation, and scoring.

2. *Teaching Bilingual Education: Process and Practice:*

Assignment: Group demonstration of a lesson plan & strategy summary.

The signature assignment for this class was a group lesson plan project. The content selected for the two lesson plans was Language Arts Literacy. The NJCCC focus was on vocabulary and concept development as well as comprehension skills and response to text. The lesson objective was for students to write a short skit in which they would use as many of the new vocabulary words as they could. Students learned the purpose of the skit was to show multiple uses of the same words. The lesson was planned around a children's fairy tale <u>Goldilocks and the Three Bears</u>.

The communication game strategy was taken from one of the three course textbooks, <u>50 Strategies for Teaching English Language Learners</u> (Herrell and Jordan 2008). As indicated in this lesson, the game was academically appropriate for the grade and proficiency level. In addition, it provided opportunities for verbal interaction between the students. The strategy chosen afforded the students an opportunity to use listening skills as well as verbal directions in playing games. The strategies used in the lesson illustrated sound principles of Bilingual/ESL instruction because students were engaged in meaningful social interaction as they worked together in a group. It was learner centered because the lesson began with something students knew about, (fairy tales) and the activities were based around that interest. The lessons involved the students in the four language domains (LSRW) and guided by the WIDA CAN DO Descriptors. (Montanez, S. 2010) (Artifact- Group demonstration of a lesson plan & strategy summary)

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domain IV- This assignment encourages instructional material and strategies that address issues of cultural diversity in the classroom. These lessons

were well thought out, designed and differentiated so that the main focus continued to be on the

academic levels and learning needs of the individual student. There was much collaboration

with colleagues in order to make sure we were on the same page regarding instructional practices

and strategies.

3. *Integrating Language and Content in the ESL/Bilingual Education*

   Assignment: Language of Content Group Project

A signature assignment for this course was a language of content group project. For this for

assignment, the group needed to demonstrate mastery of the material, including chosen WIDA

standards and NJCCC CPIs, CALLA articles, and content-area text). In addition, the

presentation had to be organized, demonstrate usefulness of handouts, and distribution of the

workload within the group. In this particular Social Studies lesson, students would be able to

define a landform; use photographs to compare and contrast characteristics of an island, river,

plains, and mountain community; compare life in communities located on the plains, on a river,

on an island, and in the mountains; and identify the transportation used to move goods and

people from the specified landforms. This turned out to be a great presentation. Initially I was

not looking forward to a group assignment because I prefer completing my own individual

assignments and not have to rely on others. However, except for the lack of participation of one

group member, the project was a success. The result was a great presentation that was detailed

and organized. The professor liked the interactive 'Think Pair Share' activity and hands-on

work. In this lesson, there were a lot of visuals and connection to real life experiences, i.e.,

modes of transportation used to move goods and people from the specified landforms. Students

in the class served as our ESL students and as the ESL teachers, we were walking around

checking on student progress. Our pretend students were given time to share their personal

experiences and knowledge. In addition to the use of many visuals, there was positive

reinforcement along the way. Students worked independently on sentences with details while the

teacher worked in small groups with some of the ELLs. There were color coded vocabulary and

matching playdough. The hands-on playdough activity was for students to create a model of the

landform. (Montanez, S. 2011) (Artifact-Social Studies Presentation)

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domains III & IV- As a teacher leader, we must never

lose sight of the fact that our main focus is the learning needs of the student. That being said,

this assignment aligned with the Domain III of the Standards because we collaborated with our

colleagues/peers in the class in order to plan a lesson that was aligned with content standards and

team-based. This was a group project wherein the objective was to increase and improve student

learning with regard to Social Studies, specifically a geography lesson on landforms. In

addition, we were able to use information we learned in class about developing trends in

ESL/Bilingual while integrating language and content. This assignment also aligned with

Domain IV because as an ESL teacher the expectation is that we are to promote instructional

materials and strategies that address issues of diversity and equity in the classroom. This will

ensure that individual student learning needs remain the central focus of instruction.

