

## Content and Curriculum

Throughout my graduate program, I learned more about the important content to cover with my students and strategies to make it relevant to them. Although my preschool program follows a curriculum, there are still ways to bring in new content, make it more engaging and fun, and ensure my students are getting the most out of it. Not only has this program taught me ways to change or create new content that is relevant for all of my students, but it has also helped me understand how to break down interventions for my students who are on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) so that they can meet their goals. Whether it's academics, social-emotional learning, or motor development, as an educator, I strive to create content for my students that is engaging and meaningful to them.

The first artifact is an Unwrapping Standards assignment from EDSP 5730: Diagnostic Assessment. For this assignment, I used a standard connected with one of my student's IEP goals. Specifically, I used the standard SE.4.b., "Develops socially competent behaviors with peers". With the standard, I "unwrapped" it by first identifying the concepts the child needs to know and the skills the child needs to be able to do. Then, I created a concept map with vocabulary terms related to the concept, which in this case was competent behaviors. I created high, medium, and low Depth of Knowledge (DOK) facts, as well as DOK essential questions. I created a lattice task analysis for the standard to show all the concepts that a child needs to master before mastering the state standard, as well as what comes after mastering it. I also created progress monitoring probes with an answer key to assess if the child has met the state standard. Morgan et al. (2013) discussed,

This analysis of the academic standards provides educators with a deep understanding of the skills and concepts needed for achievement on assessments of student learning. It also provides them with a guide for how to

plan instruction that is based on the needs of students in the classroom environment, for those at both lower and higher levels of academic achievement. (para. 34)

For my assignment, I chose to use a social-emotional standard instead of an academic standard. This was an especially challenging but important strategy to learn. It really made me think about what the standards mean, what prerequisite skills a child needs before they can master the standard, and how and what I need to teach the child. This strategy is useful because I can do it with any of my students' IEP goals. It will help me provide more effective instruction for my students' interventions.

The second artifact is a paper about cognitive processes that I wrote for EDTE 5600: Advanced Studies of Children and Adolescents. For this project, I had to identify and critically analyze an existing educational resource. The resource had to facilitate the processing of information, the development of knowledge, thinking, and complex cognitive processes. The resource I chose was an activity called *Story Emporium*, which is available through PBS Kids.

*Story Emporium* (PBS Kids), is an educational game that allows children to create a story by choosing the theme of the story, the setting, the main character, and something specific that goes with the story. The story then plays out, and children can see how their choices result in an ending. Children can then go back and make different choices to see what happens instead. It was interesting to analyze an existing resource and identify the cognitive processes involved.

Although the activity focused on literacy, it also required problem-solving. The two cognitive theories that align with this resource are Schema Theory and Dual-Coding Theory. Moreno (2010) explains that Schema Theory explains how prior knowledge helps students make sense of new information (p. 244). Sadoski and Paivio, (2013) explained that Dual-Coding Theory explains how both verbal and nonverbal

cognition are woven together through all aspects of literacy. Understanding this has helped me be more intentional when selecting and using similar resources in my classroom.

Before this course, I did not use technology in my classroom except for occasional use of videos to teach things like life cycles. Researching different educational resources, such as the interactive game on PBS, has influenced me to use technology more often in my classroom, as long as it's being used interactively.

The third artifact is a lesson plan I wrote for EDSP 5830: Methods of Teaching in Inclusive Early Childhood Settings. This lesson focuses on learning about race and understanding the uniqueness of each person. In this course, we read many children's books about race and different cultures. It was eye-opening for me to learn the importance of teaching about race at such a young age. Before this course, I always taught an All About Me unit at the beginning of the school year. After this course, I was able to create more meaningful lessons for my students that honored each of them and taught them about other races and cultures. This is important content, such as reading books about different races/cultures and having open discussions about them, that needs to be covered during the school year and made relevant to the students because it will teach them a life-long lesson. Loukola (2023) explains that "An antiracist approach to actively recognize and resist racism is necessary for education" (p. 2). I want to instill anti-racism in my students, and to do that, I need to teach and expose them to books, materials, and lessons that include people of different races and cultures and teach about discrimination in an age-appropriate way.

These three artifacts demonstrate my understanding of creating and teaching content to my students. The Unwrapping Assignment taught me how to analyze a state standard and discover what I need to teach a child before they will meet the standard. My paper about cognitive processes helped me discover a new tool to use with my

students and understand how my students use different cognitive processes, such as Schema Theory and Dual-Coding Theory. The artifact on race demonstrated my ability to create a lesson that is meaningful to use with my students during my annual All About Me unit. These tools have helped me create more engaging and meaningful lessons to use with my students in whole group settings, as well as working with students individually or in small groups to address their IEP goals.

## References

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