

My School and Social Context Report

Madeline Kuehn

Part 1: Self (no more than 2 pages)

I grew up in Plato, MN, a small town about an hour west of the Twin Cities. I am the oldest of 3. I have two younger brothers (3 years and 5 years younger), and I lived on a farmstead with them, and my parents. Growing up in my family, education was very important. My mom has her doctorate in animal nutrition and my dad went to college for mathematics and computer science. In elementary school, every night my parents would sit and do homework with me. We would do things like practicing spelling words, or times tables. If I struggled with a topic, my parents would find resources to help me engage. They read stories to my brother and I every night, and we would always have dinner as a family.

As I moved into high school and had more independence in my learning, my parents still stayed on top of everything I did. If during the day my teachers would put in a missing grade, it was a sure bet that 5 minutes later I would receive a text from my mom asking why that assignment was missing. I participated in many activities growing up. I was on the soccer team, participated in activities like knowledge bowl, 4-H, BPA, FFA, Student Government, and more! If I wanted to participate in an activity, my parents would fit it into their schedule. I honestly cannot remember a time where I was not able to participate in an activity or organization due to my parents being against it or not being able to afford it.

Money didn't seem to be an issue in our house. Looking back now, I know there were times where my parents were stressed about finances, but it didn't seem that way growing up.

We were solidly middle class; both of my parents had nice jobs, my dad worked for an ethanol marketing company, and my mom worked part-time for an animal feed company developing dairy cow rations. My parents were fairly conservative, much like many people in the area where I grew up. My high school was also very white, and consisted of many middle- to lower-class families.

I always knew that I wanted to be a teacher, but I wasn't sure what I wanted to teach. I attended Luther College in Decorah, IA. As I moved into college, I started as a history major, but after one class switched to mathematics and computer science. I worked through college as a server in town. I also was a math grader and worked as a tutor in the math center. I found a great group of friends, all of whom grew up in vastly different ways. Throughout college, I started to diverge more radically in my social and political beliefs than my parents and that continues to be the case today. These days, I live in Minneapolis, MN with my partner, Samuel.

Part 2: School Context (no more than 2 pages)

I currently teach at Columbia Heights High School in Columbia Heights, MN. Columbia Heights is a small suburb Northeast of Minneapolis. Our district serves a unique population in terms of both socioeconomic diversity and multiculturalism. First, over 78% of our school population qualifies for Free and Reduced lunch. Additionally, about 45% of our students do not speak English as their first language. Many of our students come from Ecuador, and our next largest group of students comes from Somalia. Our student make-up at the high school is probably around 45% Hispanic, 35% Black or African American, 15% White, and 5% Asian/American Indian. Many of our students have parents who do not speak English. Additionally, many of our students have parents who work jobs that require students to be the

care-takers for their siblings before or after school. We also have a large number of students who receive special education services. In general, many students also come in far below grade level in terms of Mathematical ability.

In contrast to our student body, many of the teachers in our school are white/white-passing. We have many older teachers, but as our school enrollment has grown, the last few years more younger teachers have come in. Most of the teachers in my school do not speak a second language, but those that do typically speak Spanish. Most teachers grew up in the area, or went to college at the U of M and stayed in Minneapolis. Four years ago, our school hired a new principal and there are still many growing pains between the administration team and our staff.

My high school experience was vastly different compared to those of my students. Many of my students fall well below the poverty line, and additionally, some have faced vast challenges and difficulties to make it to the United States. Many students are hoping to become first-generation college students, and some are first-generation high school students, where as myself and many staff members have had family members who have attended and received post-secondary degrees, or had family members who were teachers themselves.

I do see cultural factors that shape and influence how instruction is delivered. The high percentage of students whose first language is not English requires teachers to adapt lessons to accommodate English learners, including incorporating visual aids, differentiated instruction, and strategies to bridge language gaps. We have multiple classes for just EL students, and many of our PD opportunities discuss how to best engage our EL learners. Additionally, our diverse student body means that cultural responsiveness and inclusivity is vital in our curriculum and

classrooms. The socioeconomic challenges many students face, such as serving as caregivers for siblings or parents working non-traditional hours, or working jobs themselves impact student attendance, focus, and homework completion outside of class.

