Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium Essay

Standard #1: Learner Development. The teacher understands how learners grow and develop, recognizing that patterns of learning and development vary individually within and across the cognitive, linguistic, social, emotional, and physical areas, and designs and implements developmentally appropriate and challenging learning experiences.

As a Business Education teacher, I will see many levels of students each day. I may see freshman, sophomores, juniors, and seniors, even in the same class. That is the nature of an elective course. However, the needs of each of the students that come into my classroom are as diverse as the students themselves. Each lesson I create must attempt to reach each of these students on a level that they are comfortable with, and do so in such a way that they are challenged to complete the task. I know each lesson will not accomplish this feat every time, but I will struggle to teach my students and create lessons that achieve this goal.

I plan to have many tasks that are developmentally appropriate for students working through the adolescence phase of development. Students in this phase range from age 12 to 18; most high school students fall into this range. In this developmental stage, students are struggling to discover their own identity, social life, and to determine where exactly the boundaries are on their own moral compass. To address my student's needs in this developmental stage of their lives, I plan on creating lessons that will allow them to explore the business world around them, discuss business laws and their efficiency, and encourage my students to participate in group projects that allow for discourse and the sharing of new ideas.

Recently, in my field experience, I encouraged my students to be creative. They were middle school students in this same developmental stage. My students liked to explore the internet and gain ideas for new projects that I gave guidelines for, but in which they were allowed to create something new on their own. In this developmental stage, students need to explore the environment around them and be creative. This creativity allows them to discover who they are, and express themselves to their peers and family.

Standard #2: Learning Differences. The teacher uses understanding of individual differences and diverse cultures and communities to ensure inclusive learning environments that enable each learner to meet high standards.

Learning is fun, especially when you get to interact with the subject; in this light, you can gain much more knowledge about the subject than if you were to objectively observe or passively learn about that very same subject. At least that is what I believe about the topic of Business. The business world is a

global entity that has integral parts and multiple levels and layers. To try and teach my students about the global business and the economy, I must create lessons that require them to be very hands-on, or call to attention the fact that they already participate in commerce and the business world in many ways of which they may be unaware. The culture that they live in dictates the products they purchase and vice versa. This intricate relationship must be taught in a way that students can understand.

One of the classes that I wish to teach in high school will be a Marketing course. Students will learn about the global marketplace and the different demands that each country has for an international business. Culture plays a large part in the success or failure of marketing a product. Some colors succeed in countries, whereas that same color in another country will cause the product to fail. To understand the intricacies of marketing and the Four P's of marketing, I would like to create a lesson where the students create their own product, set a price point of that product, chose a country and location in which to sell it (other than the United States), and set up a promotional/advertising scheme to get their product sold in that country. They would have to research a lot about the country and the culture in which they want to promote their product for that item to be successful. Hopefully, this will allow students to see the intricate nature that exists between culture, commerce, and products that are produced.

On a smaller scale, I have discussed diversity with my advisement students in my field experience. Each of my students and I shared the occupation of our parents, the short and long-term goals that we have for ourselves, and the ways we plan to obtain these goals. We discussed that each of our ideal careers are as different as our parents' jobs, and we all have different ways of obtaining our goals. That doesn't make the goal any less valid or important to the person who desires that goal; instead, it makes the goal unique and special, like each of them.

 It is important for my students to understand that each student is unique and they each come from diverse cultures and backgrounds. In the middle school, I can start small and build an appreciation for the student and his/her peers. At the high school level, it is important to promote diversity and the appreciation of different cultures in the classroom and throughout the business world. Regardless of the grade level at which I teach, I will continue to hold students to a high degree of responsibility when it comes to their learning of course material and their behavior in the classroom.

Standard #3: Learning Environments. The teacher works with others to create environments that support individual and collaborative learning, and that encourage positive social interaction, active engagement in learning, and self-motivation.

Social interaction is essential for the sharing and discussion of ideas in the classroom. Group projects allow students to work together and show off their individual strengths. Additionally, when students work in groups or pairs, they must work with students of different learning abilities, learning styles, and talents than their own. Collaborative learning does not have to exist between a group of just a few students; the entire class can function as a collaborative learning environment as well.

One of the activities that I plan on introducing to my students is the simulated business. What better way to learn about a business and its environment than to run one? To encourage collaborative learning and encourage positive social interaction, I will allow the students to choose the roles they will play in their group in order to best demonstrate their knowledge and talents; for example, the roles of chief executive officer, chief financial officer, chief marketing executive, etc. will be distributed throughout the group. As the lessons about business environments and dynamics develop within the classroom, so shall the group's business in the simulation reflect this knowledge attained as the group amends the simulated business.