4. *Issues of Language & Cultural Diversity in ESL/Bilingual Programs*

   Assignment 3: Argue the Issues: Persuasive Essay Regarding an ESL/BE Issue.

This assignment involved three groups taking part in a mock congressional hearing. Each group

had a role of questioning (as mock congressman) and presenting a brief for or against the issue.

My group had the task of responding to Dual Language Education Act of 2009 Bill #H.R. 3753

a/k/a The PRIDE Act and I was the brief writer against the Bill. As the brief writer, my

assignment was to write a 4–6-page persuasive essay. In the brief, I defined and described the

types of bilingual programs, and obstacles. Below is an excerpt regarding my opinion regarding

Bill #H.R. 3753.

> "…In my opinion, the United States' overall feeling toward language makes it very
>
> difficult to implement a standardized system of bilingual education. We as a nation are
>
> afraid of losing English as the official language and until we develop a European attitude
>
> toward embracing our cultural diversity, bilingual education will continue to have a
>
> rough road ahead. …The fact that policy implementation and policy interpretation differ
>
> from state to state is a critical pitfall of bilingual education. …The fact that this is still an
>
> issue after almost half a century is proof that bilingual education does not work and is
>
> doomed for failure." (Montanez, S. 2011) (Artifact Assignment 3-Argue the Issues).

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domain VII*-* This assignment brought to light the real-

world issue of ESL/Bilingual Education and the roles of Legislators in formulating policies

specific to ESL/Bilingual Programs. This standard requires the teacher leader to advocate for

student learning and our profession as well as understanding educational policy. This

assignment allowed me to appreciate how educational policy is made at the government level

and the political implications. The objective of this particular assignment, served to identify and

analyze factors that affect second language schooling in the state, national and international

context.

In addition, this group project was a collaborative effort of the entire class. We were prepared to

discuss the issues and we demonstrated knowledge of the topic. Others in the class were

assigned other Bills and the energy in the room as issues were argued for and against various

issues was electrifying. Our group received high rubric scores for collaboration with peers

because it was evident, we supported everyone's efforts. High scores were also given in the area of the individual research we would bring to the class. This also aligns with this Standard with regard to working with our peers to identify and use research.

5. *Linguistics and Second Language Acquisition for Teaching Languages*

   Assignment: ESL Interaction Analysis

This assignment was for students to demonstrate our ability to apply SLA (Second Language Acquisition) research and theory in the context of language learning and teaching. The assignment was to the transcribe and analyze a 10-minute recorded conversation with an English language learner. I chose my sister-in-law who is from the Dominican Republic. The 5–7-page analysis focused on the learner's language, comprehensible input, feedback/error correction and negotiation (for meaning). Below is an excerpt of my analysis of the assignment.

> … I was immediately able to spot the differences in regards to the linguistic features (syntax, pronunciation etc.) of a second language learner. I was able to find and identify points during the conversation where we had to negotiate for meaning. As a side note, not only did we verbally negotiate for meaning, but there was a lot of body language as well (hand gestures, facial expressions etc.) … It is apparent to me that my sister-in-law was determined and motivated to do what she had to in order to speak English. … I was able to experience firsthand a lot of the new linguistic terminology we had learned in class. …I thought that analyzing the transcription would be easy because I should be able to spot the speech errors right away. However, further review of the transcription revealed so much more than just speech errors. I never realized the many techniques we use to negotiate meaning. Finally, I must say that I am very proud of my sister-in-law and her second language acquisition. Coming to a foreign country and having to learn a

new language as an adult (after the so-called critical period) is not an easy task.

However, she has done a fine job. (Montanez, S. 2011) (Artifact Assignment ESL

Interaction Analysis)

In my Linguistics Reflection paper, I concluded that, "We can apply what we have learned when

communicating with any ELL for example in the supermarket, church, on the street… any public

area." … I can and have used the technique of recast as corrective feedback. In addition, I am

frequently called upon to serve as interpreter for the Child Study Team and now I can explain the

various techniques used to negotiate meaning. Even when translating from English to Spanish or

vice-versa and when using the target language, there are always opportunities to negotiate

meaning and utilize the various components of linguistics." (Montanez, S. 2011) (Assignment

Linguistics Reflection Paper)

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domain I and VI- This assignment aligns with these 2

Domains because as teacher leader, I understand the different backgrounds, ethnicities, cultures,

and languages in my district. As a result, I am able to use this knowledge to promote effective

interactions among my colleagues, families within our district and all other interested

stakeholders.

