

## Context For Learning:

For the 2011-2012 academic school year, I completed my residency at the National Teachers Academy (NTA) in a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom. NTA is an Elementary School serving students from Pre-Kindergarten to Eighth Grade in the Armour Square Neighborhood. The school originally opened in 2002 and shortly after transitioned into one of AUSL's training academies. NTA's mission adheres to the notion of creating life-long learners through means of adhering to a culturally relevant curriculum (*national teachers academy*) NTA takes pride on being a data driven community that aligns instructional practices with results from high stakes testing such as ISAT and NWEA MAP to embed the demand for college readiness. In order to help students achieve their academic potential, grade level classrooms are tracked to support student learning to provide differentiated instruction to support students in making their academic gains.

NTA is located in the Armour Square Neighborhood, which is located on the South Side of Chicago and includes the Chicago Housing Authority Wentworth Housing Projects and the China Town community. Currently NTA is comprised of a 385 student body that is 97% African American (cps.edu). NTA is a neighborhood school that offers students an open enrollment process, while also allowing students from other neighboring communities to attend. Currently the Armour Square Community has a large low-income population with a majority of its residents ranging in age from 0-40 years old. As my residency has unfolded, a majority of the students within my classroom live primarily within the neighborhood and are familiar with each other outside of the school setting. A large portion of students reside in the same apartment building complexes near the school, while a few others are driven to school by parents from neighboring communities. The community is closely located to the Downtown metropolitan area and is considered to also be a part of the south loop area. Driving home, the community is very reflective of the gentrification processes that are currently undergoing in the neighborhood. There is an array of empty lots and fields, as well as refurbished high rises that promote the leasing of expensive condominiums. Though close to the downtown area, local grocery stores and other community based centers, besides the school clinic and Chicago Park District facility that are attached to NTA, seem distinctly far and limit access to community resources for the residents within the neighborhood.

Parental involvement and contact was limited to the relationship between a couple of parents and my mentor. Very rarely did I have the opportunity to communicate with parents on an individual basis about student academic or behavioral progress. Communication between parents was conducted solely by my mentor via phone and parent portal to communicate concerns about homework progress and or behavior concerns. Only during report card pick up, or school based meetings for the evaluation of SPED services was my contact more extensive with parents. During our last Report Card Day Pick Up, my resident partner and I were allowed to discuss academic progress and any developmental growth that we had observed amongst 3 identified students, while having our mentor finished the conference with discussions about MAP scores and potential summer school options. If there were any behavioral concerns that needed to be addressed during the

span of the day, most conversations were recommended not to occur for the sake of calling home to report negative behavior patterns from our students.

Throughout my residency experience, all content themes and skills were completely reflective upon my mentor's discretion to adhere to specific school based mandates. We followed Everyday Math and the FOSS Science Kit based upon some form of pacing guide that was only communicated to me by my mentor. There unfortunately was no unit plan or pacing guide that could be referenced to view upcoming themes and concepts. Weekly lessons that I was responsible for were only discussed weekly by my mentor and the discussions briefly outlined what units we would cover with our students. Differentiated reading and math groups were contingent upon teaching specific individual skills that were outlined by the data provided by student's progress reports on Map scores. All lesson planning documents adhered to the Daily Double Clipboard format that followed the "I Do, We Do, You Do format; except the lessons that were reflective of our differentiated grouping. For our differentiated small group plans, we had to use a template that was created by one of the NTA teachers. We were allowed to use the Illinois Learning and Common Core Standards for lessons, but we heavily focused on the integration of the Descartes for small group instruction. When implementing Guided Reading Instruction, we had to use Traditional Basal reading resources for third and second grade levels. All other materials for instruction were completely at our own discretion. There was an ample use of handouts and worksheets in our classroom and most of these materials were found through online resources.

Due to the fact that I had transitioned from a 5<sup>th</sup> grade classroom at The Chicago Academy during the first week of November, the resident cycles for my partner and I did not align with the Regular and Track E cycles that other residents adhered to. A modified cycle was supposed to be created for my partner and I, but we simply transitioned into a modified weekly cycle approach that was conducive to decisions allocated, discussed, and proposed by my mentor and MRC. When assessing the progress of our instructional delivery, recommendations and suggestions for the pacing of lessons and different strategies such as the moving from student centered to a teacher centered approach, or the use of manipulatives were given by both Mentor and MRC. Feedback was provided to follow up those recommendations, and our Resident Score Cards were reflective of the Danielson Framework.

## **Data Use/Assessment**

NTA is a very data driven environment that uses student progress to guide instruction. Common Language around assessment for NWEA was constantly used. Students were able to communicate their individual RIT scores, and vocalize the gains they needed to make by the identified testing times. Instructional plans for my second lead teach were completely reflective of practicing isolated skills that would be present on Spring Session of Map Testing. Before ISAT testing in March, the same patterns were taken to expose students to the opportunities to practice specific skills and extended responses for both math and reading. Exit tickets were the core of our assessments. Specifically during our small group instruction, exit slips were a main focus that would drive what isolated skills students had mastered or needed additional practice.

