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BEDUC 410

Content & Reflection-Project #2

2-18-11

Context

My small group consisted of five 3rd grade students; three girls and two boys. All the students speak English as their first and only language. This particular small group of students did not receive grade level scores on their last MAP (Measure of Academic Progress)-Reading assessments. Their scores indicated they are relatively low in the comprehension department. One student is not a SPED student officially, but tends to process things slower than other students at grade level. All students love to read, but still struggle with strategies to further comprehension of text. I also determined their ability by looking at their files where my MT (master teacher) has informal reading conference materials. At this stage in their cognitive development and comprehension abilities any comprehension strategy will be beneficial for all the students in this group, but questioning is at the top of the list.

The students’ next book project will be a report and poster board about a specific wild animal. This book report is to help students a) to become an expert about a specific wild animal and b) to become familiar with the feature of a non-fiction text. By doing a small group instruction around the book *Dolphins* I am guiding the learning of a wild animal for those in my group. This is also a form of scaffolding instruction for the students in my group that have lower reading scores. The students will learn how to ask questions about a non-fiction text that will help guide them in their own research of a wild animal for their book projects. This trimester’s (district wide) focus is on non-fiction.

Analysis

It took me a while to do this particular lesson at my main placement. All the reading groups were right in the middle of another book and working on different strategies with my MT. After looking closely at all the groups, I did find one that was getting close ending a book and moving on to the next. This group also happens to be slightly lower than a few other groups. My MT felt this group would be best for me to work with. In order to determine what would be most beneficial for this group I spent time talking to each one and research their files. Based off of my MT’s informal reading conference notes and their MAP-reading assessment, I felt the strategy “questioning” would be most useful for this particular group of students. I choose the book *Dolphins* because according to Routman’s (2003) guide for evaluating book, it will engage the students and support their learning. Given my small group of students’ reading levels, the size of the book, including the appearance of print, page layout and spacing between words and lines, is appropriate for all the students. The book, *Dolphins,* provides the right amount of unique words (repeated throughout text) with that of familiar words. The concept and vocabulary are familiar to the students as they have had a small bit of knowledge presented at the beginning of the school year and that their school mascot is a dolphin. The only (smallest of) issue with this book is that the length may be a bit long for a two day lesson (32 pages total-4 chapters). The length of the book would be great if the students had more time and a second skill/strategy to focus on. When selecting the other materials for this lesson I thought back to Tovani (2000) and Routman (2003) and decided to let the kids use sticky notes to write their questions on. As for choosing to do a KWL chart, I can’t reference any particular author or professor for the idea as I believe I have read or heard about it in almost every class.

Surprisingly enough I did not have to make any major changes mid-lesson. I am only about 50% confident that is because I know these five students extremely well and have worked with them plenty of times. The other 50% is pure and simple luck! I did, however, notice that my slower processing student didn’t have very many questions and seemed a bit “spaced out.” During the silent reading (you-do) portion of the lesson, I decided to work with Sam (pseudonym) one-on-one. This was not in my lesson plan, but it was something I knew to look out for. Seeing one student struggle during the lesson and knowing another student was struggling by looking at their post-it notes did slightly change the course of my second lesson. Without boring the other three students who had excellent questions I repeated the “I-do” and “we-do” portion of the second lesson at a faster pace than the last lesson. During the “you-do” section of the second lesson is when I stepped in and worked with each of the two struggling students one-on-one.

At the end of the second lesson, the students had created a wonder KWL chart full of questions and answers. The amount of information on the KWL chart is impressive considering we only covered two full chapters between the two lessons. If the students and I would have had time to read all four chapters I believe the KWL chart would be complete. The students learned multiple characteristics of dolphins, including: personalities, diets, predators, different species, hunting areas, baby dolphins’ diets, and body structure. All this information was on the KWL chart and presented by the students. The students also learned how to ask questions while reading a text to gain further understanding. I know this by looking at the questions presented on the KWL chart, sticky notes and “questioning FQR” worksheet. Some questions include: Are dolphins prey?, What do dolphins eat?, Do all dolphins make the same sounds?, Where is Chile and New Zealand?, When dolphins swim in pods, are they nice to each other or do they fight?, and many more. If I had more time with the students, I would like to finish the book *Dolphins*, but I would like to have the students focus on their schema; activating and using background knowledge.

Reflection

I have to admit, at first I was intimidated by this lesson. It seems that everywhere I look guided reading is done differently. After I focused on a particular group and did my research, I realized that as long as I am focusing on what this group needs then the students are getting some form of guided reading. In regards to my two lessons, the only thing I would change would be to not introduce the “questioning FQR” worksheet. My students were doing a great job with the sticky notes and after I introduced the worksheet the students were confused. I didn’t have to guess that they were confused; many of them said “I don’t get it” or “what is the ‘fact’ part again?” I immediately thought of Tovani (200) when she was discussing that teachers can’t be expected to know when a student doesn’t ‘get’ it. My MT has created a classroom where every student knows they are responsible for their learning and that was no different during my lesson. Taking the time to further explain and model the worksheet took the lesson past the time anticipated. The worksheet is a good form of written assessment, but I could assess my students learning from the sticky notes. I will use the worksheet again, but not at the same time as the sticky notes.

After the lesson was over, and thanks to my field instructor, I felt very good about my lesson. One of my lesson’s biggest strengths was the pre-selected questions during the modeling stages (I-do and we-do). Having good questions to model allowed the students to understand what kinds of questions they should be asking while reading the text on their own. Ah, modeling! I have had the hardest time actually modeling what I am thinking while working with students on random assignments, but not with this lesson. I truly enjoyed the modeling process and it felt natural this time. This project has helped me grow as a professional in many ways!