

What Students Felt they Learned

In their [reflective essay assignments](#) at the end of the course, virtually all students reported that the case-writing had a significant impact on their understanding of teaching and learning. For instance, half of the students (28 of 56) reported that writing the case had helped them understand what their students needed in order to learn well.

The process of analyzing my case and receiving feedback helped me to recognize where the students fit into the equation. Without this deep work, I do not think that I would ever have thought about how the lack of scaffolding caused their disengagement, or even the simple fact that this was a class disinterested in more kinesthetic learning activities...I realized how important it is for students to deeply engage in a subject, to work with it, transform it, apply it to new situations, all under my coaching and guidance. If that is what I need for deep understanding, then my students need it as well.

A somewhat smaller number (18 of 56) described case-writing as an opportunity to better appreciate the relationship between theory and practice, helping them to recognize the value of using theory to explain and evaluate their classroom work.

Without different theoretical lenses to view teaching in practice, teaching would seem unpredictable and happenstance...through writing my case and reading other cases, applying theory to practice has led me to new insight into teaching and learning...By using tools like theory, teaching is not the guessing game I thought it was.

Finally, about one-third of the students (17 of 56) felt that case-writing had allowed them to view their experiences through a more professional perspective, expanding their understanding of the case incident. In this student teacher's words, the experience of discussing and sharing her case idea with others was particularly helpful in deepening her understanding of the incident she described.

I saw how a 'not-so-great' teaching moment could be changed into a learning experience for me and other teachers through thorough analysis and applications of theory. Sharing my case with others, my case partner, and presenting it to a group of teachers heightened my learning experience. I watched my case progress into different stages; I saw it through multiple lenses due to new articles and theories.

Several of these teachers suggested that their initial explanations of the case incident were insufficient and described how they had developed richer explanations that seemed to account for the more complex, layered nature of the case. For instance, John noted that he originally felt that all he needed to do to improve the teaching in his case was a "little fine-tuning", perhaps to "add a day and try again," but by the end of the course he had a very different sense of the intricacies of the situation:

The experience of writing a case turned out to be a profound experience. When I finished teaching the unit in November I knew the lessons needed a little tuning...I talked to my CT about what happened and left it at that...Writing the case I was able to get a lot more out of what happened. I had my eyes opened to seeing the implications of time allotment, lesson sequencing, prior knowledge and pre-assessment, and making choices on the fly to ensure the success of a lesson. If I had not written and re-written the case as I did, I would not have the deeper insights I have...Before the development [of] my case study, I thought I would simply add a day or two and try it again...[but] I now know that I have to put more effort into my assessment of prior knowledge and concepts and that I have to not move on to new material until I am certain that I have achieved the goals I set out at the beginning.