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Reflection 2

R #2 – Matching Lesson to Student Physical Ability to Attend

Within the first grade class I work with at Crestmont Elementary School, there are seventeen students total in Mrs. Smith's class. Out of the seventeen in the class, ten are girls and seven are boys. The reading levels of this class go from one end of the spectrum to the other. The majority of the students are on level for first grade which means that they are recognizing sight words and understand the process of sounding out words they do not know immediately. There is one student that is in this class that knows all one thousand of his sight words already and is on a fourth grade reading level. There are a few students that are extremely slow at understanding how to read therefore is on a lower reading level. Because my teacher does not agree that students should be "written off" as a disability student, she does not have any disabled children in her classroom. She firmly believes that with enough one-on-one attention and teaching, any student can comprehend the information. After spending some time assessing how she spends her time with intervention students, I see how right she is! Mrs. Smith's students want to learn and enjoy school which is such a breath of fresh air to see.

Within this lesson, the students were taught how to write expository passages. Expository writing, or nonfiction writing, is where the writing passage is a true illustration of the main idea. Because the writing has to be true events and no imagination or story writing is able to be brought into their writing, it can be a challenge for students. With my first grade students, I came into the lesson fully aware that writing nonfiction articles or sentences would not be easy to teach. Therefore, I had to think up a creative way for them to distinguish the difference(s) between expository writing and

story writing. The idea that came to mind when thinking of an inventive way to teach this lesson was by using thick, black-rimmed glasses. I will admit that the first thing I ever think of when I think of a journalist or an expository writer of some kind are these stereotypical glasses. I thought that, through these glasses, the students could look at their papers in a different way.

When I started this lesson, I asked my seventeen first grade students if they have ever read a newspaper or magazine before. I, then, discussed what is written in newspapers and magazines and how the stories included within these writings are truthful accounts and portrayals of stories around the world. After a brief question and answer discussion about newspapers and magazines, I pretended that a journalist friend of mine said that her newspaper was in trouble. I went into a story about how the journalists did not show up for work that day and they needed to get a newspaper out as soon as possible. When I told the students that my “friend” asked if my smart first graders could help the newspaper out, they got really excited about accepting the offer. I pulled out a pile of words (ex: pencil) and told them that my “friend” already gave me the words for which we were to write about. As I read a few of the words aloud, the students gave emotions that expressed excitement and happiness because I tried to make the words fit specific activities or interests of the kids. After reading a few of the words, I explained that nobody will receive the same word as another in the class because the “newspaper” does not want to read the same article twice. I explained to the students how to write true definitions and draw accurate pictures and all that was expected of them through this writing process. After my explanation, I drew a word and did an example on the board for the students to see. I decided to do an example on the board instead of

already having an example ready for them so that they can see and hear how I processed my sentences and drawing.

After my example, I sat down and told them I had a secret that was very cool and only they can know. I had them come closer and whispered to the students “even journalists have their own magic to write good, truthful articles!” The kids played along and were very animated when they heard the secret. After I told them the secret, I quietly pulled out a pair of the black-rimmed glasses and quietly whispered a gasp of surprise. I whispered a gasp because I knew if I modeled a quiet expression that they would follow, and they did. I loudly whispered that these glasses were magic and that when writers put these on, they can only see true writing like what I wrote on the board and what is in newspapers and story telling is not seen. I was very specific with the rules about these glasses in saying that if they are played with and not used write, the magic would dry up and would not work anymore. I also told them that they are to only be used during brainstorming and when they start to write they should be taken off. Because of the way these lenses are designed, they give off blurry vision, making it difficult for the students to write. I showed the students just how to put the glasses on and take them off so that the students were not too rough on them and break them or any other unpredictable circumstances would occur. I told them that when they get these glasses, they were to be very quiet and stay on task. If they did not follow these rules, the glasses would be taken away and that whatever magic the glasses gave them would disappear. The students did not enjoy this statement, so they made sure to stay quiet throughout instruction time. After all the information was dispersed to the students, I sent them to their desks so I could pass out the glasses, the word of choice for each individual student, and a sheet of

paper. They got busy as soon as all the materials were passed out. After completing the activity, I had each child present their article. They had to get up, introduce themselves as “Journalist \_\_\_Name\_\_\_,” what his or her word was, read their article, and show the picture. After each presentation, the students would quietly and “professionally” clap and the next student would present. I did this so that each child could have an opportunity to feel pride in their work. Afterwards, I summed up the lesson by praising the students work and explaining that this kind of writing is called expository writing.

