

**ASSIGNMENTS & RUBRICS**

developed in using the book

*Fires In The Mind: What Kids Can Tell Us About Motivation And Mastery*

by Kathleen Cushman

**in a Preservice Teacher Education Course**

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Course Assignment Descriptions (pp. 2-7) and Assignment Rubrics (pp. 8-11)

*Assignment: Reflective entry @ <http://firesinthemind.org/>*

**Purpose:** To engage with a broader community of educators beyond the MAC program around interesting questions related to practice, and to contribute questions, ideas, challenges, etc. to the wider conversation about topics linked to the course text.

**Task:** You can comment on something on the website (<http://firesinthemind.org/>) or you can write to the author (kcushman@firesinthemind.org) about content you read in the book, and she may use what you say (with your permission of course) to create a new blogpost quoting you!

**Confidentiality:** Please omit **all** identifying information linked to your placement site (the names of your district, school, students, teachers, administrators, parents, etc.). Use only your first name in your posts. If you have a unique name and your context could be recognized by your name, use your initials instead.

**Documentation to Submit and Guidelines for Submissions:** If you write to Kathleen directly, cc me on the message. If you post to the blog, include the link in the e-mail message you send me.

**Resources:** I put four links on the CTools side bar (featured posts, for teachers, video, for parents) if you are considering posting directly to the blog.

**Due Date:**

## *Assignment: Who Are My Students? Many Interests, Many Strengths*

**Purpose:** To get to know some of the interests and strengths of all of the students in one of your classes and to use what you know to help you begin to build a positive relationship with at least two of the students with whom you have not yet made a connection.

### **A. Preparation**

1. Complete the *For teachers* section of pp. 29-30 **before** you do the field placement component.
2. Generate a script to guide your introduction of the task to the students.
  - a. The content of your script should be framed in a way that both encourages all students to respond **and** encourages the inclusion of truthful responses.
  - b. The content of your script should let them know why you are seeking this information (beyond it being a course assignment) **and** how you will use the information.

### **B. Field Placement Component**

1. Ask students to individually respond *in writing* to the *For youth* section on p. 29. You can use the format in the text or you can present the information in a different format.
2. You **must** include the two questions in the *For youth* section. Feel free to ask additional questions that will help you get to know the students better.
3. If you have students who struggle with writing, you can ask them the questions orally and you can write the responses.

### **C. Documentation to Submit and Guidelines for Submissions:**

1. The script you used to guide your introduction of the task.
2. A roster or list of the names of students in the class you chose to do this activity with (omit student ID# and other information about them). *This is the only document that should have real names.*
3. Your responses to **all** the *For teachers* prompts on pp. 29-30
4. Students' individual responses to the *For Youth* prompts on p. 29
  - a. You can submit hard copies of students' responses (***with identifying information removed***) or you can compile the information in a word, Excel, or other document (***with identifying information removed***).
  - b. For the students who did not submit responses, highlight them in some way along with the reason they did not submit responses to the questions (absent, chose not to do it, etc.).
  - c. Write how you plan to get to know those students who did not respond to the questions on p. 29?
5. A short narrative (no more than two pages double-spaced) describing how you used what you learned to begin developing a relationship with at least two students with whom you have not yet connected. *This narrative should be about actions you took not a plan about actions you will take in the future.*

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**D. Additional Guidelines for Submissions**