6. *Language, Culture and Communication*

   Assignment: Case Study of an English Language Learner

The purpose of the case study was to explore and analyze the experiences of an ELL or

immigrant student. The instruction for this assignment was to choose a student, develop

interview questions, interview the student, analyze the data and write-up the paper. Below is an

excerpt from the analysis of my case study of a freshman college student from Peru.

… I believe I can integrate the knowledge I have learned from this interview into my

teaching in a number of ways. I can learn to be more sensitive to an ELL's feelings

because you do not know if they are currently separated from their families and are still

awaiting reunification. I will not judge someone whose family unit may not be intact

because due to the changes in immigration laws, the political conflicts in their country or

socio-economic status, it may be difficult if not impossible for families to reunite. I

cannot assume that an ELL has had a poor education because as you can see from Juan,

despite a poor educational system in his country, due to private schooling, he learned

advanced math at an early age and was considered to be a genius by his peers. The proof

was in his grades because he received "As" and "B" in school. …I can incorporate

technology into my lessons as well as use culturally relevant pedagogy when teaching

social justice.

… We take a lot of things for granted in regards to our good educational system and the

access we have to technology. As Juan indicated earlier, in Peru "the schools were not

good" … If we personally have access to technology or if it is provided through our

school district, we have to make every effort to incorporate it into our lessons. If we do

not have access to technology in our schools, then we need to rally and fight for it….

(Montanez, S. 2012) (Artifact Case Study of an ELL)

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domain IV- This assignment aligns with this Domain

because it encourages instructional material and strategies that address issues of cultural diversity

in the classroom. This case study revealed how lack of resources and access to technology is a

problem. However, a teacher leader understands the need to make improvements in technology

and that student learning continues to be the main focus.

7. *Practicum in Teaching ESL*

    Assignment: Impact on Student Learning Project

The signature assignment was the impact project at the end of my ESL student teaching practicum. My practicum was in a middle school located in my school district. Students had been learning grammar and writing so my goal was to continue the emphasis on the unit of grammar and persuasive letter writing. This was an ESL 1 class of 5th, 6th and 7th graders. There were a variety of WIDA proficiency levels consisting of Level 1(Entering), Level 2 (Beginning), Level 3 (Developing) and Level 4 (Expanding). The project was divided into four sections, i.e., Unit Overview, Assessment of Student Learning, 3 Case Study Analysis of Two Students and a Final Reflection. Below is an excerpt from my reflection.
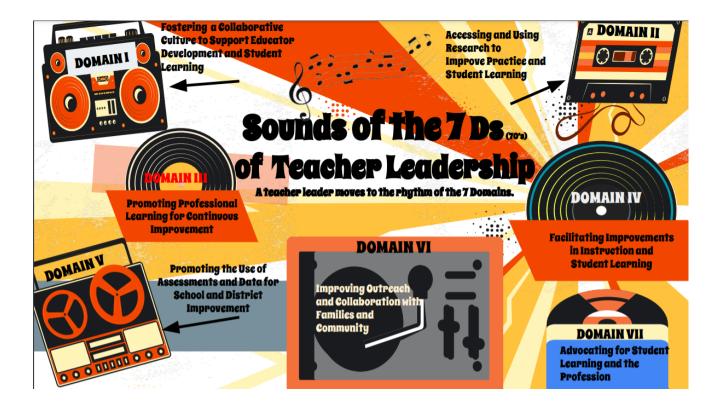
> …A significant success in this unit has been that the students are showing growth. When completing the warm-ups, they have gotten fastest at finding grammatical errors and more of them. Although they had to make corrections in their summative assessments, for the most part, I thought they did well. It is a difficult part of learning English and they are trying. When I feel they are getting tired, I switch to something fun, like a dance or game. The one student who failed was having a bad day and was just not in a good mood. That student is at a WIDA proficiency level 3 (Expanding) and was more than capable of doing better than he did. (Montanez, S. 2012) (Artifact -ESL Impact Project)

