Jim was a student intern in mathematics at an urban high school this year. The school is a highly diverse school of approximately 1400 students from lower and middle class backgrounds.

He taught Algebra, Algebra Essentials 11 and Pre-Calculus (with a second collaborating teacher). Jim’s students ranged from ninth through twelfth grades, from average to above-average abilities.

He immediately impressed me with his commitment to teaching as a life work by attending optional textbook “users” workshops and staff planning meetings preceding the opening of school. He quickly and competently assumed teaching responsibilities once the year started, and he made it a point to familiarize himself with the school, school staff, and community in which we work.

He has all of the math and computer skills that one should be able to expect from a college graduate, but he stands out from others who also have those skills by being able to bring them to the level of the students he teaches. I was often amazed at how quickly he could assess that a lesson was just a little off the mark and come up with a different explanation, a new example, or an activity to involve the students. In this respect, he had the abilities of a much more seasoned teacher.

He was also very strong in unit and lesson planning, thinking out every step and strategy to keep students aware of where they were going and how they were going to get there. I also liked his questioning strategies which allowed students “think” time, and the fact that he dignified their answers and followed through with additional questions to build on student successes. Everything that Jim did in the classroom, from arrangement of the room and assigning seats, to displaying student work, to displaying the lesson “targets”, to using costumes and props, was to help students understand and appreciate mathematics. Because students were so actively engaged and were always treated with respect, he did not have discipline problems. The students truly liked him and felt that they learned a great deal from him.

Jim has strong communication skills. Not only does he speak and write well, but he also communicates his genuine concern about people and his work in his appearance and manner. He was regarded as one of “us” a real teacher, by the rest of the faculty during his time because of his professional demeanor, his dependability, and his preparation and teaching abilities.

He is the kind of teacher I like to endorse, not only because of his intellect and skills, but also because of his true commitment to the field of teaching, his belief that every effort should be 100%, his view that one can always improve and should work to do so, and his genuine love and appreciation for kids. My students and I both grew because of the time Jim spent with us.
During his internship year Dave taught mathematics and biology at an urban high school of about 1400 students populated almost entirely by African American students. Our graduating class this year has 200 students while the freshman class typically has over 750 students. A large percentage (approximately 80%) of those who graduate go on and further their education. Dave is a graduate of our high school.

During his internship year he taught two classes of ninth grade mathematics and two classes of biology. This is a second year of science for most of the students, but many are still in the ninth grade. The math students were part of a Professional Development School project called the Ninth Grade Team. They were in a two hour block with earth science as the other hour. The object was to give the students extra support with high expectations, parental involvement, and a time-out room for unacceptable behavior. Dave worked immediately in these classes with individual students and small groups as many were well below grade level in their math abilities. His main lead teaching was in biology. After observing, helping individuals, participating in planning, and teaching a few classes, the lead teacher for about two weeks during first semester. More observation and planning followed and took over teaching both math and biology to begin the second semester. The following sections will deal with the program standards of assessment in more detail.

Knowing and Teaching Subject Matter
Unlike most interns, Dave had received his undergraduate degree several years ago. This seemed to present a problem in the biology area and he found it necessary to spend more time with the textbook to “bone up” on some of his knowledge. When he did that, he presented a much stronger teacher to the students. In addition Dave was in a group who had had no previous classroom experience before the internship. His methods class was during the summer and lesson plans were tried on each other - not a true measure of their use in a real classroom.

Another area he has been working on is increasing the use of examples, analogies, and applications of the topic in both math and biology. At first, he tended to answer questions only by repeating what he had previously said and not by trying some different explanation. Dave continues to work hard on this.

Lastly, he is starting to allow himself enough time to go over materials before presentation so he can anticipate problems and questions and check over his own answer keys. This is allowing him to be better prepared to address the problems and questions of the students and be prepared with more responses, or give an explanation prior to an assignment. This has been helpful to both Dave and the students.

