

## 2.7 TNT 200.2 – Sample Exemplary Paper for The Learner Project

During my field-based observation at Sample Preparatory School with teacher Mrs. Jones. I heard one of the most important things for this project. Mrs. Jones said that their real focus for the Pre-K students wasn't just teaching them their syllables and basic math but helping them to be more well-rounded students. She was interested in their entire being as a student, from brain, to body, and social interaction. Sample's philosophy for their Pre-K students was to essentially make them better students.

During my observations I witnessed all of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs being met. Their physiological needs were met with rest time, lunch time, and snack time. The teachers made it a priority to give them sufficient breaks throughout their day to rest their brains and be able to focus back in to their lessons. Their safety needs were met at the beginning of each class when they sang a song about how to love and treat their friends by not hitting and not saying hurtful things. In addition, the teacher made sure to travel with them in between classrooms, was always present in the classroom with them, and made sure they got to their parents at the end of the school day. Their social needs were met with many opportunities to interact with their fellow classmates. During station time they were able to draw and play with blocks with their classmates. This fostered Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development. Although the students were still working on not just looking to their teacher for answers and moving to the stage where they rely on peers and themselves for answers, this was still developing their zone of proximal development. Their esteem needs were met on a constant basis with praise and immediate feedback when they answered a question correctly, completed an assignment, or mastered a task during small group learning. Lastly I was able to see their self-actualization needs being met when they mastered tasks in small group learning. They'd pump their fists or exclaim with joy when they got a math problem correct or spelled a word right.

I was able to view another level of Vygotsky's Theory of Social Development in my observation of Teacher XYZ's class. During this class the students were learning how to play a group game of four square. At the beginning of the class the students were relying on the teacher for directions of how the game worked and how they could form better strategy. However, by the end of the game I was able to see the students to start to strategize with each other. Their zone of proximal development moved one ring in closer to the center and they were able to see that they could play this game with the aid of their fellow students' minds and bodies. Obviously gym time is appealing to kinesthetic and spatial learners according to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Yet, the strategy side of the game will appeal to logical-mathematical learners. The game also applies to Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development in that it works on increasing the competitiveness found in Stage 4: Industry v Inferiority. The students were able to find self confidence in their success and the teacher was able to maintain a stress free and positive environment, found in Jensen's Brain Based learning, by keeping the game fair and encouraging teams falling behind to consider a new strategy for their game.

The students in Mrs. Jones's class would have been in the Preoperational Stage of Piaget's Theory of Cognitive Development. It was extremely important to make sure they were actively involved in activities and challenged through different teaching methods. I was able to observe this with Mrs. Jones's methods of transitioning and switching between methods. She encouraged the students (in a bilingual program) to answer her in Spanish, she read to them in Spanish, and mostly spoke in Spanish. She would recognize when a certain student wasn't on the same level and repeat herself. She only turned back to English as a last resort and even then would compare the vocabulary term in both languages so as to encourage language development.

Each day the students were tasked with learning new syllables and were taught these through various learning styles. According to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences I saw linguistic, musical, spatial, bodily/kinesthetic, inter- and intrapersonal, as well as logical mathematical styles being accommodated. Mrs. Jones, as I mentioned, made it a point to mostly use Spanish in her classroom. Only substituting for English when absolutely necessary. She sang songs with the students to encourage vocabulary development and incorporated whole body movement and

partial body movement into her songs. During math time the students were encouraged to use their fingers for counting as a visual and sing songs to remember values of numbers and coins. There were opportunities for interpersonal learning styles when the students would go through station time and talk about their drawings or the objects they had made with their blocks. During small group time intrapersonal styles were being accommodated by allowing the students to work on math problems by themselves or coin sorting before the teacher became involved. In every activity, I witnessed the teachers utilizing Jensen's Brain-Based Learning theory, consistently keeping a positive and stress free environment. Students were held accountable for their actions but were not punished so as to induce stress when they did not succeed. This leads in to Erikson's Theory of Psychological Development. Stages 3 and 4 were being worked on during this grade. For Initiative v. Guilt the students were taught lessons in math on how to tell time and how to distinguish between pennies, nickels, dimes, and quarters. Both of these lessons would have real life and whole life applications that are necessary to their development. For Industry v Inferiority the students were already exhibiting signs of competitiveness. The teacher used words of praise like, this students is winning who else is winning and show me how you are winning. They were instilled with self-confidence when they correctly identified answers and were given immediate feedback and praise. I was able to notice an area for the teacher to work on which was not making the students feel inferior when they failed. There were a couple of instances when I observed the students knowing they had failed and feeling that they had disappointed their teacher. The guilt and inferiority began to set in. Especially when their neighbor in small group had just succeeded. The teacher could most likely point out that getting an answer wrong is not failure, it is part of the learning process and encourage them to try again in a more gentle way.

In another observation of teacher ABC's Kindergarten Reading/Language Arts Class I was able to observe again Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences. Her class starts out with a learning style suitable for linguistic, interpersonal, and kinesthetic learners. She reads to the students, has them respond in group call back, practices think-pair-share when then students talk about the book they just finished, and she has the students come up to point to things like what the caption is in a book.

Overall, each of these three teachers I observed, either in person or online, incorporated a multitude of learning styles into their classrooms as well as motivational strategies. Each teacher's goal was to have their students succeed and make sure that the students were aware of their success.