

Teacher Coaching and Development Process

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EAD 530

May 27, 2020

Inquiry into Teaching and Learning: Observation Pre-Conference

In all of my years of teaching I can only remember one time having a real, in-depth conversation with any of my instructional coaches about the lesson planned for an observation. Also, I can only recall one of my observations requiring a lesson plan to be submitted prior to the pre-conference. Unfortunately, the only meetings similar to a preconference I have had was mainly to arrange the observations, making sure schedules did not conflict.

During the pre-conference video, Principal Young asked several questions to get an understanding of what she will see during her observation, and also asked for clarification about planned instructional strategies. At the end of their meeting, she asked the teacher if there were any areas that she wanted her to look for or pay special attention to during the observation. The teacher's responses to Principal Young's questions show that she has thoroughly thought about the lesson objective and how to get her students to demonstrate mastery and understanding. Based on these responses, it can be said that she uses lesson planning as a "proactive practice" (Nagro et.al, 2019).

Assessment of Teaching and Learning: Classroom Observation

Activating students' prior knowledge is an ideal strategy when beginning a new lesson. "All new vocabulary needs to be explicitly linked to prior experiences with connections made to past academic learning. This allows students to have the opportunity to make an immediate and concrete connection between their understanding and knowledge of the world and what they are learning in the classroom." (Wessels, 2012). The teacher was able to connect students' ideas

about why authors (or anyone, rather) writes, and connect it to the three main purposes for writing- to entertain, inform, or persuade.

I would also give her positive feedback on her classroom management, preparation, enthusiasm, and modeling. Modeling expectations, whether it be for academic or behavioral learning, is especially necessary at the early childhood level. Also, her use of sentence frames and closing the lesson by restating the objective were all exceptional practices, in my opinion.

While I love the idea and discourse during the “Inside/Outside Circle” share activity, I would suggest modifying it for space reasons. As some of the students showed in the video, it can be frustrating when there are over ten separate conversations going on and you just simply want hear and be heard. Maybe splitting the time between an independent and partner activity, that way students are all not doing the same thing at once.

Furthermore, I would also suggest to the teacher some other methods of actively engaging the students. Although this was only one lesson observed, I do believe that for a topic such as author’s purpose, I can think of many different activities and literature choices that may be a little more engaging for 2nd grade students. I also wondered about differentiation for this content. I was only able to view 5 minutes of the video, and it was whole-group teaching. While there is nothing wrong necessarily with this instructional method, I would just want to ensure that our gifted and exceptional students are not left out of the learning process.

Assessment of Teaching and Learning: Post-Observation Conversation

Principal Young’s first words were thanking the teacher for allowing her into her classroom, and that she viewed some great instructional strategies. She then asked the teacher

how did she think it went, allowing the teacher to share her feelings and feedback before divulging into any of her own observations. Overall this brief conversation set a positive tone for the rest of the post-conference.

Using specific evidence from the observation allowed the principal and teacher to make connections during their conversation. These connections served as talking points for them to further discuss the lesson. This also allowed the teacher to explain what she was thinking, and reflect on what went well versus what she would change.

In my opinion, Principal Young was effective in validating the strengths of the lesson, as the teacher was more receptive to her feedback due to her positivity. I have always been told that you always start with positives before jumping into what may be taken as negative, and she does just that.

Phrasing feedback as a question is a good strategy as most teachers often already know or are aware of their areas of weakness. Communicating this way clearly made the teacher feel safe to divulge in her rationales for her instructional decisions, and for them to discuss strategies of improvement together. She also made sure to give the teacher reassurance (i.e. “I think that is a very solid reflection.”) In my closing opinion, a post conference for any observation is meant to be a reflective practice, one that reinforces support and collaboration.

REFERENCES

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