

School Culture Print and Visual Essay

This assignment asks you to look carefully at the culture of your school and process it in two different ways—using words and using images.

Your first step in completing this assignment is to collect all kinds of information by traveling around the community and viewing your students' environments--homes, businesses, recreation areas, and the school itself. You will also be gradually meeting staff members such as administrators, guidance counselors, teachers and other school personnel in your first few days in the school. You will probably get a chance to attend a faculty meeting; you may want to view some extra-curricular activities and participate in some lunch room discussions. Listen to what everyone has to say about the culture of the school's community.

Next, you will need to gather some data about your school and district by visiting the Ohio Department of Education website, the local Chamber of Commerce and official district publications and websites

In sum, you will need to learn all you can about who your students are and the contexts within which they are learning. Then you will need to process what you have learned in two different ways.

Print Essay

In a three-five page essay, answer the following questions:

1. Provide some demographic and other data about your school (i.e., test scores, poverty level, funding, graduation rates, percentages of students on IEPs, percentages of English Language Learners, numbers of students going on to postsecondary schools). What does this data tell you about your school? What does it mean for your teaching?

Expectations: Provide a description of your school that is rich and supported by relevant data where appropriate and available, indicating a good understanding of factors impacting learning and learners and how this knowledge will impact your curriculum and teaching.

_____/10 points for reporting of data

_____/10 points for what it means for your teaching

2. What are the broad social and political factors in your community that could influence your teaching? What do these mean for your teaching this fall?

Expectation: Provide a description of the broad values of the area as a whole, demonstrating that you understand the political and social contexts and tensions within the school and community, and ideas for how these broad values may impact your teaching.

_____/10 points for the factors

_____/5 points for what it means for your teaching

3. What does/do the culture(s) of the families of your school community mean for your teaching?

Expectation: Your essay will show us that you have a thorough understanding of the language, cultural practices, family goals, values and priorities of families in your district as well as examples of how this knowledge will be applied in your instructional decisions this fall.

_____/10 points for the factors

_____/5 points for what it means for your teaching

Visual Essay

The second half of this assignment asks you to prepare a visual essay that explains what you have learned about the culture and how that will help you as a teacher. You may choose to create a movie, a website, a PowerPoint slideshow, or something else. A Visual Essay is a popular genre for magazines and on-line sites of all sorts. In this kind of composition most of the work is done with carefully selected and arranged photographs, with words playing a less important role: usually just an introduction and/or title and some captions. A Visual Essay is a good way to develop composition skills apart from extensive writing.

This assignment encourages you to think about all you've learned about your school and district and represent it visually (with some use of music, too, if so desired.) Your objective is to create a screen-based representation of the influence of these various demographic and cultural elements on your school and the work you will do there. You may start collecting images from school websites or photos you have taken (being sure not to show recognizable faces of students.) You may also visit Google Images, Flickr, Yahoo Image Search, YouTube etc., and find some images or video clips related to your school.

You may create this assignment in any one of the following programs: iMovie, Moviemaker, PowerPoint, VoiceThread (<http://voicethread.com>), Prezi (<http://prezi.com/>) or a comic book portrayal of your school's culture using Comic Life <http://plasq.com/comiclife>.

Essentially, your print essay will communicate your knowledge of your school's community in a more literal way, while your visual essay will communicate your knowledge of your school's community in a more abstract way.

Expectations

Images are arranged in a cohesive way. The theme(s) of the visual essay is (are) clearly defined.
_____ 10 points

Images visualize the major aspects of your theme. Images support and comment on each other.
_____ 10 points

Images are arranged in an innovative, creative way. If music or sound effects are used, they support the images.
_____ 10 points

If applicable, quotes or captions add another thought-provoking dimension to the images.
_____ 10 points

The visual essay is smooth technically, with quotes (if used) able to be read with no typos.
_____ 10 points

_____/50 points

TOTAL POINTS: _____/ 100