Part 3: Teaching Practice

State which perspective you are using here: **Individual**

<u>Danielson’s Framework for Teaching Clusters</u>	Percentage (0-100%) of <i>Teaching Practice Perfection</i> and why. - Which parts of the cluster are done well (provide an example)? - What are opportunities for improvement?
Clarity & Accuracy (i.e., learning outcomes, instructional decision-making, content expertise).	60% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Some parts of the cluster that I do well are content expertise and instructional decision making. I am very knowledgeable in my content and am able to use that to help explain concepts to my students in a variety of ways, as well as crafting good assignments and tasks for my students. - I know that I need to do better at explicitly letting students know what their learning outcomes are and how they can know that they’ve achieved mastery, as well as connecting the material to other disciplines.
Learning Environment (i.e., positive developmental relationships, intellectual challenge, support & persistence).	75% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I have many positive relationships with my students. Additionally, I show up for my students at school activities and athletics. Students often work collaboratively with each other and are helping each other out unprompted. - I need to improve on allowing my students to have productive struggle. Often I will jump in if I see my students struggling instead of letting them work it out just a little bit more.
Cultural Competence (for more information see Landson-Billings; Woolfolk, 2023, p. 74)	60% <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are experiencing academic success in my classroom, through our short quizzes we give every week.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I don't think that I do enough in my classroom to engage my students in culturally specific contexts through mathematics.
Classroom Management (i.e., routines and procedures, collective responsibility, physical environment).	<p>60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are aware of what is expected of them each day. There are procedures in place for many aspects such as warm-ups, collecting supplies and papers, and what happens during worktime. - Students are not always productively engaged, and often get side-tracked if I am not standing in front of them. However, I have some large classes which makes this very difficult (32-38 students)
Intellectual Engagement (i.e., lesson structure & flow, rich learning tasks, student collaboration & discourse).	<p>60%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is very obvious to outside observers that I love what I teach and I will push my students. Most of my students will explain their thinking when prompted, and many participate in discussion. - My learning tasks are not always the most engaging. Many times, students are not engaged in open-ended questions or that higher order thinking and building off others' ideas.
Successful Learning (i.e., equitable access, assessment & feedback, shared accountability).	<p>80%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students are constantly getting feedback in my class in terms of mastery quizzes. Students know that I want them to fail (because through failures we learn!) and use that new knowledge to help them succeed. - I know that I need to improve my communication with families and using my data to influence what I am teaching next.
Professionalism (continuous professional learning, collaboration, principled decision-making).	<p>90%</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I am highly involved in school activities, such as coaching math team and knowledge bowl. I contribute often during department PLCs and school meetings - I am not actively involved in many district or community projects or committees, and that is something that I could improve on.

Action Plan:

Step back from the detailed reflection you provided above, and synthesize in a broader context: Overall, what would you suggest as one major area to explore further that would impact your (or your institution's) teaching practice and subsequently learning for students?

Overall focus area: **Intellectual Engagement**

Direct impact: Why did you pick that area? *What do you hope would change for teachers (yourself) and students?* Is there a lesson or unit that you teach that you can envision this change impacting?

Or, is there a particular student (or group of students) that you can envision this impacting?

I chose intellectual engagement because I know that fostering deeper, higher-order thinking and discourse among students can significantly enhance their learning experiences. While students sometimes engage in discussion and explain their reasoning when prompted, I am not consistently embedding tasks that challenge students to think critically and collaborate meaningfully. I would like to implement some more thought-provoking, open-ended tasks. I believe that if I can improve in this area, it would help students to take a little more ownership of their learning, as well as allowing them to engage in deeper, more meaningful discussions with their peers.

I think a unit that would be great to update would be our data and probability unit. Instead of just learning about the probability and taking notes, this would be a great unit to have students collect and analyze data through a schoolwide survey. They could then analyze that data and describe what it means.