The simulated business project is something that may take time and effort to establish within the school. Not all schools have access to this sort of technology. Within the middle school environment, I established a collaborative learning environment in which discussion and class demonstration was the key aspect. Students discussed the procedures for using Microsoft Word to create business letters, flyers, and cards. Some students knew faucets that others didn't. They shared their knowledge with each other using the Smart Board and discussing new ways to obtain the same product/result. Each student was engaged and learning from each other. The class was a collaborative learning environment.

Standard #4: Content Knowledge. The teacher understands the central concepts, tools of inquiry, and structures of the discipline(s) he or she teaches and creates learning experiences that make the discipline accessible and meaningful for learners to assure mastery of the content.

The subject of Business Education is vast. What most students do not realize, however, is that they already participate in business and commerce. Students know a lot about business already, they just do not know how to label its parts and how those parts fit together. That's where I come in. Teaching business education is, and should be, a hands-on experience that allows students to understand the business world around them. Projects and group work/discussions allow students to make sense of the global marketplace in which we all live.

To demonstrate the importance of learning about business, I plan on allowing my students to list all of the products in their room. In this process, students will see that their lives are influenced on a daily basis by products that are created by the business world. Additionally, students will be required to list at least ten advertisements that they have seen on television within the past few days. In discussing these commercials, I can point out the use of advertisements and their effectiveness or ineffectiveness within the home and social environment. These lessons will help me to create a learning experience that demonstrates the omnipresence of the business world in our daily lives and the influence that business has on the decisions we make, and, in turn, making learning about the business world a meaningful and important factor.

To relate the importance of learning about the business world to my middle school students, we discussed business letters. As a class, we discussed reasons (personal and professional) to send a letter, e-mail, and memo. Students gained appreciation for the reasons behind sending these communication

tools because they chose why they would send each type of communication and justified its use over the use of the alternative methods (i.e. letter instead of memo, e-mail instead of letter, etc.). Then, I taught my students the structure of block business letters and used examples of business letters that have been previously written. Lastly, the students created their own business letter to a company of their choice. Allowing students to be creative within a structure of business letter writing allowed the students to relate to the subject more effectively.

Standard #5: Application of Content. The teacher understands how to connect concepts and use differing perspectives to engage learners in critical thinking, creativity, and collaborative problem solving related to authentic local and global issues.

There are many benefits to teaching students strategies in effective problem solving. Problem solving required complex thought and situation analysis. Students who are able to learn and utilize problem solving skills can deal effectively with practical situations that may arise in the course of school work or job work. When students build their problem solving skills they are also building upon their critical thinking abilities. Student's need to build upon their critical thinking and problem solving skills in order to be effective and successful in their current and future work environments. "Merely having knowledge or information is not enough. To be effective in the workplace (and in their personal lives), students must be able to solve problems to make effective decisions; they must be able to think critically" (Snyder & Snyder, 2008, p.90).

When we ask students to reflect on what they have learned, ask why an event happens, request elaborations of answers that are given in class and ask students to describe processes, we are asking our students to think critically about what they are learning. We are asking students to think about the how and why, not just focusing on the facts. Asking the right questions can guide students to enhancing their critical thinking and problem solving skills. Questions such as: "What do you think about _____ and why? How do you know that? How did you draw that conclusion?" all allow teachers to probe the thinking processes of students. These questions make students think about how they came to their conclusions and why they settled on that particular answer.

Teachers should model critical thinking and problem solving processes so that students can understand the depth to which we need them to interpret and discuss topics. The use of modeling is a good way for teachers to demonstrate problem solving skills and teach students how to walk themselves through a process. Modeling can also be used in discussions. Teachers lead the students on discussions about certain topics and allow them to think thought the process of getting to a desired outcome or idea.

This process of modeling is one that I will use with my Business Education classrooms. One activity that would benefit from this process in explanation would be the communication process. I plan to walk through steps of the communication process and allow them to demonstrate to each other why each component is important and the effect that feedback and interference plays in the process. Role playing games can also be a good part of this lesson.

Brainstorming ideas and research are two of my more favorite techniques of teaching problem solving skills. Students can brainstorm with each other in small groups for solutions to business problems. Not only are they thinking about solutions and building their critical thinking skills, they are learning communication and negotiation skills as well. Business problems can include budget analysis, communication errors, or even human resources issues with employees. Students can brainstorm with each other in order to address the problem and determine for themselves the results of their implementations.

