

## **Part 1 Narrative: The Learner and Learning**

Candidates demonstrate the ability to thoughtfully describe, critically analyze, and insightfully reflect upon their readiness to use an understanding of learning theory, learner development, and learner differences for the design of effective learning experiences in a variety of settings with diverse learners.

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May, 2020

## Describe

**The purpose of the Description is to establish a meaningful context for your narrative. The description includes two elements, which can be addressed in either order:**

- 1. Part Theme – Interpret the meaning of the theme (e.g. Part I: The Learner and Learning--What does the theme mean to you?). Address the theme holistically. You do not have to include connections to literature but can do so if helps you examine the theme.**
- 2. Evidence – Describe the context (setting and situation) where you collected evidence and explain how the body of evidence helped you make meaning of the theme.**

To me, the learner is the student who has developed up to the point where the teacher meets them and is there to foster their learning in the best ways possible. No learner is the same as the next one, nor is the learning that their teachers guide them through. As an educator, my goal is to meet the learner where they are developmentally and to help them progress toward achieving their goals. Variety is important in teaching because every student learns best either visually, auditorily, or kinesthetically depending on how their brain is structured and has matured. Each of these learning types are considered in my experience as a student teacher, particularly in one lesson about the Elements of Art as tools to fully engage students. Each of these categories of learning types embodies subcategories of learning strategies. Being aware of all these learning methods and teaching to each method of learning aids all types of brains in the learning process. As a teacher, I am a learner as well. To speak of the learner as a student is a simplification. The learner is not just a student but a whole person, and should be treated as such, always. Some of the most valuable lessons I have learned and will continue to learn, come from the students I work with. Theorists have created stages of developmental learning to make sense of how students develop as learners. The discoveries of these theorists can help teachers gain a more holistic understanding of their students, and therefore adjust their teaching practices to meet their student needs. Students' developing minds are considered in my Figure Unit for student teaching, for which students develop an idea for their final unit piece, collaborate to hang a final exhibition, participate in a critique, and assess their own progress. Theorists such as Piaget believed that high school aged students are in the stage of using deductive reasoning, abstract thought, logic and planning in what is called, The Formal Operational stage of human development. Lois Hetland and Manuel Barkan advocated for art education in their own ways. Manuel Barkan's view of Art Education sheds light on the importance of relevance in teaching art. The components of a lesson that a student can relate to their own lives brings to the surface a

new, advanced capability for understanding. Any student, no matter their learning style can gain learning from making meaning. As much as I love some art making processes, and cannot wait to teach them to my future students, I must be able to connect what they learn to their lives. Art Education helps students develop in so many ways. Even students in high school, who, as almost full-grown people, who already have fully developed motor skills and most artistic skills, the arts still bring meaning to their lives. The visual arts allow for us to process the world in ways we wouldn't have otherwise. To reflect, connect, respond and refine our responses to the world and how to mirror it from the way we see it, as to communicate to others. The connection between students and art is explored even further in my Figure Unit, as it develops relevance of the figure by exploring the historical and contemporary contexts of the figure. While it is easy to let students fly with free range in self expression, structuring the classroom experience is imperative to the learner's learning as well. The work of Lois Hetland highlights the structure that students become accustomed to in the classroom. I know from my special and art education classes and experience in schools that students do best when there is a type of structure in the nature of instruction in the classroom. If students can predict what can happen next and have taken part in developing the classroom culture, they feel more comfortable and less anxious. A lot of kids come into the classroom with a fair amount of anxiety already. The point in having a structural framework such as the Studio Habits of Mind and Studio Structures allows students to focus on the things they should be learning and not on the anxiety of not knowing what is expected of them. By outlining the Studio Habits of Mind and repeating them in a way that is comprehensible for your age range of students, you can also minimize behavioral problems. A successful learning environment ensures that the students are reminded with an outline of what is expected of them instead of reprimanding students for doing what is not expected. By combining stable studio structures with the eight habits of mind in each lesson as well as ensuring to create relevance and using varied presentation styles for different learning styles, it will be easier for learners to be routine towards achieving the goal of thinking and working artistically and the teacher will be able to guide an art class to success. The evidence for this part of the portfolio is from my experience shadowing and student teaching at the Champlain Valley Union High School. CVU is located in Hinesburg, Vermont and it serves a large population of students from the towns of Charlotte, Hinesburg, Shelburne, St. George, and Williston. CVU has three full time visual art teachers and each teacher has approximately one hundred new students each semester. For this reason, CVU teachers are thoughtful about classroom management, building relationships with students efficiently, and supporting students that are hard to reach effectively through communication with stakeholders.