1. When responding to the items that would require students' names (i.e., C3, C4, & C5 above), use initials instead. If you have students with the same initials, you can use numbers SS1, SS2, SS3, etc.). You can also choose other ways to disguise their identities. All documents you create for this assignment should be free of actual names (student, teacher, school etc.).
2. When you answer the item about strengths (prompt 8 p. 30), be sure to list the students whose strengths you were unsure of **before** you receive their responses. If this winds up being all of the students, that's OK. The ultimate goal is not that you collect information; it is that you collect information that you use to learn more about your students as individuals. If you do not feel that their responses help you do get to know them (e.g., they say that there's nothing they do well or give you a response that is vague), seeking clarification can be used as an opportunity to get to know them better.
3. There are a variety of ways you can document that you found out the strengths (prompt 8 p. 30) of the students you were initially not sure of.
  - a. If you make a chart, you can highlight the strengths of those you were unsure of,
  - b. You can make a list of the strengths linked to the initials of those you were unsure of,
  - c. You can highlight strengths of those you were unsure of on the documents the students submitted, or
  - d. You can write a narrative about the strengths you uncovered about those you were unsure of (no more than two pages double-spaced).
4. For prompt 9 p. 30, be sure to come up with ideas beyond having students complete the prompts on p. 29. Be specific about how you might get more information.

***Assignment: Engaging Students in Planning to Strengthen Purpose and Value of Practice:  
Practicing Toward Mastery***

**Purpose:** To give students a voice in the unit planning process.

**Field Placement Component:** Find out from your mentor teacher at least one topic she or he expects you to teach next semester. This topic can (but doesn't have to) be linked to what you will be working on in your methods class. Using this topic as a starting point, **come up with what you want students to know about the topic**. This information will go in the first box on p. 114. Complete the rest of p. 114 with students in one of your classes. Record the responses your students gave. *Although you are starting with what you want students to know about the topic, please create space for students to share what they want to know about the topic.*

**Rephrasing the Questions and/or Generating Prompts and Examples:** The questions as written (p. 114) may be challenging in terms of eliciting responses from your students. Feel free to rephrase the questions in a way that you think will be more meaningful to them. ***Be sure to capture the intent of the questions if you rephrase them.*** Just in case you have students who might have difficulty responding to these questions, you want to have some prompts or examples to offer that might get them started. See p. 115-116 of course text for some ideas. Content that you are learning in methods and other courses may be helpful in terms of generating ideas.

**Choosing Participants:** You can meet with the whole class or a small group (minimum of five students that represent your class's diversity in terms of readiness, interests, or learning styles, etc.). If you can only meet with students individually select a minimum five students who represent the class's diversity.

**Recording Information:** For this assignment, you are expected to interact with students to get information. You are more likely to get useful information through a conversation in which you and the students can ask probing and follow up questions and build off of each other's comments than you will if you ask them to independently complete a list of questions. Therefore, *please resist the urge to have the students respond to the questions independently in writing.*

**Documentation to Submit and Guidelines for Submissions:**

- A. Submit a written introduction that provides contextual information (i.e., number of students who participated; the grade level(s) of the students; the class students are a part of (AP physics, algebra, American history, Spanish II, English literature, etc.); location of the conversation(s); etc.
- B. Submit an outline that includes your introduction of the *practicing toward mastery* task, its purpose, and your plan for facilitating the information gathering discussion process with students. Indicate whether you used the questions as written. If you have rephrased the questions, list the ones you used in the outline.

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- C. Option 1: Most if not all of you will be doing some planning in your methods courses. If the topic you address with students is one you are already creating a lesson/unit for in your methods class, you can use the same plan for this class.
1. Highlight and clearly label the following in your plan: a) topic, b) purpose of unit, c) sections that address the prompts (see p. 114 prompts 2-6).
  2. Use the *comment* function in Microsoft Word a) to explicitly indicate which areas (p. 114 prompts 2-6) you are addressing and b) to explain what you learned from students or what information you are using from the discussion with the students to inform particular portions of your plan.
- D. Option 2: If the topic you discuss with students is not one that you are already covering in a plan that you are creating in your methods course, you can write a narrative that includes a) the topic of the lesson, b) the purpose of the lesson, c) specific prompts (pp. 114 prompts 2-6), and d) how you plan to incorporate students' suggestions in your plan. This should be no longer than 1 1/2 pages single-spaced.