By the same token, research is a way for students to create their own knowledge and understanding of topics. They can evaluate other individuals' views on topics such as business ethics and decide for themselves what is "right" and/or "wrong." Allowing students to research different views on the same topic allows them to form their own opinions on the issue. Business ethics and case studies would be a perfect discussion for students to utilize research. Business law would be another great tie-in for research. Students could research precedents and international laws for case analysis and then form their own ideas about what should happen. Then I could let them know the results of the case and allow them to discuss why the outcome happened in the way it did.

I have not had the opportunity to apply this standard to such a degree in courses that I have taught thus far. However, I try to make business education a discovery of learning each and every day. Students know more than they think about computers and their uses in the business world. Sometimes they discover what they already knew and can transfer that knowledge into the business classroom; other times, they learn something brand new and exciting. My middle school students found out that they already knew a lot about what to do to solve simple business problems; they just need to learn what tools to use and how to use them. Introducing new Web 2.0 technologies is one way I like to give students new tools to use to solve problems in the workplace.

Snyder, L. G., & Snyder, M. J. (2008). Teaching critical thinking and problem solving skills. Delta Pi Epsilon Journal, 50(2), 90-99. Retrieved from ProQuest Education Database. (Document ID Number: 195581754).

Standard #6: Assessment. The teacher understands and uses multiple methods of assessment to engage learners in their own growth, to monitor learner progress, and to guide the teacher's and learner's decision making.

Students are unique. Each student poses a new challenge to teachers because each student learns differently and tests differently. Some students are tactile learners, others are verbal learners; similarly, some students test easily while others have test anxiety. To assess students effectively, multiple methods of calculation can and must be used. Multiple choice tests are a favorite assessment of teachers with little time and many students. This assessment can be used to test students at multiple levels on several topics within a subject; however, multiple choice test questions can be difficult to create.

Creation of assessments is difficult. To create questions that assess at multiple levels of Bloom's Taxonomy is ideal, but it can be a struggle for teachers with limited time. Alternative test methods such as project assessments; essay tests; fill-in-the-blank questions; or simple, verbal assessments can be used to combat the monotony of multiple choice tests that so often fills the high school classroom. Additionally, the use of multiple testing methods allows students to be assessed in different ways, in turn, allowing students to shine on the assessments in which they excel and it offers a less stressful environment for students who get test anxiety. Using a variety of assessments also allows for alteration of testing environments for students with disabilities that need different assessment methods.

I like to use the verbal assessment at the end of lessons and as a review at the beginning of a new lesson that ties to the previous lesson. In this manner, I can remind students about what they have learned and apply that knowledge to new learning or assess what the students have learned during the current lesson. Verbal assessments are a great time to give needed positive feedback. In addition to assessing what they have learned and giving feedback, I also assess what topics I need to repeat or spend more time on, and I learn who needs more time and who is ready to move on. Assessments are not just for the teacher assessing the student; I use it to assess myself.

During the assessment of a student, the teacher and the student both see the growth and learning that has occurred as well as the growth and learning that needs to occur. The assessment works as a directional post for both teacher and student in this way. It allows me to understand who understands what and at what speed, and it allows students to see what they already know and where they need to focus their study time in the future. Using a variety of assessments allows both the teacher and the student to understand more about the learning process that is taking place within the classroom. I intend to use a variety of methods in the classroom so that there is no monotony and I can better comprehend my student's understanding of the course material.

Standard #7: Planning for Instruction. The teacher plans instruction that supports every student in meeting rigorous learning goals by drawing upon knowledge of content areas, curriculum, cross-disciplinary skills, and pedagogy, as well as knowledge of learners and the community context.

Planning instructional lessons is a complex process of checking standards, planning time for coverage of material, monitoring previous student understanding of material, incorporating cross-curriculum standards, and planning lessons that address global issues in a way that students can understand. To plan lessons for one class, it takes approximately 3-4 days. When structured properly, lessons promote transfer of knowledge from other subjects and curricula to permeate the classroom and allow for connections to be made and further knowledge growth.

I try to pull in topics from other subjects to make lessons relevant, promote transfer of knowledge, and make mental connections with topics that are similar in nature. For example, I will tie in math concepts for use in financial literacy courses, English standards of letter writing when discussing business letters,

and history lessons when talking about how culture of other countries affects the United States commerce. Incorporating cross-curriculum standards and tying in concepts from other subjects is a great way to make topics relevant to the lives of my students. In this manner, students can see that, just because the topics are taught in different classes, it doesn't mean the topics are mutually exclusive. Planning with colleagues is one of the most effective ways to incorporate topics that students are learning about in their classes at the same time you would like to address a topic that may relate.