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## Analyze

**The purpose of the Analysis is demonstrate your ability to critically evaluate your performance as an emerging professional. To do so, you will construct a critical evaluation of your achievement of one Performance Criterion for each standard. You will write 10 analyses in total (3 for Part I, 5 for Part II, and 2 for Part III). This narrative should use four elements to analyze a Performance Criterion.**

**1. Performance Criterion – Explicitly interpret the components of the Performance Criterion.**

**2. Literature/Theoretical Framework – Use educational literature or program mission/theoretical framework to support your interpretation of the performance criterion. The *program mission or theoretical framework* can also include the mission or theoretical framework of the institution in which you completed fieldwork.**

**3. Salient Evidence – Select 1-2 pieces of salient evidence from the Evidence Chart for the chosen Performance Criterion. Articulate how your evidence connects to the Performance Criterion and the literature/program mission/theoretical framework. Throughout your analysis you should make explicit/direct connections to your evidence.**

**4. Critical Self-Evaluation – Use the Performance Criterion, literature, and salient evidence to evaluate how well and to what degree you achieved the Performance Criterion. Base your self-evaluation on the correspondence between the performance criterion, the educational literature (or program mission/theoretical framework) and your evidence (see diagram below). Explain what the evidence shows rather than describing in detail what you did.**

**Standard 1:** Learner Development- P.C. 1.2 “Candidates use an understanding of developmental theory (in areas such as cognitive, linguistic, social emotional or physical) to design appropriate learning experiences.”

To me, this performance criterion is focusing on meeting students where they are, and seeking to understand how to support them in their learning in a way that works well for them. By communicating with special educators, teachers, and other professional staff, parents, families and with the students and their work, a teacher can develop a sense of where the student is developmentally, and can therefore have a well-rounded understanding of the whole student. Seeking to understand the developmental stage that students are at enables teachers to be the best they can be for each student. It is important for teachers to know where a student is developmentally, because their development affects the way they learn best.

According to Piaget, children organize their knowledge through experiences and growth, which happens in stages. In the adolescent years, the youth move beyond the limitations of concrete mental operations and develop the ability to think in more abstract ways. Piaget called this new ability “Formal Operations.” The Formal Operational Stage corresponds to roughly 12 years of age through adulthood. This is when children are able to think abstractly and can answer problems and think of things that might not physically exist (Bergin&Bergin, 2012). In the Formal Operational Stage, students develop the ability to think abstractly, have logical thoughts, and start using deductive reasoning and planning. For high schoolers in an art class, this means that concrete objects are no longer needed. Concepts and processes can now be thought of hypothetically. This comes into play in planning and refining artistic ideas and decisions, and will most directly surface in the context of critique and discussion and reflection about art. In the Figure Unit that I planned, students tap into the development of planning, and abstract thinking when prompted to dive into their preferences for styles, aesthetic and meaning by researching their favorite portrait artists and developing an idea for their final portrait painting. Students are also asked to do a self-reflection “I Can” rubric after they complete their final piece before it is graded and a written self-reflection of their learning, done either in a document, a visual presentation or verbally. This allows them to tap into the development of their abstract thinking and deductive reasoning. High schoolers are also at the developmental stage of uncertainty when it comes to physical and social emotional development because they are developing abstract thought and planning. Students of this age are likely to be thinking of

what is *possible*. Formal operational thought is needed in thinking about intimate relations and the evaluation of alternatives demands the use of logical thinking. It is important to understand that students of this age are going through this complicated stage of their lives because it can give way to behavioral changes and social-emotional insecurities that can affect a student's engagement in class. Having a class routine and examples that are relevant to their lives are ways that teachers can try to keep students engaged while providing a structured, low stress environment to help them deescalate from the social emotional pressures of life in the Formal Operational Developmental Stage.

