



National College of Art and Design
A Recognised College of University College Dublin

Evaluation of 4th Year School Placement :BA (JH) Education and Design or Fine Art

STUDENT: Bernadette Nugent

SCHOOL: St Oliver Post Primary, Oldcastle, Meath

PRINCIPAL: Mr. Brendan Corcoran

ART TEACHER/S: Ciara Ferris

CLASS TIMES/GROUP:

Tuesday: 11:20 - 12:00 2nd years. 2:00 - 2:40 3rd years.

Wednesday: 9:00 - 9:40 3rd years. 11:20 - 12:00 5th years. 12:00 - 12:40 2nd years. 2:00 - 3:20 1st years.

Thursday: 9:00 - 10:20 2nd years. 2:20 - 4:00 2nd years.

Friday: 9:00 - 9:40 1st years. 9:40 - 11:00 3rd years. 11:20 - 12:00 6th year.

OVERALL EVALUATION OF 4Yr School Placement

I undertook my final year teaching placement in St Oliver Post Primary, Oldcastle. This is a mixed gender school, with a strong emphasis on academic excellence paired with an overarching belief that the health and mental wellbeing of students is of greatest importance. Teachers in this school are renowned for their enthusiasm and dedication to their students, so I was extremely fortunate to be immersed in this community which is so passionate about delivering the highest quality of education and fostering an environment which allows students to reach their full potential. There is a strong emphasis on pastoral care, which my host teacher leads. I was trusted with the responsibility of liaising with a number of school refusal students. This gave me the opportunity to gain a new viewpoint on the diverse needs and challenges faced by students outside of school, and overall left me focused on cultivating a more holistic approach to education. I realised the importance of students' overall wellbeing, beyond the realm of academic achievement.

St Oliver's also has a dedicated SEN unit, where I had the opportunity to work closely with a number of students with varying additional needs. This gave me a new perspective on the way I teach and the content I deliver, and I feel increased the flexibility and adaptability I have in the classroom. It also ignited within me a goal that would overarch my placement, to break down the barriers between mainstream and special education. Through building trust and relationships with these students, they eventually gained the confidence to attend their first mainstream classes. This exposure both for the SEN students, and the mainstream students was invaluable. It allowed me to foster a deeper sense of empathy and understanding within all students, and created a culture of acceptance and patience within my classroom. It brought all students together to create a more compassionate and supportive school community, and has cemented within me that SEN teaching is something I would love to further explore within my career.

My **strengths** would be **classroom management** and the establishment of classroom rules and routines. I make a very conscious effort to keep routines strong and at the forefront of my teaching. This gives students structure and ensures that there is respect for the teacher at all times. I made a huge effort to get to know each of my students individually, this has been what has aided me most in my teaching. Building rapport and respect to the point where there is scope to add humour and fun into each lesson makes for a more cooperative and healthy learning environment for all. Bringing positivity and energy to the classroom has resulted in

excellent engagement, students have been consistently keen to learn and volunteer. Knowing each student, their boundaries and their capabilities means that I have been able to push each of them to reach their full potential, but also allowed me to be aware of when a student is having issues, academically or personally, and have been able to aid them.

My **teaching skills and ability** have continued to improve throughout this placement. I teach predominantly through questioning, leading students to discover their own answers to posed questions and centering learning around student involvement. This tactic has proven to benefit the retention of information within my groups and has formed the basis of my recaps and evaluations. I **assess and evaluate** students learning continuously during class time, through questioning and discussions, be that peer or whole group. I have found the balance of peer and self assessment to be of benefit, while paired with more interactive methods such as quizzes, games, crits etc. so there is a blended system in place and students do not find stagnancy within lessons.

My **intentions and success criteria** throughout this placement have been strong. Using relevant lower and higher order learning intentions that relate to the learning content but also aim to foster ideologies of inclusion, communication and a deeper understanding of art as a fundamental of life rather than a skill, and are carried through into success criteria. Given the diverse profile of my student body, I have **differentiated** in my planning through making all tasks and lessons accessible to all learners. The way I have planned and delivered my content means there is *generally* no need for specific differences in the way a task is presented or carried out by a certain student, rather the tasks and projects lend themselves to a huge scope of outcomes from different students. The basic principles stay the same, but the way each student approaches a task is changeable. I have chosen to teach in this manner to further try to break the barriers that have been built between mainstream and SEN students, aiming to create a classroom where all students feel equal and all outcomes and skill sets are accepted and celebrated in their uniqueness. I have found this has been hugely beneficial for my students, and there is no longer the anxiety over being singled out or seen as different in my classroom.

Weaknesses:

Documenting the **extra learning**, for example; intra and inter personal skills, empathy and inclusion, life lessons etc that are occurring during my lessons has been a weakness of mine. These are such important educational outcomes not captured in the specification and regularly not captured in my planning until pointed out to me by tutors or other teachers. I am so focused on creating an inclusive environment and layering the learning I am providing that I sometimes forget to take written note of it.

In earlier reflections I tend to **focus entirely on the negative aspects** of my lessons and my teaching. This undoubtedly was acting as a subconscious way of keeping my confidence in my own abilities low, and I did feel that no matter how well a lesson went, there was always something wrong with it. I feel I am hyper critical of myself, and this has been brought up to me by both tutors and host teachers. In the second block of placement I started to keep a reflective journal, documenting all the small wins and happy accidents that occur and aided learning in the classroom. Taking this more positive approach and having this diary to scan back over if I lacked confidence on a particular day really helped.

Conclusion: I feel this placement has been a transformative journey for me and has cemented my assurance that teaching is the right career path for me. Getting to witness the profound impact that art can have on students, and guiding them through artistic exploration, seeing their growth both artistically and personally, has been an experience that very little compares to. I was very fortunate when I was a pupil in St Oliver' in how my talents were nurtured and I was cared for, so being able to step into that role in the same place has been a huge privilege.