

Reflecting on Teaching and Learning Through a Project GLAD® Lens

by Amanda Reyes—Director of Financial Capability, Nusenda Credit Union, OCDE Project GLAD® Key Trainer, DLeNM, & Course Instructor, Central NM Community College

Promising practices...

Advocacy

Authentic Educator

Pivot Creativity Innovation

Financial Capability

Advocacy

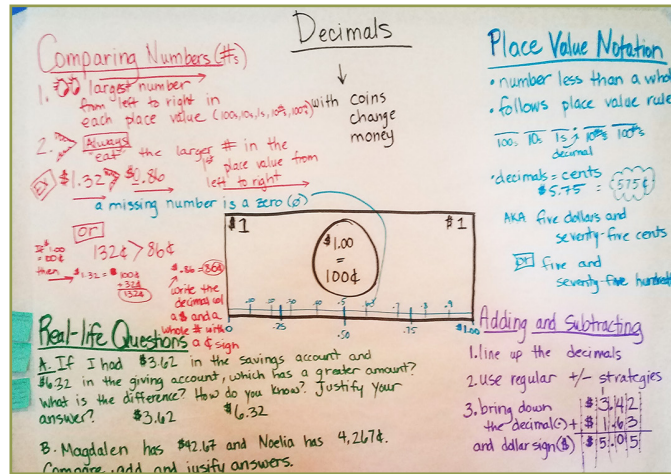
Advocacy

I have been teaching since 2001, each year building upon unique opportunities and diverse student populations. I have been fortunate to have taught in Pre-K, elementary, middle school, high school, and college settings in traditional and community schools. The programs in which I have worked include general education, special education, gifted education, and inclusion, with newcomer, emerging bilingual, and second language learning students, and those with identified disabilities. I have been a peer mentor, administrative intern, assistant principal, supervisor, director, and instructor.

My personal frame and motivation are closely aligned with the values I learned as I became a Key Trainer of OCDE Project GLAD®. In a world of unlimited access to information but filtered knowledge, educators are the front-line, the first responders, and the cultural ambassadors for students, families, peers, collaborating staff, and even their administrators. Educators must navigate the experiences and needs of students with income insecurity, second-language learning, or a disability, then guide students to build necessary skills for future careers, kind hearts, and the ability to analyze their worlds. Countless resources have been written, presented, or recorded about this work; how to be more efficient, effective, advanced, collaborative, and engaging. But, in my opinion,

none have taken the stance of Project GLAD®, originally built on a foundation of advocacy for a specific group of students, yet brilliantly designed for inclusivity.

Project—What's in a name? Merely everything.



A Pictorial Input Chart on decimals supports financial literacy students with concept and language development.

The word project implies time, thought, and effort. Learning is the act of the brain taking in information and analyzing this as a problem to be solved. GLAD, the acronym for Guided Language Acquisition Design is the extension of this long-term learning—supporting the teacher in developing content knowledge and building language, the foundation

of interaction between people. Rhythm, color, repetition, connection to prior learning, feelings of security, and meaningful communication are naturally, yet intentionally planned. Acknowledging and incorporating the learning theories and brain research that serve as the foundation for these techniques are acts of advocacy.

Authentic—Connected to Personal Experience

Project GLAD® reminds educators that students come with their own experiential bank; one that is overflowing with opportunity to build upon their truth, while acknowledging that they each have a different, powerful, story. Teachers bring their own experiences and learning as they find ways to make connections with their students, and the content and language they teach. Framing personal experiences as wealth is an act of advocacy.

Educator

I am no longer a classroom teacher, but use

—continued on page 7—

Soleado—Spring 2022





—continued from page 6—

experiences and lesson learned from my previous roles to direct and expand the community financial education programs for Nusenda Credit Union. This includes teaching two dual credit courses per semester with the Albuquerque Public Schools' (APS) Career Enrichment Center (CEC) though Central New Mexico Community College (CNM). It was challenging to teach an online high school course for the first time, merging financial capability (the capacity, based on knowledge, skills, and access, to manage financial resources effectively) along with career exploration, and using a new Learning Management System (LMS). Therefore, I drew on a personal framework for thinking about how my experience as a Project GLAD® Key Trainer helped me to incorporate the structure and strategies into my various professional and volunteer roles. My non-negotiables reflect what I see as the spirit that guides the how and why of Project GLAD®. They are:

- ◇ Cooperation and facilitation of communication is key.
- ◇ Intentional scaffolding of information and learning must be included in all planning.
- ◇ Input must be purposeful and include returning to the content for a deeper dive.
- ◇ Spiral learning facilitates the gradual release of responsibility.
- ◇ Mentorship is vital.

I have intentionally utilized these non-negotiables when designing professional development for school staff, updating coursework for teachers at CNM, and even in my work with the Girl Scouts. In my role at Nusenda Credit Union, this same approach supports education program design and facilitation of the financial curriculum. Project GLAD® reinvigorated my love for teaching, training, and learning, plus added specific strategies to innovate and “pivot” in various situations. Thinking as an educator, is an act of advocacy.

Pivot—A Term That is Foundational to Business

This term refers to what happens when there is a starting point, then a barrier, and the need to change direction or move differently. Educators have long been masters of the pivot when school communities change, new technologies and materials are introduced, or when research points to updated best practices. The past year and a half have taught us all that our work with students,

regardless of the format—virtual, face-to-face, in-person, recorded, and more, must continue in order to meet the demand for learning. In the fall of 2020, I was teaching virtually while navigating online school with my three children: a 1st grader, a 5th grader, and an 8th grader. The most engaged online were the youngest two, both attending a school that uses Project GLAD® nearly schoolwide in the dual language and English+ classrooms. My son, the youngest, sat across the room from me every single day. Working through a chant with his teacher—headphones on, school iPad propped up, body moving, and words flowing—he thrived. He learned to read and write in two languages with the help of Pictorial Input Charts, Chants, sentence stems, a picture dictionary, Signal Words, and an incredible teacher who relied heavily on the foundation of Project GLAD® as the primary format for learning. I couldn't see or hear a full lesson, but I followed her lead and taught myself how to incorporate the foundations of Project GLAD® while teaching (and learning the technology tools) online. What gratitude I have for my child's teacher and her unknown leadership! Learning from others, is an act of advocacy.