As a teacher of high schoolers whose minds are still developing, it is important to promote the development of abstract thought, logic, deductive reasoning, and planning. If students have more experiences that promote these developmentally significant benchmarks, they will have a stronger foundation in these cognitive skills. High School art classes focus more on the lines of formal operations than classes in middle or elementary school, so as to match the developmental stage of students. By being familiar with the developmental stage that their students are at, a teacher can know what to expect from a student and how to challenge them to promote their growth. Important developmental information includes but is not limited to cognitive development and teachers' benefit from being aware of all types of development (cognitive, linguistic, social-emotional, and physical).

One piece of evidence that supports this idea, describes the creation of lessons based on the developmental stage of students in terms of their deductive reasoning, abstract thought, logic and planning through the artistic process. In my Figure Unit, students strengthen their development of planning and abstract thinking when prompted to dive into their preferences for styles, aesthetic and meaning by researching their favorite portrait artists and developing an idea for their final portrait painting. At the end of the unit, students are asked to fill out an "I Can" rubric and self-reflection as well as participating in a collaborative exhibition hanging and critique. Students are engaged in planning and logic, in the planning of their exhibition hanging and they are engaged in deductive reasoning when assessing themselves on the "I Can" rubric and self-reflection.

I believe that I achieved a thorough understanding and explanation of developmental theory in areas of cognitive, social emotional, and physical development. I focused the most on cognitive development by elaborating on the applications of the brain's functions in the Formal Operational Stage. I also included how, as a student is physically and cognitively maturing through their adolescent stage, they are affected by their formal operational thinking, which affects their social emotional state. While I did not give as much attention to physical and social emotional development, I did include how they are also closely correlated with cognitive

development and how students show up in the classroom and how teachers can support them through this Formal Operational Stage.

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**Standard 2:** Learning Differences- PC 2.2 Candidates use an understanding of diverse cultures and communities to design inclusive learning experiences.

To me, this performance criterion is aiming to define the way that cultures and communities are represented within the art classroom, so as to ethically reach the point of relational understanding. The key to achieving the integration of cultural knowledge into learning is not in the product, but the process of art-making. This criterion seeks to inform that the order and implementation of a lesson around a topic, method or material from a specific culture or community is done ethically. This means that cultural assumptions are put to light as assumptions and that no group of people is homogeneous in norms, values, or traditions.

As an art teacher, there are abundant ways to incorporate cultural references into the curriculum but it takes thought to do so in an ethical fashion. While implementing practices of a specific culture or community, it is important to understand how to shed light onto the traditions and people that it traces back to. In *Brave Art and Teens: A Primer for the Future High School Art Teacher*, Jodi A. Patterson describes a paradigm that connects to cultural awareness in teaching art. “Brave art falls within a holistic paradigm that has to do with expanding student awareness about how they interconnect to the world via nature, Bodyself and community... Those who tend to be holistic in education have a collective goal of transformation--transforming humans to be more like themselves--more authentic” (Patterson, 2014). Brave art offers openness, acceptance and trust. It also focuses on ethical and caring relationships with each other and the natural world.

