



February 2020

During the fall of 2019 I supervised Destiny Powell's student teaching internship at Penquis Valley High School in Milo where she worked under the mentorship of Thomas Gillett in the subject areas of history, geography, and government. Mr. Gillett used a learn-by-doing approach and provided Destiny with numerous opportunities to experience the full responsibilities and rewards of teaching, including planning for, instructing, and assessing one of his classes for the entire fifteen weeks. Destiny assumed his full load of courses for well over a month. During this time Destiny demonstrated not only growing competence with Maine's teaching standards but also some strengths that are likely to serve her well as a new teacher. These include an ability to organize materials, curricula, and each lesson for optimal student accessibility; an ever-present willingness to keep a lens trained on students who struggle; an emerging affinity for skills-based instruction; and an increasing belief in her ability to continue growing as both a learner and a teacher.

One of the highlights of visiting Destiny's class for observations was seeing a new organizational tool each time I walked into the room. From bulletin boards that allowed students to become more self-sufficient with make-up work and obtaining supplies to a binder that structured all of her plans and handouts for every course to seating arrangements that optimized opportunities for students to participate in student-led discussions, Destiny was aware that her preparation for each day and each class period helped determine her students' likelihood of successful learning. While organization seems to come naturally to Destiny, thinking about how students would experience her planning was a new skill that she developed through trying a new tool, device, or strategy and then observing her students' reactions and engaging them in feedback processes.

Destiny came into her student teaching placement with concern for students living with economic challenges, and not surprisingly her awareness of their struggles related to academics grew. She also gained interest in the needs of diverse learners and of technology-focused students taking social studies with her as part of their comprehensive program and of advanced students who often required something more than might have been detailed in her original plans to keep them engaged. She worked to support programs and routines that would meet the needs of all of her students, including supporting after-school homework help, being mindful of the type of out-of-class work she assigned, and being flexible about where in the room and in the school her students completed in-class independent work.

By the midterm, as she was taking over all of Tom's classes, Destiny began focusing more on skills that crossed disciplines and could be applied to all of her varied classes. She noticed which skills her students had not yet developed and cross-referenced those to the skills she found most useful in her undergraduate program and in everyday life. From there she determined how her units could refocus on these skills within the designated content, and she then enlisted support from other subject area teachers to ensure she was addressing each skill appropriately. All of this additional effort culminated in her ability to track and document growth in her students' performances.



While Destiny's journal entries tended to be relatively brief and to the point, her comments after scheduled observations, her regular questions (sometimes in emails and often in our twice monthly seminars), and her ongoing changes in practice with her accompanying explanations pointed to not only a rich and rewarding student teaching experience but also to her dedication to continuous improvement in her teaching practice. Destiny is committed to both teaching and her own ongoing learning: about her pedagogy, her content, and most firmly, her students. She has amassed one of the most impressive collections of photos of student work seen in the Ed Studies Program in recent memory, and she has stories of her own growth as her students were learning for nearly every picture. Destiny is prepared to teach in her own classroom during the upcoming academic year.

Sincerely,

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