Valley City State University

**Advanced Program Field Experience**
Rationale Statements from Capstone Portfolios

First Example:

**Field Experience Rationale Statement**

I have gained rich and purposeful field experiences throughout all my graduate courses. Some of these experiences were officially documented and others were not, but they all helped shape the teacher I am today. Each class in the VCSU graduate program has given me valuable knowledge on how to be an exemplary teacher. I have implemented many new ideas I learned from my experiences, from new tips on classroom management to how formative assessment is used. These experiences have made me a master teacher. Along with this, I chose my field experience from EDUC 650: Field Design and Implementation to meet Proposition 2, “Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students” and Proposition 4, “Teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.”

I chose this artifact to meet Propositions 2 and 4 because experience is the best teacher and I learned the most when I taught a 21st century unit in my classroom. I created and implemented a Project-Based Learning (PBL) unit on weather with my first grade students. Students worked individually and in small groups as I acted as the facilitator to their learning. They prepared daily weather forecasts, documented their weather observations in science journals, and shared their findings with another first grade class via email. VCSU’s Core Values of Expertise in Curriculum/Instruction is exemplified in my artifact. I explored new approaches to delivering instruction, differentiated learning, and different formative and summative assessments. Because of this experience, my students learned how to take charge of their own learning. They also developed critical thinking and problem solving skills that tie directly to 21st century forward thinkers.

Throughout this experience, I learned how to create and implement a standards-based PBL unit. Implementation is the best way to learn, as creating the unit means nothing if it is not taught effectively. This is where most of my learning occurred. I not only created a unit, but I was challenged to put it into action and change my way of teaching. I had to act as the facilitator and use more open-ended and problem-based instructional techniques. I was also constantly reflecting on my teaching and changing things as needed.

In the future, I will continue to use PBL and STEM-related instruction in my classroom when appropriate. I will also continue to learn from my experiences both in and out of the classroom. I will strive to challenge myself and embrace new ideas and be a reflective and honest teacher. Each year I feel myself getting more confident in my abilities and more knowledgeable about delivering quality instruction. I will continue to use my experiences from my graduate studies to achieve growth and improvement.
The NBPTS proposition 4, “teachers think systematically about their practice and learn from experience”, connects to my VCSU field experience. During the course EDUC 650, Field Design and Implementation, I created and implemented a project-based learning (PBL) unit on recycling. The ultimate goal of the PBL unit was for my kindergarten students to make a commercial about recycling. I had a great deal of frustration during the unit because I was more of a coach than a teacher. Giving up the control and allowing each group of students to be in charge of their commercial was eye opening. The students focused more on littering than recycling, which I had not initially planned.

Through this field experience, I learned the importance of stepping back and permitting students to take charge of their learning. When students are given time to figure things out on their own, the learning is retained more than if the information is told to them. I also learned what was important to my students through this field experience. The area where we live is full of litter. My students were very concerned about this, which changed their focus in the lesson.

When teaching this unit again, I would like to team up with an older grade (I have a good friend who teaches 3rd) and do this project together. I feel the 3rd graders would have some great ideas to share with the kindergarteners and help them with the commercial. The students could work together to videotape themselves and load it on the computer to edit their commercials. The 3rd graders could show the kindergarteners how to do this and obtain input from the kindergarteners about what to keep and what to fix.

In the future, I will continue to reflect on my teaching and student learning. I need to remember to not only reflect mentally, but also write it down for future reference. I am constantly learning new strategies and approaches in teaching. Modeling my learning to the students shows them that learning is never finished. What I gained through this field experience will help me plan and implement future PBL units. Teaching grade-level standards using PBL units will help my students greatly with the 21st century skills critical thinking, problem solving, and teamwork.
3rd example:

**Field Experience Rationale Statement**

The artifact I selected was from my STEMED 680 class, Building Math: Everest Trek. This class was taught by Professor Lana Fornes. I chose this artifact because I felt that it really helped me prepare my class. I started teaching STEM this year, and this was our first project. The children really enjoyed this experience with all the hands on work.

This artifact reflects how I taught the material to the students. We worked on different aspects of the design phase before I integrated this project. Because it was so student lead, we did a couple of projects before this to get the students used to having me as more of a guide than a teacher. Once I introduced this exercise, the students were ready to go, and able to work independently. This artifact shows what I presented the students to give them an idea of what I was looking for. They were able to take this, and build on it for their own projects.

This artifact relates to the NBPTS Proposition #3. I feel this artifact shows I am being responsible to monitoring my student’s learning. By managing a big group of students, the work environment is safe, fun, and effective. By being more of a guide to the lesson, it is easy to monitor everything that is going on in the different groups. This helps keep students on track instead of letting them fall behind.

This applies to the VCSU Core Value: Supervisor/Leader/Coach by my capability to, “be able to provide supervised instruction with technology experiences in K-12 classroom or schools” and, “be leaders in exploring ways to integrate technology into the classroom and work with other classroom teachers on collaborative projects that will seek to use technology to improve student learning”.

After completing this assignment, I learned that all students relate to different materials, but they need to work at their own pace. By placing them with students that work faster, they are able pushed a little harder, and work at a faster pace. I found this to be beneficial for the majority of my students. Some of the students did not work well in groups. Maybe a smaller group will be better next time.

I will be able to use the knowledge I gained from STEMED 680 and this project to further my knowledge in the field. My students really enjoyed it, and I would like to be able to present more projects to my students.