Patterson continues to describe what Brave Art is, by showing what it is not. “Project work is often rampant under the header of “multiculturalism” (Patterson, 2014). Art education has rightly incorporated multiculturalism into its repertoire in an effort to correct its Euro-centered past. However, these good intentions too often fall into “project-based” lessons that toe or meet the line of cultural appropriation. Cultural appropriation refers to the adoption of elements from one culture by a person from another culture. As an example, Patterson asks us to consider a lesson in Native American art that is centered

around the creation of a “dream catcher.” If such a lesson is implemented with one of the many accessible dream catcher art kits available on the internet, and students are able to use materials from that kit to assemble their own, there is a significant lack of expressive creative drive. Furthermore, a lesson like this likely does not talk about the culture that dream catchers derive from nor of their true purpose. This is one example of how a lesson meets the criteria of cultural appropriation, by ignoring the “sacredness” of materials borrowed from a culture or community. “According to the native tradition, dream catchers should resemble a spider web and hang above a baby's cradle. The web filters out nightmares allowing only good dreams to pass through to the sleeping child below. People make real dream catchers in intricate, ceremonial steps that include giving thanks for the spirit of the wood, plant fiber cords, sinew, and owl or eagle feathers (depending on the gender of the baby)” (Patterson, 2014). If we approach a lesson in a different manner that incorporates an art-making experience that revolves around the ideas of dreams, catchers, ceremony and something sacred that does not seek to copy the dream catcher, we can get our students to dig within their own values and beliefs of what a dream catcher means in their community and how it is different. With the personal reflection of making what they have imagined to be their own kind of dream catching or ceremonial device, the image and story of a dream catcher will hold so much more meaning to them than if they had just made one from a kit.

As evidence for this performance criterion, I considered the structure of my lessons on the figure in art. Throughout the Figure Unit, students enter class to a presentation about the history of the figure in art. By seeing examples and hearing stories from my presentation on the History of the Figure in Art from prehistoric to contemporary times, students learn about how we can seek to understand the values and practices of diverse cultures and communities that are inclusively introduced in this powerpoint format, and how different communities and cultures used the figure as a subject in their own ways and for their own purposes. The purpose for this part of the figure unit is to expose students to the significance of the figure and how it has been used and interpreted so many different ways by various cultures and communities. I conducted this part of the unit in a brief video to show how I would approach this part of my lessons with my students. I talk about where each piece is from, what time period it is from, who made it, how it was made and why. With this historical foundation in their learning, working with the figure holds more relevance and meaning that would not be present if the unit did not seek to cover the historical context in which the figure has been used and interpreted.

After writing about this topic, I feel that I have a solid understanding of what it means to stray away from cultural appropriation in the quest to give cultures and communities the credit that they deserve when I am incorporating a piece of that culture into a lesson. This

performance criterion was also aiming at the goal of helping students grow with a carefully planned multicultural curriculum that is centered in helping students gain perspective and respect for others and the world around them. I feel that I have done this in the planning of my Figure Unit lessons with historical and contemporary contexts, and I wonder how I can improve in this way of teaching.

**Standard 3:** Learning Environments- PC 3.1 Candidates design learning environments that support individual learning marked by active engagement.

I believe this performance criterion is aiming to define the ways that teachers can personalize learning in order to reach every student by engaging them through multiple methods of teaching. An inclusive learning environment is characterized by universal engagement, and one way to ensure engagement is through differentiation and accommodation for each student. A student is less likely to want to or be able to engage in class if they are having trouble understanding content or concepts. Developing relationships with students and giving students opportunities to express themselves and learn in different ways helps to shed light on student characteristics, challenges and strengths to a teacher. This plays a major role in the decisions a teacher makes in personalizing educational experiences so that each student has a way to engage that best suits their needs. Brain Based learning is a way to access all students, depending on their learning style(s), strengths, challenges, and interests and by doing so, students can access learning in a way that encourages them to be actively engaged.

Historically, teaching *and* learning has been largely based on what students, teachers, and policy-makers think. Their opinions, experiences, and logical-arguments in the classroom inform the teaching and learning process. Brain-based learning has a different approach to the core aspects of teaching and learning. In Brain Based Learning, how students get motivated, how their attention works, how memories are formed and how information is presented, become the main focal points of teaching and learning. Brain based methods in teaching such as the development of curriculum, and lesson plans, are based on the most recent research on how the brain most effectively gathers knowledge and reacts to experience in the classroom. Research conducted by neuroscientists guides teachers in making better decisions for the benefit of their students. This way, teaching practices are justified by the main boss; the brain (Person, 2016).