Alignment to Teacher Leader Standards Domains I-VII - I will have to conclude that student teaching and the culminating project aligns to the seven domains of the Teacher Leader Standards. I understand teacher leaders are guided by the standards and we must be ever mindful of ways that we can improve our pedagogy. Collaborating with colleagues in order to make the change we want to see will ultimately increase student learning. I can relate to the passions that

motivate us to honor the teacher leader standards. Continual collaboration with my colleagues

and the journey of the teacher leadership program has definitely made me aware of new

approaches to teaching that will increase student learning. As indicated in the text,

"Systematically studying teaching strategies and techniques can lead to discoveries that would

not have become apparent in the absence of systematic study, and these discoveries ultimately

lead to new and significant changes in teaching practice." (Dana, 2020 p. 25) I am an advocate

for my students and for the integrity of my profession.

4. *Artifacts/Evidence (See Appendix)*

5. *References (See Reference Page)*

12. Teacher Leadership Graphic Organizer

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14. Appendix – Reflection Artifacts

PLC Group Project - Signature Assignment Coursework

Montanez_MA3 – Assignment coursework from Teacher Leadership

Example of a Parent Outreach newsletter

Hispanic Heritage Month Celebration Program

Montanez_MA4 – Fundamental of Curriculum

Montanez_MA2 – Teacher Leadership & Learning Communities

Montanez_Assignment2-Parent Outreach Survey

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FLENJ Workshop - "Ignite Fires to Create Future-ready Critical Thinkers." Certificate of Attendance

Montanez_MA1- Analysis of Classroom Teacher Behavior

Montanez_Assignment1-Pt.3 – Agency in Teacher Leadership

Email from Dr. Marc Mancinelli, Ed.D., Director of Curriculum and Instruction

Sample Google Classroom

Sample Choice Board

"Areas of Strength" Administrative comment in teacher observation

Montanez_DQ6-Teacher Leadership in Practice

Montanez_Assignment 4 - Teacher Leadership in Practice.

Montanez_Assignment 5 - Teacher Leadership in Practice

Montanez_Assignment 2 - Agency in Teacher Leadership

Montanez_MA2 - Fundamentals of Curriculum Development

Montanez_MA3 – Fundamentals of Curriculum Development

Montanez_MA4 - Fundamentals of Curriculum Development

Montanez_MA3 – (Analysis of Classroom Behavior)

Montanez_Assignment 3 (Applied Theories of Learning)

Montanez_MA2 – (Fundamentals of Curriculum Development-Methods of Evaluation

Section)

Montanez_Assignment 5 -Final Reflection & Inquiry Plan (Teacher Leadership in Practice)

Montanez_Assignment 1-Pt3 (Agency in Teacher Leadership)

MontanezDQ7 – (Applied Learning Theories)

Montanez_Assignment 3 (Teacher Leadership in Practice)

Montanez_DQ6 (Teacher Leadership in Practice)

Montanez_Assignment 1-Pt.1 (Agency in Teacher Leadership)

Montanez Impact Project (Inquiry Project - Includes summary of data results)

(Agency in Teacher Leadership)

Group Goldilocks Demo w-Summary (Teaching Bilingual Education: Process and Practice)

Argue the Issues: Persuasive Essay Regarding an ESL/BE Issue (Issues of Language &

Culture Diversity in ESL/Bilingual Programs

Social Studies Group Project (Integrating Language and Content in the ESL/Bilingual

Education)

ESL Interaction Analysis & Linguistics Reflection Paper (Linguistics for Second Language

Acquisition)

Case Study of an English Language Learner (Language, Culture and Communication)

Impact on Student Learning Project – Unit on Grammar and Persuasive Letter Writing

(Practicum in Teaching English as a Second Language)