**Fall 2010 Student Example (used with permission)**

Professional Development Assignment

 On October 22, 2010, I attended the ICSS conference at the Lisle Hilton in Lisle, Illinois. While I was there, I attended 5 different breakout sessions. I attended sessions on: using literature to take a look at social justice issues, service learning, using historical fiction to present facts, a session on merit pay, and a using technology in the classroom.

 The first session on using children’s literature in the classroom was a good session. The woman giving the session is a college professor at Aurora University. She showed us different examples of trade books that dealt with such difficult issues like the Holocaust. We basically passed 15 or 20 books around the room and took a quick glance at them. Toward the end of the session, the presenter gave every person in attendance a packet with over 90 different trade books to use for different social issues. That list of books is one of the most valuable things I have received in my time in college. I like the use of trade books because they are more interesting to read than textbooks, and I think it is easier for students to visualize the event(s) when they are given illustrations.

 The second session I attended, and I think the most important, was one about service learning. I think one of the main functions of social studies should be to teach people how to be good citizens. I hate to sound like an old man, but I cannot help to think that, overall, people are not as nice to one another as they used to be. One of my missions as a school teacher will be to provide students with service learning opportunities to help them become aware of certain community issues, and to help them become better citizens. Savage & Armstrong (2008) states the following:

research on service learning indicates that the experience does have a positive impact on students. Some of the benefits of service learning include a heightened sense of personal and social responsibility, a more positive attitude toward others, more complex patterns of thought, improved learning of content, and improved self-esteem. (p. 95)

During my three-week clinical experience, Kingston Elementary School was doing a food drive to help feed local citizens. Even though we never really did do social studies while I was there, my cooperating teacher made it a point to remind the students to bring in as many can goods as they can each day. My teacher lets the student leave the classroom to walk down to the office and turn in the can good that he or she brought.

 The third session I attended was about using historical fiction to introduce facts to students. The two middle school teachers that did the presentation were fantastic. Not only were they passionate about what they were telling us, but also I could tell the students were having fun with the extension activities that the teachers were having them do. The teachers had great ideas about using Skype to have the students do presentations in front of one another. If used properly, I always think technology should be part of the classroom.

 I have to be completely honest; I was not a big fan of the keynote speaker. I am not discounting his message, but I did not think that genocide was an appropriate topic for lunchtime conversation. I would like to hear his story again but maybe in a different setting.

 After lunch was over, I attended the most bizarre session of the day. I went to a session on merit pay. When I saw the option for this session on the agenda, I was excited. I like to listen to people discuss hot button issues. I went into the session feeling excited, but I left the session feeling disappointed. I had anticipated listening to experience teachers voice their opinion on merit pay and offer great insights. Instead, I heard a fifty-minute rant by a very passionate experienced teacher. The only problem is I had no idea what he was talking about. He was obviously against merit pay because he became so animated when he was talking about administrators, but I did not truly understand his message.

 The final session I attended was about technology. I really love technology. It is exciting to use. With a few simple clicks a student can take a good idea and/or project and turn it into a fantastic one. I think it is easy for some people to get stuck in a rut. The technologies we discussed in class are the same ones I see over and over again. I have seen teachers use Inspiration to make concept webs. I have seen dozens and dozens of Webquests and PowerPoint presentations. However, until the session on technology, I had never seen Bubbl.us, Glogster, and Prezi. Glogster is a really neat online tool students can use to create creative and fun posters. I also like Prezi a lot too. Prezi is a online presentation tool like PowerPoint, but it the appearance is a little different. I know that it takes a lot of time to get the parents on board and get the necessary paperwork filled out to grant the students permission to use Internet sites like these, but I am more than willing to try. I hope I have an opportunity to use one of these during my student teaching. I know I probably wont be able to get the students privileges for these sites, but that doesn’t mean I cannot use them.

 I really did enjoy my time at the conference. Even though I only connected with two of the sessions, I thought the day was successful. I got good insight on service learning projects. I had always heard the term service learning, but I did not truly understand what it meant until the conference. I got a great list of children’s books that I can use in the classroom, and I got a lesson on the current online technologies available to teachers and students. I think professional development is important for ANY professional. I plan on going to as many conferences as possible so I can expand my teaching toolbox. I want to be the best teacher I can be for my students, and me, and I think attending professional development conferences is a good start.

Works Cited

Savage, T.V. & Armstrong, D. G. (2008). *Effective teaching in elementary social studies (6th ed.).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.