There are three principles that help to effectively apply brain based learning in the classroom. Scientific evidence has proved that no two brains are alike. Therefore, the first

principle says that differences must be embraced. Unique talents, skills, abilities and interests of students must be considered when planning lessons. A variety of teaching strategies (kinesthetic, auditory, and visual) must be considered to reach each student. Variety is important in teaching because every student learns best in a specific way, depending on how their brain is structured and matured. This is seen in my evidence when students are involved in all three types of learning the elements of art.

Teaching in small chunks is the second principle. By teaching skills in small chunks, teachers are able to scaffold learning and students are able to retain more information. If too much information is presented, the brain is overloaded and cannot process it all at the same capacity. This is an example of when a student would feel like they don't have the option of engaging because they can't access the learning at such a fast pace. Repetition of small chunks of information helps to strengthen the connections in the brain and repetition in different ways (visually, kinesthetically and auditorily) ensures that the instruction is reaching learners who learn differently from one another. In planning the elements of art bulletin board activity, I originally thought that including all of the principles of art as well would be nice. However, keeping the vocabulary down to just the elements of art allowed students to focus on a smaller number of terms and therefore enabled us to repeat each term several times in different ways throughout the lesson.

The cerebellum is greatly influenced by development, containing 40 to 50 percent of the brain's neurons while remaining only 10 percent of the brain's volume. Because the Cerebellum takes responsibility for so many of the brain's neural connections, and since it is mostly affected by exercise and thoughts, movement is highly encouraged in the classroom. Movement is the third principle of Brain Based Learning. An increased supply of oxygen to the brain through movement improves the function of the brain, which then improves memory and outlook on life. Students therefore have a stronger ability and desire to learn and engage. The activity I used as evidence got students up from their seats and into the hallway, where most learning does not happen, which was exciting for our learners. It woke students up and increased the production of good learning chemicals in their brains. Even as the teacher, I remember this lesson more clearly than most, due to the change in scenery, the movement, and the different ways that the material was covered.

Every aspect of the Brain Based Learning framework is represented in the elements of art lesson that I led for an Introduction to Art class, as a student teacher. Our students were starting to embark on a journey of units based on the elements of art and had been learning briefly about all of the elements. Some of our students seemed to need a refresher on the basic definitions and application of elements before going forward, and this is why this lesson was created. Each student was given a card with an element of art. Everyone moved

out into the hallway where we gathered around a large bulletin board with several posters of famous art on it. This discussion happened part way through class as a movement break, as to enhance the production of noradrenaline, cortisol and dopamine to advance learning and attentiveness. Students were then prompted to look at the board for a moment and think about where the elements of art could be, and then they were given the chance to add their own element of art to the bulletin where they saw it was best represented. This was the visual and kinesthetic part of the lesson. I then picked each card off the bulletin one by one and asked the owner of the card to explain their thinking behind their placement of the card, reinforcing their answer with repetition or more information that helped to solidify the correct response. Some of the cards were in the wrong place, and I asked where else that card could go, to prompt students to think collaboratively about where they could put it to represent its meaning. In this way, the elements of art were dealt with in small chunks. This part of the lesson was mostly auditory and visual but also kinesthetic in the placement and replacement of cards.

My second piece of evidence also embraces student learning differences in the sharing of gesture drawing homework among peers in my Figure Unit. For the gesture drawing homework assignment check-in, Students are gathered around their own and each other's work and asked a few questions such as "What kind of videos do you think your peers used?" This serves to bring them all together as an inclusive learning community and to keep them accountable for the work they do. Another goal of this group share is to show students that while everyone learns and demonstrates their learning differently, they are all growing with the effort that they put in.

