Teacher as …Orchestra Conductor

I picked the metaphor Teacher as Orchestra Conductor, because the musicians in the orchestra represent the students in my classroom. The Orchestra Conductor’s main obligation to his/her musicians is to set the tempo, articulate clear instructions, and shape the sound of the ensemble. The Orchestra Conductor must keep the tempo, balance, and harmony of his or her musicians in order to produce a magnificent musical arrangement. The teacher is responsible for executing strategies, skills, and techniques to students who represent the dynamics of the instrumental families.

After my first four weeks of student teaching, I feel my personal metaphor Teacher as Orchestra Conductor, so far is appropriate. The first priority of the Orchestra Conductor is to establish a bond with his/her musicians in order to be respected as a leader; similarly, as a teacher I found by establishing a bond with my students from the start was necessary to activate their cooperative response to make the lessons interactive. As a teacher who must lead her students as a conductor, I have learned how to modify and adjust my lessons to involve the diverse abilities of my students. I feel, as the conductor of my class, that I have the ability to communicate effectively the strategies, skills, and techniques to encourage my students’ growth potential.

As an Orchestra Conductor manages as a traffic manager for the various instrumental sections to know when each instrument enters the musical collaboration, I
found as a teacher it difficult at first to transition students from one task to another while keeping the rhythm and balance of the lesson stimulating for the students. In order to manage my class as an Orchestra Conductor, I needed to individually assess my students, both informally and formally, to help give me insight into their capabilities, then to prepare and execute lessons that would produce a positive outcome. As a teacher, the assessments of my twenty-five students helped me to fine-tune and adjust my lessons according to the needs of my students, which helped me to react quickly and appropriately in response to unexpected developments. The diversity of the students and the various learning abilities in a classroom must be managed with quality strategies, motivated by consistent reinforcement of the content and skills students can eventually develop independently and successfully. The Orchestra Conductor must stimulate his/her musicians’ artistic expression and style; as a teacher, I would like to stimulate my students’ artistic expression and style by fostering a positive attitude in their ability and accentuating their strengths to achieve a higher goal. As a teacher conducting my class, I hope to unleash my students’ talents, nurture their creativity, and enhance their desire to excel.
Teacher as … Orchestra Conductor

After twelve weeks of student teaching in my third grade class, I have been afforded an incredible opportunity to build my confidence in myself as a teacher. I can honestly say reflecting upon my experience there is no other place I’d rather be than teaching students. My first week of student teaching was filled with mixed emotions. My cooperating teacher shared her plan book for the first week with me and asked if I would mind starting to present a few lessons a day beginning on the second day of school. I was exhilarated by the thought and anxiously prepared my first lessons in readers and writers workshop, language arts skills, social studies and math. I knew there were so many strategies, skills, and concepts I wanted my students to embrace and adapt independently; however, I never realized how difficult classroom management would be until I encountered it firsthand. Even though my first lesson to my twenty-four students was well organized with clear objectives, I had to establish myself as a teacher by setting the tone for classroom management. If I didn’t gain their cooperation in my first lesson, I knew I would be setting a negative tone for any other lesson that day or thereafter. I survived my first lessons by gaining my students’ trust and cooperation by consistently reinforcing expectations and respect of classroom rules during each lesson. I was mentally drained and fatigued by the end of my first day, but proud my students
learned the concepts I implemented. My goal was to foster a feeling of security, while exposing students to explore and learn about new topics or themes.

I learned that when I used examples from my own life to making connections with the lesson, the students were able to make a similar connection in their own lives. If this connection is consistently modeled, the students were able to achieve critical thinking skills. I found I received the most benefits and productivity from my students when they were actively engaged in the activity or lesson. It was a challenge my first few weeks, when I developed my lesson plans for various subjects, I not only had to make sure every lesson was addressing and meeting standard criteria, my objective was to provide a productive and interactive learning experience where my students would be able to incorporate independently. I faced many insecurities during my first seven weeks of student teaching, wondering if I could possibly incorporate all of the resources and knowledge I gained from my education classes, develop standard-based lessons which allowed my students to explore broader based thinking.

My cooperating teacher, as well the other third grade teachers, were helpful and supportive in listening to my ideas and giving critical advice whenever I had a question. I feel now after twelve weeks of student teaching, I am developing a variety of approaches to specific content areas, while establishing a creative learning environment for my students. Assessing and tracking my students’ progress on a daily basis afforded me the opportunity to examine what part of the lesson or activity did the students master and which concept might have to be reinforced further. I learned through this experience that differentiated instruction is a necessary component to an effective lesson plan. It is
essential to integrate differentiated instruction so that all of my students have an opportunity to understand the process of the concept. This gives every student a chance to synthesize, apply, and extend their ideas. From my informal and formal assessments of my students after each lesson, I could critically internalize where I needed to improve my teaching skills.

During my student teaching experience, not only have I gained confidence in my ability to create and develop a lesson plan from a seed idea and increase my students’ thought process, I learned how beneficial it is individually to evaluate each student’s strengths and weaknesses. From my conferencing with students during guided reading and writer’s workshop, I learned as a student myself through the eyes and thought process of my students. It has been very rewarding for me to sit with twenty-four students throughout the week and enable them to develop critical reading and writing skills. By getting to know my students individually helped me to develop patience with their abilities and motivated me to create lessons and activities in which every student produced a tangible outcome. A very wise professor once told me, “work smarter, not harder.” I usually hear these words while I am preparing my lesson plans for the week.

My cooperating teacher was very grateful I wanted to experience every aspect of student teaching. She would politely ask me if I felt comfortable with the idea of preparing particular lessons. My professional development as a teacher could not have increased if I always taught lessons where I felt most comfortable. I was challenged to face my fears in areas I felt deficient. My comfort zone in areas such as science and math were maximized with each lesson and activity I demonstrated. My confidence teaching
these subjects were increased with every investigation, experiment and problem solving activity I demonstrated. As I want my students to embrace the strategies and skills I want them to master, I had to learn how to embrace the experiment and problem solving activity if I wanted my students to achieve success. The positive reinforcement and encouragement throughout my lessons, my cooperating teacher feels has given the students essential skills they need to implement daily.

I am sorry I am concluding my student teaching experience in a few more weeks, but I am eager and more confident to have my own classroom. I still like my personal teaching metaphor and consider myself Teacher as … Orchestra Conductor, as I have learned through experience I need to rely on my confidence, creativity, and knowledge in order to lead my students to successfully master their talents. As an Orchestra Conductor instills energy and excitement to each musical arrangement, I want the echo of my students’ energy and excitement instilled in every lesson and activity.