Creativity

Project GLAD® reminds educators that we have permission to be creative. Project GLAD® acknowledges there is no one approach to teaching and learning, but rather a set of powerful strategies that complement the classroom, honor the educator, appreciate individual students from an asset lens, and motivate focused communication between peers. Project GLAD® found me when I was disillusioned with the materials and approaches thrown at special education programs. Too many failed to be engaging, to foster opportunity for inclusive learning, or to encourage high standards for my students with various disabilities. I was equally disillusioned with the divisions that are created when students learn through the “other” approach, be it strategies, class size, programs, or teaching style. I have found that my most successful years of teaching involved team teaching based on a Project GLAD® foundation, which included students of all academic and linguistic levels. This required significant planning and relationship building on the part of everyone involved, including educational assistants and specialty staff. When we planned together using

—continued on page 15—

—continued from page 7—

Project GLAD®, our ideas, knowledge of students, and pedagogy worked synergistically to build a strong foundation for students, constructing one that supported scaffolding, accommodations, modifications, and differentiation. We started with standards, considered the student population, and envisioned robust learning experiences. Creativity in planning is an act of advocacy.

Innovation

Educators are at the forefront of innovation. We take new and old ideas, current events, and available technology or tools to teach students how to think. Moving in a new direction with my career was a natural progression. I relied heavily on Project GLAD® foundational research and theory to understand the opportunities for service with financial capability in Pre-K through high school in the formal, traditional education setting. Historically, financial literacy standards are not included in New Mexico's standards, making this work more difficult to conceptualize in classrooms across the state. In the summer of 2020, I completed a standards analysis of financial education using Common Core State Standards and approved NM standards. Noticing these were sparse and disconnected from the core of our current events, I created mini-units based on the Common Core Math standards, taking Strategies that Hang Together to sketch out a primary, intermediate, and secondary mini-unit comprised of the following charts: Observation, Inquiry, and Pictorial Input, along with sentence/question stems for 10/2's. The Pictorial provides a visual format for analyzing and organizing key concepts within the standards, when writing a short unit. Though we typically encourage educators to build units by starting with the Process Grid, completed Pictorials can help educators quickly use visuals, color-scaffolds, and content, to determine scaffolding techniques, differentiation strategies, and appropriate accommodations across grade levels. The vertical alignment of standards in math revealed the need to supplement Tier 1 and Tier 2 content vocabulary. Change, coins, budget, expense, income, spend, save, and give are just a few examples.

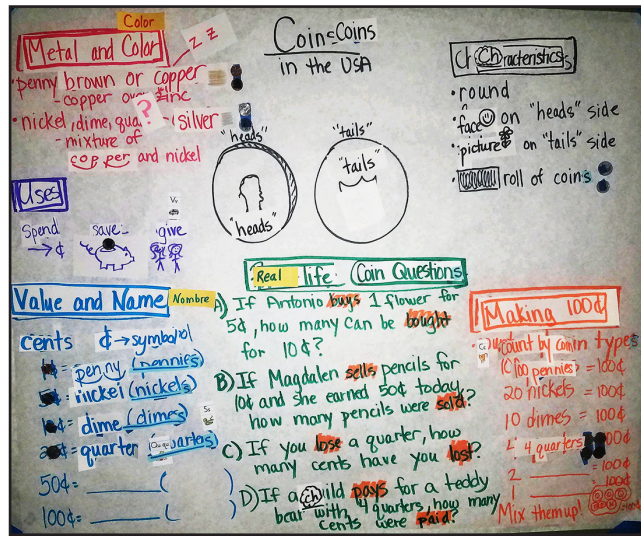
Incorporating real-life problems with the math content increased the opportunity to teach language across content. In the example on this page, note

the syllable division (using Wilson Language Training notations), interactive word wall (Four Blocks), highlighted verb forms (sells/ sold, lose/ lost, etc.), and cognates (yellow strips). Intentional planning for these basic Pictorials encourage high levels of engagement in the classroom and for community application. Opportunities for curriculum and program development require a balance of proven and forward-thinking strategies. After fielding

multiple requests for financial literacy resources for high school math, I am now facilitating a team through Nusenda, some of whom are Project GLAD® practitioners and trainers, tasked with creating a financial capability course in math. Innovation in service, is an act of advocacy.

Financial Capability

Education is power and opportunity, but financial capability is important because it is the pathway to economic freedom. When individuals engage in building knowledge, are given quality tools, and have a trustworthy support system to make financial decisions, they are more equipped to make an informed choice for current or emergency situations and understand the long-term implications of such decisions. This cycle of knowledge, tools, and teamwork creates empowerment for the individual. However, this cycle is not exclusive. By definition, the act of empowerment is a gift that is shared through a community, crossing barriers for financial inclusion and long-term economic advancement. Financial Capability is an act of advocacy for self and others. What better lens through which to view curriculum development, delivery of instruction, and community advocacy, than through Project GLAD®?



This chart allows Ms. Reyes to teach language across content with a focus on syllabication, vocabulary development, verb forms, and cognates.

For more information on OCDE Project GLAD®, please visit www.dlenm.org/what-we-do/instructional-support-and-resources/ocde-project-glad