Through my interpretation, theoretical framework research, and salient evidence, I have achieved a solid understanding of designing learning environments that support individual learning marked by active engagement. The key part of supporting individuals and therefore enhancing engagement, is differentiation and accommodation. While a teacher may not always have the right information to accommodate for students, the teacher can always teach each type of learning style, in the hopes of hitting all targets of understanding. If all instruction was just lecture-based, students who learn more kinesthetically or visually may have a harder time than students who learn more auditorily. If all instruction was just one type of instruction, most students would have a hard time, because all brains are wired differently and respond well to a variety of stimuli. As a teacher, it is important to have a variety of teaching methods for the same material, to be able to reach each student and consequently encourage active engagement.

Bergin, D. A., Bergin, C. C. (2012). *Child and Adolescent Development: In Your Classroom* (2nd ed.). Stamford, CT: Cengage Learning.

Patterson, Jodi A. *BraveART and Teens: a Primer for the New High School Art Teacher*. High St., 2014.

Person. "Multiple Intelligences: What Does the Research Say?" *Edutopia*, George Lucas Educational Foundation, 20 July 2016, [www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-research](http://www.edutopia.org/multiple-intelligences-research).

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## Reflect

**The purpose of the Reflection is to review your learning and identify areas for continued growth. The Reflection includes two elements:**

**1. Review of your personal learning – Examine specific incidents and points of learning related to the theme of the Part (e.g. Part I: The Learner and Learning), reconsider long-standing perceptions that were challenged or affirmed.**

**2. Plan for ongoing learning – Conceptualize ideas for ongoing growth in this area.**

In the process of developing my interpretation of the Learner and Learning through research and reflecting on my experiences in relation to areas of this theme, I have come across a handful of points in my learning where I have experienced growth. I have been able to reach back to the Human Development course that I took during my first semester at the University of Vermont, to refresh my knowledge on Piaget's theory of development.

Comparing Piaget's implications of the Formal Operational Stage with my own new experience as a student teacher, enhanced my understanding of how to consider student development in the classroom and why it is fundamental in the promotion of the learner's quality of learning. I was also able to recall that the Formal Operational stage can influence abstract thoughts of what is possible, and can therefore affect the social emotional

well-being of physically changing adolescent students. This is an important part of my learning because teaching is informed by both cognitive and social emotional development, and these both change in relation to how a student has developed.

I have also thought about how Brain Based Learning, as I described it in one analysis, is a fundamental structure from which to build more differentiation and accommodations, in a classroom to meet the needs of all minds, as minds are like snowflakes. No two are alike. My belief that it takes a lot of planning to fully incorporate Brain Based Learning into the curriculum has been somewhat challenged, as I reflect on my experience in teaching and see how I have used multiple methods of instruction and presentation in all lessons. I wonder if there is a part of Brain Based Learning that I use more than others, and I want to see how I can improve on equalizing the playing field for all types of learners.

This narrative has solidified my belief that historical and contemporary content are equally important in representing cultures and diverse communities. My belief that cultural examples are best not avoided for fear of cultural appropriation was affirmed by the statements in my research. I see the importance of historical and contemporary content in building bridges between students of diverse backgrounds and between students and diverse communities. The value of building connections between students and humanitarian content develops relevance toward practices in art and art's nature of change over time and across communities.

In future classrooms, I look forward to improving my methods of supporting the social-emotional wellbeing of my students, using what I know about Formal Operational thought and what I will continue to learn about the adolescent stage and the effect that it has on learning. I am also planning to incorporate more movement into my teaching practices to engage my students, as the science of Brain Based Learning has suggested. Lastly, I am going to seek out more diverse examples from the history of art, to use in my curriculum, so as to give credit to the people who have not been properly represented in art, before our time.

This experience has reaffirmed my belief that the students are sometimes the real teachers in the classroom. The students that I have worked with and will continue to meet and to educate are a complicated, diverse, emotional, impressionable, thoughtful and brilliant population of people that will forever change with time and with the development that I hope I can continue to advance, as their teacher.

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**Attached Documents:**

1.2: [CVU Life Unit for solo teaching](#)

2.2: [History of the Figure in Art](#)

Youtube link to my video presentation: [Figure Unit #1: The History of the Figure in Art](#)

3.1: [CVU Life Unit for solo teaching](#)

[Sketchbook Prompt Gestures](#)