

**Teaching for Learning I**  
**SASE 451 / SASE 526**  
**Creating a Community for Learning Project**  
**Task Description**

**Purpose**

Over the course of the semester, you have had the opportunity to get to know one school and one classroom very well. Sometimes schools act as a unit with clear ideas about success that are shared between and among teachers, students, administrators, and staff. Sometimes, teachers and others act in ways that are counter to the school culture and impact how students learn. The Creating a Community for Learning project provides you with the opportunity to systematically observe, collect data, and reflect on your fieldwork experiences in order to consider what is necessary to create a community for learning in which all students can find success. In this report,

1. Draw on your observations and coursework to reflect on the messages, both overt and implicit, that students are being sent and receiving about democratic practices, community, instruction/assessment, and achievement.
2. Discuss ways in which these experiences will inform your future teaching practices.

**Requirements**

In a paper of 8-10 pages write an integrated essay (not a set of answers to individual questions) that analyzes the interactions and practices you observed in your field placement. Then, describe a classroom community that reflects your evolving understanding of your teaching practices. Your paper should have 12pt font, 1 inch margins, and conform to APA format. Please refer to <http://www.montclair.edu/media/montclair.edu/library/APAStyle-2010.pdf>. Please use pseudonyms for your school site and district, all teachers with whom you interact, students, and other members of the community.

**Data Sources:** Please attach an appendix section to your report in which you provide data to support the decisions you take in response to the guiding questions in each domain. Data for this paper should come from a variety of sources including: information from your course readings, classroom and school observations, interviews and informal interactions with students, teachers, and administrators, artifacts such as school newsletters, classroom handouts, signs in the hallways, descriptions of resources, and explicit statements of expectations for student behavior.

**Analysis/Interpretation of Data:** Be sure that any conclusions you draw are based upon appropriate synthesis and interpretations of data and that implications of the data are explored in detail.

**Professional Language:** Word choice should reflect your knowledge of important concepts within the discipline.

## Guiding Questions

### 1. CONTEXT

**Reflection Questions:** Provide the salient demographic characteristics of the student population in this school. This information is available from the Education Law Center website (<http://www.edlawcenter.org/research/data-research.html>) and the New Jersey Department of Education (DOE Data and Reports) (<http://www.nj.gov/education/data/>).

**Analysis.** How does the student population compare with the overall student population in New Jersey? In what ways do the community characteristics shape classroom practice?

### 2. DEMOCRATIC PRACTICES

**Reflection Questions:** In what ways do the school AND classroom provide space(s) for student participation and voice? To what extent are the school AND classroom environments that embrace multiple points of view? In the classroom, are students given responsibility for their own/each other's learning? Under what circumstances are divergent modes of thinking encouraged? To what extent is the school or teacher attending to diversity (e.g., social class, religion, language)? In what ways are the school and classroom preparing students to engage as active members of their communities?

**Analysis:** Drawing on your classroom observations and course readings, describe the implications for your own future classroom, for you as a teacher, and for your future teaching practices.

### 3. COMMUNITY OF LEARNERS

**Reflection Questions:** How do the school and the teacher establish and maintain an environment that is conducive to learning? To what extent do students collaborate on academic and nonacademic tasks? To what extent does faculty collaborate? Under what circumstances do the routines and structures of the school support such collaborations between students, teachers, and administrators? What kinds of interactions does the teacher have with the students? How does the teacher get to know his/her students?

**Analysis:** Drawing on your classroom observations and course readings, describe the implications for your own future classroom, for you as a teacher, and for your future teaching practices.

### 4. INSTRUCTION AND ASSESSMENT

**Reflection Questions:** What are the explicit and implicit learning goals/outcomes? What evidence is there that these goals/outcomes are clear and congruent? What

evidence is there that student learning is related to those goals? Describe the instructional strategies in the classroom (e.g., cooperative learning, differentiated instruction, culturally responsive teaching, and so on) and the impact these have on student learning. To what extent, does the teacher make adjustments to accommodate all learners? In what ways does the teacher use assessment to inform instruction and drive student learning?

**Analysis:** Drawing on your classroom observations and course readings, describe the implications for your own future classroom, for you as a teacher, and for your future teaching practices

## 5. ACHIEVEMENT

**Reflection Questions:** How do the teacher and school define success and achievement? In what ways do they foster or impede achievement and success for **ALL** students in the classroom and beyond?

**Analysis:** Drawing on your classroom observations and course readings, describe the implications for your own future classroom, for you as a teacher, and for your future teaching practices.

## 6. ANALYSIS AND INTEGRATION

Based upon your responses to domains #1-5 provide a description of the type of classroom community you envision. This description should demonstrate that you have integrated all the domains and have an understanding of the characteristics of a learning community in which all students can find success.

### Grading Criteria

Your report will be evaluated on the following criteria (please see rubric for descriptions of each):

- Description of democratic practices in the school and classroom
- Description of establishing a community of learning in the classroom and school
- Description of instructional/assessment strategies used to meet the needs of all learners
- Description of the expectations for student achievement, how they are established and supported by the teacher and the school
- Interpretations and analysis of data
- Integration of themes into a coherent essay