## About the Class Featured in this Assessment

My learning segment focused on a group of mini lessons/writing lessons that were implemented during our morning Literacy Block. There was no designated name to the unit, but for the two week span of my Spring Lead Teach I was assigned to spend two day segments on specific types of poetry which included haikus, limericks, and acrostic poems. Each day, the plan was to spend 45 minutes covering the individual characteristics of a specific type of poetry, time for students to engage in guided practice, and finally opportunities for independent writing. Our mini lessons and writing segments were implemented as whole group instruction, with the exception of 3 students whom left the room to their designated Literacy Classroom where they receive SPED supports. The remaining 4 students whom receive SPED services were a part of our Literacy Instruction for 30 minutes of teaching. Usually this included exposure and participation during the writing segment, and they would depart once the mini lessons would begin. Due to the fact that there is such a clear and obvious transition into their other classrooms, I often observed that there was some sort of disconnection between the active involvements that students exhibit prior to the ESP arriving. I feel that students developed some sort of notion that the time spent in the whole group setting was something they did not value or take as seriously, when compared to the work ethics and enthusiasm they displayed when they left for their differentiated reading. There were often clear moments of disconnect for these students, especially because the students whom did not transition into other classrooms would work on new content and skills that only they had been exposed to. Thus transitioning from our classroom, these specific students missed essential instructional time. No re-teaching or additional modeling was ever implemented, thus students often experienced difficulty working with others in designated groups, and or displayed disruptive behavior when they were not completely aware of the content and concepts they were learning. During the learning segment, I thought it was beneficial to be able to introduce the new content and concepts in the beginning of the lessons, as opposed to the end once the students left, but found that I encountered barriers with students valuing the work and complying with the task of completing the assignments when working with a whole group setting. I feel as because they knew they would be leaving, students devalued the work because it was not what they were used to completing. To support the development of the lessons, no references of text books were provided from our classroom/school setting. All materials and supports were accessed from an array of on-line resources that focused on third grade poetry such as:

\*<http://www.teachervision.fen.com/poetry/lessonplan/5637.html#ixzz1prmWMhAn>,

\*<http://www.gardendigest.com/poetry/haiku4.htm>

\* [http://www.vrml.k12.la.us/curriculum/elem/3rd/art/poetry\\_temp3rd.htm](http://www.vrml.k12.la.us/curriculum/elem/3rd/art/poetry_temp3rd.htm)

During the specific learning segment, because the mini lessons and writing were done in a whole group setting, students remained at their seats, while the content was presented at the front of the classroom. Information was displayed on anchor charts and the Elmo. Students remained in their 4 different table groups, which consisted of 3-4

students. Students stayed in their designated table groups to accommodate for Think Pair Shares, guided practice with their peers, and to complete independent work. Two of our students whom sit alone away from table groups, were pulled in to different table groups to allow for the opportunity to work and communicate with their peers. During the implementation of the lessons, students would turn their bodies and chairs to no longer face the peers across from their seats, but to have full access to the Elmo and screen that was projecting the new content.

### **About the Students in the Class Featured in This Assessment**

1. Grade Level: 3<sup>rd</sup> Age Range of students: 8-9 years old
2. Number of:  
**23** student in the class  
**13** males **20** females  
**0** English Language Learners  
**8** students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)
3. Before teaching the lesson, I was not sure of what the student's individual experiences had been with the specific content. My mentor simply delegated the need to expose student to the material and allow them the opportunity to practice the skills because they were soon going to be assessed during MAP testing. Prior to my spring lead teaching segment, most of the content they had been exposed to was in the form of fiction texts where they practiced different reading and comprehension strategies, with the exception of a few non-fiction articles that were used to practice extended writing response. Throughout my residency, during Read Aloud's, students displayed more calm and involved behavior as they were able to listen to fictional texts that included humor and content to which they could make individual connections to. I felt that poetry would have been a fun and different approach that would have engaged students because of the move from the traditional and extended texts, but also to be able to contribute a creative form of expression through reading and writing. I felt that the themes and lengths of the poems would allow for students to dive into their thinking processes as they analyzed the meanings of specific poems and the processes involved with evaluating such texts.
4. With any lesson, the level of engagement and behavioral issues are always a concern for my means of instructional planning. I know that my students need to quickly engage into any of the lessons we are doing, and have an ample amount of time to practice skills before they are expected to complete tasks independently. Since I am assuming some of the content and characteristics for the students will be new, I am looking for opportunities for students to be able to work together to collaborate and discuss their individual ideas and thinking about what the new content means, and how they can work together to accomplish specific tasks. I am concerned with how I can present the materials in ways that will help support the kinesthetic and auditory learners. My main concerns involve making sure that students will understand the phonemic awareness strategies involved with helping students to complete the syllabication processes of the assignment. I have to take into consideration students that will provide a distraction for one another and ensure that they are working

with students that will support and not impede on their academic progress. I am concerned as to how I will be able to incorporate accommodations for the students whom receive SPED services that experience difficulty with reading and writing. My plan is to group them with students whom can provide additional support, while also remembering to circulate around the room during guided and independent practice to further support them as well. My plans also have to include behavioral plans for how to maintain a positive learning environment. Thus Check for Understandings will be used often to ensure that students are aware of the voice levels, body movements, and processes involved with completing the required tasks.

<b>Category</b>	<b>Number of Students</b>	<b>Accommodations, Modifications and/or Pertinent IEP Goals</b>
<i>Learning Disability</i>	5	<i>Verbal Directions in clearly stated steps</i> <i>Summarize information to Check for Understanding</i> <i>Provide extra examples</i> <i>Repeat directions</i>  <i>Close monitoring, follow up</i>  <i>Providing Visual Cues and Guides</i>