**Areas to be Covered in Unit Plan (see rubric)**

- Way(s) you are drawing students into the content of the lesson
- Way(s) you are helping students set reachable learning goals
- Way(s) you are asking students to practice the knowledge and/or skills they are learning
- Way(s) you are checking students' mastery of important knowledge and/or skills
- Way(s) you are going to chart their small successes

## ***Assignment: Developing an Alternative to Traditional Homework Assignment***

**Purpose:** To give you practice in creating an alternative to a traditional homework assignment and use some of the advice from students in the *Fires in the Mind* text to make homework more reasonable and valuable to students.

**Field Placement Considerations:** Because this assignment is about your own practice and not that of your mentor teacher, you can complete this assignment even if your mentor teacher a) does not give homework, b) gives traditional homework assignments or c) gives non-traditional homework assignments. If you want to connect this assignment to your setting, you can ask your mentor for an idea or copy of a traditional homework assignment for which you would create an alternative. You can also generate a homework assignment for a lesson you plan to teach this semester or during your student teaching or for the unit you are planning in your methods course. *You are not required to give this homework assignment to students in your placement setting.*

**Temporarily Suspending Your Own Beliefs:** Some of you may need to make an effort to avoid getting caught up in your own beliefs about homework and be willing to stretch in order to take seriously the students' suggestions, especially if you do not fully agree with them.

### **Documentation to Submit and Guidelines for Submissions:**

#### A. Contextual Information

1. If HW is given in your class, write about a page describing the homework process in your classroom. Answer the following questions: What purpose does HW serve? What types of tasks are given for HW? How frequently is HW given? How much time are students expected to spend on HW? Is HW graded or ungraded? How do students get feedback on completed HW? How is completed HW used in the instructional process?) Describe what is working well and what could work better in terms of HW as it is currently implemented in your classroom.
2. If homework is not given in your classroom, write a page providing a rationale for why it is not given and describe the opportunities students have to get the practice they need to develop competency in terms of academic content and skills. What do you see as the advantages and disadvantages of not having HW as a form of practice?

#### B. Submit a handout of the alternative homework assignment you created. This would be the document you give students. If you choose to incorporate the following items of advice from the students (p. 134 items #1, #6, and/or #7), be sure to include them in an *easily identifiable* way on the handout. If you typically write assignments on the board in your classroom, please indicate this in your write up, but still submit the assignment to me.

#### C. Generate a script to guide your introduction of the homework assignment to the students. Your script should elaborate on all items you choose to incorporate in your assignment. Indicate in an easily visible way (e.g., highlight or label) which items you are addressing where in your script. In your script, it is particularly important to describe the purpose of the assignment (what knowledge and/or skills you are giving students an opportunity to practice and why they are important). Your script should *explicitly* address how you are incorporating the advice given on p. 134 and should be about a page double-spaced.

### Reflective Entry Rubric

Assignment	Non-Passing Range (C- or lower)*	C Range (C, C+)	B Range (B-, B, B+)	A Range (A-, A)
Reflective entry @ <a href="http://firesinthemind.org/">http://firesinthemind.org/</a>	Assignment does not meet the minimal requirements for a C range grade or the assignment is not submitted.	Submitted a general comment or question about motivation and/or mastery related issues.  Clearly and coherently written.	Submitted a comment or question related to something specific in the <u>Fires in the Mind</u> book or website.  Explicitly identified where the topic you are addressing was mentioned.  Clearly and coherently written.	Same as B range <b>plus</b> an explicit link is made to something occurring in your placement setting.  Clearly and coherently written.