One aspect of this lesson that went as planned was how well the glasses worked for this lesson. I felt like the glasses would help distinguish differences between story writing from expository. I also liked the idea of having this prop to support classroom management. Because the students enjoyed the idea of wearing these fun costume glasses, they kept on task quietly so that the glasses would not get taken away. One aspect that did not go as planned was the fact that the students had a difficult time with spelling. Although the students are in first grade and are just learning how to read and write, I was not expecting so many questions on how to spell certain words. I eventually had to stop the students’ writing to tell them that they needed to “stretch” the word(s) out so that they can hear all the letters. After saying this, it helped the students some but they were still having a difficult time writing words onto paper.

The attention span of the students was wonderful; I was impressed as to how well they listened and participated in the assignment. I felt as though, through my emotions of excitement, interest, and passion for writing, they were able to play along and express the same emotions. Through this lesson, I was able to really feel a sense of how effective modeling behavior and what was expected of the students was. Using the glasses helped

keep their attention focused on their writing as well. They enjoyed using the glasses for “magic” in writing as well as writing about something they enjoyed.

This lesson took advantage of their ability to attend because they were able to write and express their personal point of view of a particular object of interest in a truthful manner. Because of limited time within the class day, the students rarely have time to write and present their work to their work. I felt that when they found out they were going to present their writings, they were able to attend at a higher level than normal because they wanted to be proud of their work. I also felt as though the glasses gave the students inspiration to write. The glasses’ “magic” gave the students confidence to be able to write accurate definitions and illustrate depictions of the object in a way that they normally would not be able to do. I felt as though the one thing that was a foul within this lesson is their ability to spell. After evaluating their work, I came to the realization that spelling should not be a big concern at the moment because they were able to translate a precise meaning of the word and portray a picture that let me know they understood what expository writing was. I felt as though I had a sufficient amount of time for this lesson. I was able to explain this lesson thoroughly, let them create their own article and present their article all within a fifty minute period. The one instance I had was one student was taken out of class in the beginning stages of my lesson for extra assistance. Because of this, I had to have this student do the lesson towards the end of the day. It ended up working out for the best because he is one of the lowest in the class and so I was able to adapt the lesson better for him through one-on-one attention.

Currently, I feel that through this lesson as well as lessons followed, I am learning how important it is to instruct the students fully. Since these students are in first grade,

they need to comprehend every bit of information needed for the assignment at hand. If not, the students end up extremely confused and frustrated. This is a barrier I am slowly starting to climb over. It has been, and still is, a difficult task to embrace but through help with my cooperating teacher and significant amounts of time planning each lesson, I am starting to understand what angles to look at and not miss. Every single piece of information is important and I cannot take anything as something the students already know. In the past internships, I have been with students in the third grade and sixth grade classroom, therefore getting used to the younger mentality has been difficult. For example, because I thoroughly explained the appropriate way to handle the glasses and what was expected from them, there were no issues with the glasses or behavior. If I had not explained how to behave during this lesson or how to handle the glasses, the students would have played around with the glasses and talked about things off-task. I have taught lessons where the students ended up frustrated because the instruction was not thorough. For example, in my story writing lesson, I was not specific about how to answer the 5W's (who, what, when, where, and why) and the 1H, therefore the students became confused and I ended up having to have the students stop and I had to go and explain the lesson further. I realized that, although it is perfectly acceptable to stop the students and re-teach the lesson, it is most appropriate to instruct the students accurately and specifically the first time you have their full attention.