

About My Student Teaching

1. Overview of Student Teaching

(1) Student Teaching Period:

3 weeks, from September 6 to 28, 2006

(2) Name of School and Participating Grade Level:

University of Yamanashi, Department of Education and Humanities,
Attached Elementary School
Grade 4

(3) Subjects and Number of Periods Taught:

Mathematics (5 periods), Science (3 periods), Art & Craft (2 periods),
Japanese Language (1 period)
Total of 11 periods

(4) Research Lesson:

During the period of student teaching, the most troublesome and difficult thing to do was to conduct “*kyozaikenkyu*” (instructional material investigation). I decided to choose the unit called “Triangles” for the mathematics lessons I would teach.

For the first lesson of the unit, I included an activity in which students are asked to categorize triangles. For the second lesson, I provided a lesson in which students are asked to categorize triangles by paying attention to lengths of sides and introduced the concept and the term “isosceles triangle.” In the third lesson, I asked students to draw many different isosceles triangles freely on paper. Then, I asked them to engage in an activity in which they construct an isosceles triangle given only the measurement of its base. If the length of the base of the triangle is provided first, it is very difficult to draw two other sides that are the same length using rulers. Because of this, I introduced a construction method for drawing an isosceles triangle by using a compass. In the fourth lesson, I asked the students to make many different shapes on geoboards using rubber bands to get them used to using geoboards because I would be using them in the fifth lesson which was to be my research lesson. In the research lesson, I asked students to make isosceles triangles on geoboards. I was also planning on introducing equilateral triangles through the same activity but I was unable to get to this part of the lesson.

To prepare these lessons, I investigated documents such as the Elementary School Mathematics Teaching Guides for the Course of Study, the teachers’ manuals for the textbook, and current research papers. Then, I wrote a research lesson plan. I also consulted with instructional advisors, university professors, senior teachers, and other colleagues to get suggestions and opinions. At the post-lesson discussion, I received many

helpful suggestions and learned a lot. Through these experiences, I learned the importance and difficulty of conducting *kyozaikenkyu*. I also realized that it is important to have colleagues who I can talk to, encourage each other, and engage in heated discussions with.

2. Looking back on my student teaching experiences

I went to the school everyday before 8 o'clock and changed my clothes before the day began. On the days I had to teach lessons, I used the time before school to prepare. I also used the time to mingle with the students before morning class meetings. Unless I was assigned to observe lessons in other classrooms, I would usually spend all day with the students. After school, I would usually spend time with the school instructional advisor to reflect on the day and engage in discussions based on questions and points for improvement. After the reflection, I would change my clothes and go back home. Depending on the day the time vary but I usually be back my home around 6 o'clock. After I got home, I would write in a student teaching journal, conduct *kyozaikenkyu*, write lesson plans, and prepare for next day's lessons. During the week of my student teaching, it was very difficult to find time to sleep. I slept about 2 to 4 hours a day on weekdays.

During the first week of my student teaching, I did not teach lessons but I observed lessons in many classrooms. The following Saturday was the school's Sports Day, so the students were practicing and preparing every day for about 2 hours and I also practiced with the students. From the 2nd week on, I taught lessons, so I needed to a prepare lesson plan for every lesson. I also had to go over the plans many times with my instructional advisor. At the end of my student teaching, I taught a research lesson.

The most difficult part of my student teaching was writing the student teaching journal. There are three main sections you need to write and discuss in the journal, which are: 1.) Understanding students, 2.) Record of and reflections on instruction, and 3.) Record of and reflections on classroom management.

For the section on understanding students, I needed to record what kind of learning activities the students were engaged in, their states of learning, and their actions over the course of a three week period. There were 40 students in the class and I needed to record this for every student. Because of this, I needed to interact with each student consciously during school. In the course of writing this section, I found myself writing a lot about some specific students and not being able to write at all about others. From this writing exercise, I found that there were some students that I was not connected with.

For the section on record of and reflections on instruction, I needed to write about the lessons I taught, reflections from the post-lesson discussions, and my thoughts. I had to write about one A-4 sized paper (about 800 characters) for each lesson I taught. By writing about the lesson, I could reflect on my lessons carefully and deeply.

For the section on record and reflections on classroom management, I had to record the status of the classroom everyday. For this, I had to write about two A4 sized papers (about 1000 characters) each day. Through these writing exercises I could reflect on and learn about what kinds of activities the students were

engaged in during the day and what kinds of interactions occurred among the students. In addition, the questions and points of reflection that I discussed with my instructional advisor become clearer to me and I was better able to use them to improve classroom instruction the next day.

The time I spent student teaching was not easy. I thought about so many things, tried and made mistakes, and reflected on myself. Even now, after finishing my student teaching, there are so many things I think about that I could have done better. There was a time during this process that I was unable to write journals and lesson plans the way I wanted to and it took its toll on me both mentally and physically. But even though I felt so tired every day, when I saw the students' faces every morning, I felt marvelous. The more seriously I take my responsibility to teach the students, the better they react to me. I think that this happens both in classroom instruction and other aspects students' daily lives as well.

Through this experience I realized that the teaching profession is a worthwhile job. The three weeks I spent student teaching at the attached school was a valuable experience for me.