## Who Are My Students? Many Interests, Many Strengths Rubric

Assignment	Non-Passing Range (C- or lower)*	C Range (C, C+)	B Range (B-, B, B+)	A Range (A-, A)
Who Are My Students? Many Interests, Many Strengths	Assignment does not meet the minimal requirements for a C range grade or the assignment is not submitted.	<p>Names only roster submitted.</p> <p>Written script or outline submitted.</p> <p>Submitted responses to all nine prompts in the <i>For teachers</i> section pp. 29-30.</p> <p>Submitted individual student responses to prompts in <i>For youth</i> section pp. 29 (hard copies or chart).</p> <p>Written content is descriptive, clear, coherent, and includes sufficient information to facilitate reader's understanding.</p> <p>Relevant expectations presented in assignment description are fully addressed.</p>	<p>Same as C range.</p> <p>Same as C range <b>and</b> script or outline framed to increase response rate <b>and</b> truthful responses <b>or</b> included purpose <b>and</b> use of information.</p> <p>Same as C range <b>and</b> you submitted in writing the strengths of the students you were initially not sure of.</p>	<p>Same as C range.</p> <p>Same as C range <b>and</b> script or outline framed to increase response rate <b>and</b> truthful responses <b>and</b> included purpose <b>and</b> use of information.</p> <p>Same as B range <b>and</b> you wrote a detailed description of how you <u>used</u> what you learned about at least <u>two</u> students with whom you have not yet connected and the results of your efforts.</p>

**Engaging Students in Planning to Strengthen Purpose and Value of Practice:  
Practicing Toward Mastery Rubric**

Assignment	Non-Passing Range (C- or lower)*	C Range (C, C+)	B Range (B-, B, B+)	A Range (A-, A)
	<p>Assignment does not meet the minimal requirements for a C range grade or the assignment is not submitted.</p>	<p>Submitted your response to first prompt and summarized students' responses to prompts in boxes 2-6 p. 114.</p> <p>Submitted introduction and outline.</p> <p>Written content is descriptive, clear, coherent, and includes sufficient information to facilitate reader's understanding.</p> <p>Relevant expectations presented in assignment description are fully addressed.</p>	<p>Same as C range plus you included students' input about <b>one or two</b> of the five areas in your plan.</p> <p>Clearly identified unit topic, purpose of unit and the <b>one or two</b> prompts you chose to address from p. 114.</p> <p>Written comments submitted via <i>comment</i> function or in Microsoft Word foreground students' contribution to the unit plan.</p>	<p>Same as C range plus you included students' suggestions in response to <b>three-five</b> of the five prompt areas in your plan.</p> <p>Clearly identified unit topic, purpose of unit and the <b>three-five</b> prompts you chose to address from p. 114.</p> <p>Written comments submitted via <i>comment</i> function or in Microsoft Word foreground students' contribution to the unit plan.</p>

## Developing an Alternative to Traditional Homework Assignment Rubric

Assignment	Non-Passing Range (C- or lower)*	C Range (C, C+)	B Range (B-, B, B+)	A Range (A-, A)
Developing an Alternative to Traditional Homework Assignment	Assignment does not meet the minimal requirements for a C range grade or the assignment is not submitted.	<p>Provided contextual information.</p> <p>Created a handout of an alternative to traditional homework assignment informed by content in Chapter 8.</p> <p>Written content is descriptive, clear, coherent, and includes sufficient information to facilitate reader's understanding.</p> <p>Relevant expectations presented in assignment description are fully addressed.</p>	<p>Same as C range and you addressed <b>one or two</b> of the homework suggestions on p. 134 in the script you submitted (Choose from bullet # 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, &amp; 7).</p> <p>Items #1, #6 and #7 were clearly labeled in the <b>student handout</b> if they were addressed.</p> <p>Items addressed were numbered and highlighted or otherwise clearly labeled in the <b>script</b>.</p>	<p>Same as C range and you addressed three-five of the homework suggestions on p. 134 in the script you submitted (Choose from bullet # 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, &amp; 7).</p> <p>Items #1, #6 and #7 were clearly labeled in the <b>student handout</b> if they were addressed.</p> <p>Items addressed were numbered and highlighted or otherwise clearly labeled in the <b>script</b>.</p>

\*You may be given an opportunity to redo a submitted assignment that does not meet C range expectations.