Despite the best laid plans that a teacher can create, there will always be the need for adjustments. Some lessons will take longer than expected, others will be more easily understandable than expected and students will be able to move through the material faster. At times, lessons may need more explanation and different ways of looking at the same topic for all students to fully understand it. I must be willing to make changes and be flexible in planning and executing my lessons. One example in which I fully learned this message occurred when I was observing and teaching in the middle school. I planned a lesson to take one day, but the students didn't fully understand the concepts of the topic by the end of class, so I had to change the one-day lesson to two full days. I liked this better in the end, because I knew my students fully understood the material by the end of the second day of lessons.

Standard #8: Instructional Strategies. The teacher understands and uses a variety of instructional strategies to encourage learners to develop deep understanding of content areas and their connections, and to build skills to apply knowledge in meaningful ways.

Typical lecturing may work in other classrooms, but the Business Education classroom must be a more hands-on environment. Many students learn best when they are active, engaged participants in the learning process. To achieve such goals in Business Education, the teacher must be creative and allow the students to be the same. The use of multiple technologies and programs are a must in my classroom. I want to try and instruct students in a variety of ways, using multiple technologies, and implementing a variety of programs so that the students continue to want to learn, and so that they will learn about current technologies that are useful in the workplace environment.

Just as students learn and test differently, so too do they express themselves in a myriad different of ways. To assist in self-expression; the discovery of new technologies; and the development of the students' identities, I introduce Web 2.0 technologies and programs such as Glogster, Prezi, and Audacity as a way to teach and to allow students express what they have learned. Some students express themselves and convey the knowledge they have obtained with technology easier than they would writing an essay, for example. However, giving students the chance to express themselves in different ways using multiple choices in projects throughout the semester allows me to address the needs of all students.

Standard #9: Professional Learning and Ethical Practice. The teacher engages in ongoing professional learning and uses evidence to continually evaluate his/her practice, particularly the effects

of his/her choices and actions on others (learners, families, other professionals, and the
community), and adapts practice to meet the needs of each learner.

I am an individual with a specific learning and testing style, I have a background unlike any other person
in this world, and I am unique. As a teacher, however, I must realize that my students do not have the
same likes, dislikes, learning and testing styles, or backgrounds that I have. Each student has their own
set of needs and preferences. To effectively teach these students, I have to evaluate and reevaluate the
lessons that I create so that they are relevant, effective, and easily understandable.

In addition to self –evaluation of my teaching techniques and lessons, I want to make sure that I obtain
and utilize the feedback of my students and fellow colleagues in order to make my teaching experience
purposeful and understandable. Teachers that do not take into consideration the need for change and
alteration of their lessons will quickly become obsolete and ineffective teachers. I do not wish to
operate in such a manner. In addition to maintaining effective teaching methods, I will also maintain the
perception of teachers by acting as a role model for my students and my community.

As a teacher thus far, I have tried to maintain the respect of my students and my peers by making ethical
and moral decisions within my teaching career and personal life. To make sure that I am teaching my
students in an effective manner, I welcome a critical eye during my observations and feedback during
my lessons that I have taught. I take into consideration the comments that are made from my peers and
my students and adjust my lessons and my actions accordingly.

Standard #10: Leadership and Collaboration. The teacher seeks appropriate leadership roles and
opportunities to take responsibility for student learning, to collaborate with learners,
families, colleagues, other school professionals, and community members to ensure
learner growth, and to advance the profession.

It really does take a village to raise a child. To fully develop a student into a responsible adult with a
moral conscience; a feeling of belonging; and a well-rounded knowledge base, teachers must work with
the family, community members, and fellow teachers to educate students in the best way possible and
to the furthest extent possible. The family life of a student affects the learning process within the school.
The community obligations and sense of belonging that comes from being involved in the surrounding
community is important in the social development of a student. As a teacher, I must incorporate or
facilitate these factors in order to aid my students in their education.

In addition to aiding the students in the advancement of their knowledge, a teacher must never be
afraid to continue in the pursuit of knowledge within the teaching profession and the expansion of the
subject. I personally love to learn. I learn more about Business Education and teaching on a daily basis
and I do not intend on giving that up any time soon. Business is an ever-changing environment and if I
plan on preparing my students to the best of my ability, I must stay current with what is happening in
the world of business. Because I am a teacher of business, I must also stay up-to-date with current
technology trends and teaching techniques. Just recently I learned about a new Google feature that will

help me teach my students in a more effective manner. I also obtained my certification to be a Work-based Learning Coordinator within the high school. I will continue to learn and to apply what I have learned to the classroom in order to enhance and further my education and the education of my students.