Planning, Teaching, and Reflecting
One of Dave’s biggest struggles has been with planning. Math was not so much of a problem in that the Transition Math textbook is fairly easy to follow and actually best if done as suggested by the authors. The struggles were mainly in the presentation of the information, explanation to the students, and pacing of the work. As mentioned earlier, Dave is working on increasing his repertoire of examples, analogies, and applications. He did not seem to anticipate students'
Strength: Less successful intern  
Subject: Math  

misconceptions, questions, or slowness in understanding some concepts. This did improve as his lead teaching continued.

The problem in biology focused on the use of the book. This is the first year of using Biology Visualizing Life in our classrooms and this could have been a part of the struggle. It seemed to be difficult for Dave to determine the big picture and therefore what was important to be learned. Additionally, Dave had trouble assessing what students already understood or what misconceptions they might have and how they might be addressed in a productive, coherent manner. Too often the lessons appeared to be time fillers and not designed to produce meaningful learning or understanding. He seemed to feel it was necessary to use the text as a major learning tool at the expense of lab work and other hands-on/minds-on experiences. Another concern was the lack of change throughout the hour to address the different learning styles of all students. Most people cannot stay focused on one style for fifty-five minutes.

In general, Dave's reflecting seemed to be done through his personal journal which was turned in to his field instructor. Much of my reflection, done while observing his teaching, was written out and given to him for his own use. No comments or responses were expressed. Our discussions were focused mainly on determining the next move or upcoming plans to try and help him improve on his current teaching and not as much on what had been done. He is very accepting of constructive criticism given concerning his planning or teaching and will hopefully try to incorporate some of these suggestions into future lessons. This will be easier for him when he gets a feel for the concepts that are important to be taught and the various ways they can be addressed to meet the needs of all learners.

Classroom Management and Student Engagement
One of Dave's strengths has been the creation and management of a classroom learning community. He encouraged the students to create classroom rules that both he and the students could live with and has managed to live by them throughout his lead teaching. Dave has tried to use cooperative learning on a regular basis but needs to work on time management and how these activities can promote good learning. He has a strong desire to provide as much individual attention as possible and is still learning how to facilitate an entire classroom of learners.

Dave stated early in the year that a priority of his was to engage students. He has attempted to do this by creating a safe environment - one that encourages questions and discussions by the students without fear of put-downs. He has also stressed the value of education and learning as a lifelong endeavor and served as a role model with open discussions and encouragement of academic achievement. In reality, he has discovered that in real life, not all students can be engaged all of the time. At first, his response was rather intolerant and harsh toward those students who were not engaged or actually acting out with inappropriate behavior. Dave knows what is appropriate and wants the students to know too but has accepted that he can only do so much. He seems to have a better understanding of his own limitations with seeing students one class hour a day and the realization that we can't make students accept responsibility since many have not been taught basic behavior at home. He is still doing all he can to encourage all students to engage. This includes the involvement of parents and counselors as well as helping in Chapter 1 planning for at risk students. He is best when talking with students one on one as he was able to while still
Strength: Less successful intern

Subject: Math

Note: Name of intern has been changed.

mostly observing in the classroom. As lead teacher he still manages to talk with many of the students as they enter or leave the class and show his caring and respect for them, even if they don't have it for themselves.

Professional Development and Relationships
During Dave's lead teaching he made use of the adolescent health center staff for a presentation. Not only did all of the students learn but many were introduced to a service they may not have known existed for their use. He has also been involved in working with the Chapter 1 teachers in planning and working with more than half of the ninth grade math students in the classes he taught. To provide some income, he worked for Michigan State University's Talent Search Program by tutoring after school. The benefit was for the students as Dave became more active in the program than in any year in the past.

In conclusion, with work on his planning and teaching, I think Dave will become a good teacher. He has a lot to offer the students as a positive role model who is caring but believes that students have some responsibility for themselves. He is willing to help them all he can.