Practicum Reflection

A. Interpretation of student learning:
1. *What were the learning goals/objectives as identified by the cooperating teacher?*

    The teacher sought to give the children a chance to increase their reading mastery. She also wanted to let the children get more familiar with sight words because most of them were on a rather low reading level.

2. *What evidence exists to demonstrate student learning or mastering of learning goals/objectives?*

    The teacher let me take a group through the processes of guided reading and sight word practice. It was apparent through those activities that the students knew how to read on their level and some were a little more practiced than others. When the children practiced their sight words with me, they were able to name about 90% of them and that told me that the teacher had allowed them to practice these words and had also made an intentional effort to point these words out in shared reading times.

3. *What barriers did the teacher encounter in reaching the stated the goals/objectives?*

    I did notice that some students were struggling to read on an A level which is very much below the expected level for first graders. I think the teacher had trouble meeting individual needs and keeping up with the students' progressions. Some students had books that they had simply memorized. Other students would simply sit and look at pictures and pretend to read the books they had selected during individual reading time. I know that it is not easy to try to meet individual needs of students, however, children cannot be permitted to "slide through the cracks" and make it to the next grade level without mastering an appropriate level of reading.

4. *Determine and explain if the teacher's methodology with meeting individual's needs was effective or ineffective.*

    As I said earlier, the teacher had trouble meeting individual needs. From what I saw, students did not get much individual time with the teacher and if they did it was only for assessments. The assessments were important but the students should be able to interact with their teacher individually and build a relationship with her so they feel safe in the classroom. She also met with students in small groups during individual reading time which was rather awkward considering the students need the room to be quiet during their reading. Because she chose to do this, the other students in the room were able to get away with talking and not really reading.

B. Insight on best practices and assessments as related to students:

   1. *What methods or instructional strategies did the teacher use to motivate students learning?*

   The teacher made good use of her shared reading and instruction time. She would often put up a poem or short story that incorporated sight words or rhyming/pattern words so the children could all see the same text and learn together. She also would split the children up that did not go into specialized instruction into groups that would either work with me or with her. During this time she and I would either do guided reading, sight word practice, or math practice with the children.

   During some whole group instruction times, the teacher would read a selected book to the students and point out different reading strategies to them and model these strategies for them. Such strategies included predicting, evaluating text for character motivation, looking to pictures for meaning, etc. There was a lot of whole group instruction during my time at the school and the children seemed to like this type of instruction.

   2. *What aspects of the classroom's environment (aesthetic value) and structure (community interaction) were evident during your observation?*

   The classroom was organized quite well. I appreciated the fact that the teacher had taken time to make sure the room felt comfortable and more like a living room than a classroom. She made good use of pillows for children to use during individual reading time and organized her books on a bookshelf that made it easy for the children to access them when they needed to. She also made sure that the room was organized in such a way that there were little nooks that the students could get into if they wanted to be secluded while reading.

   From my observations, the way the desks were set up cultivated the interaction of the students. I did not see students getting into arguments with their neighbors and they all seemed quite comfortable with each other. The teacher told me that the students were actually allowed to pick where they wanted to sit at the beginning of the year and that she was surprised that they had picked spots that did not lead to discomfort or an abundant amount of unwanted noise and talking.

C. Alignment of learning goals with assessment data:

   List teachers' assessments (formal and informal) used to monitor/determine student progress.

   The teacher assessed the students reading using the BEAR test and she also used whole group instruction time to see what students were understanding and what students still needed help on. She also used the reading assessments that were required by her school. However, I do not remember the specific names of those assessments. I do know that they tested for phonemic awareness and some were indicators of the children's reading levels.

D. Implications of a Christian worldview in the learning community:
   State ways in which you could incorporate your Christian worldview within the context of this classroom.

   I would incorporate a Christian worldview into this classroom by establishing expectations that lined up with biblical concepts. Such as, loving one another and treating each other with respect (Romans 12:10). I would also make sure that my actions reflected the actions of God. It would be important for me to make sure that I handle my frustration appropriately in front of the students so that I am modeling how they should react in situations that upset them (1 Timothy 4:12). Even if the children are not Christians, I should behave appropriately and professionally while still maintaining a safe and loving environment for them.

E. Implications for future teaching and professional development:
   1. *Identify and examine successes in the classroom and explain your rationale as to why you feel these activities/instructional strategies were successful.*

      I saw success when I would work with students on an individual basis during individual reading times. My teacher would tell me to work with a certain student and I found that as I worked with the selected student, he or she would be much more inclined to read. I believe this was a success because it made the student feel like the reading was intentional and not simply another process that needed to be completed.

      Another example of a success in the classroom was when I did one of my read-alouds for the students. I had selected a book that discussed different aspects of Thanksgiving that started with each letter of the alphabet. Not only did they get to notice the different letters and what words began with those, they also engaged with the text more because of my leading questions about words or topics they did not know much about. I think by choosing a text that was relevant to the moment and had familiar aspects (the alphabet) the students were more apt to engage in conversation about what I was reading.

   2. *What methods, activities, and/or instructional strategies will be beneficial for you to learn more about, and what steps will you take to ensure your professional growth in these areas?*

      Looking back I realized that I could have been a better steward of my time. I forgot that children only have a short attention span and do not care to sit for fifteen minutes and then do an interactive writing. I need to make sure that students have time to take a breath and move before I transition into another lesson. I also need to make sure that I am aware of my individual students' needs and try my best to get one on one time with each of them. This would be done so I can make sure they are getting extra attention where they require it. In order to reach these goals, I will take extra time planning out my lessons and take into consideration the abilities and personalities of my students when figuring out what and how I need to instruct them.