



What Makes This TEAM Reflection Paper Successful?

Some specific examples/evidence that contributed to the success of this paper are provided below.

Module Two: Planning

Grade: 5

Subject: Language Arts

Criteria I: Development of New Learning (*How the teacher developed new learning and what was learned*)

How the teacher developed new learning:

- Collaborated with mentor, fifth grade colleagues, reading specialist and literacy coach
- Read *Learning By Doing* by Richard DuFour, *Constructing Meaning* and *That's a Great Answer* by Nancy Boyles
- Reviewed the DRA 2 teacher guide and supporting materials

What the teacher learned:

- "I also realized that except for the workstations, I had left all the planning to the teacher's manual. . . . I should have been planning for the individual needs of my students."
- "I now knew that I needed to find material and content that would be retained over time and not just taught to the test. Also, I learned that when planning I needed to ask myself if proficiency in a standard would increase students' knowledge in other subject areas, and could it be used successfully in the next lesson or the next grade level?"
- "I know that by planning time to explicitly model reading strategies and skills, students will learn through their observations of my modeling."
- "I learned that when planning I needed to ask myself proficiency in a standard would increase students' knowledge in other subject areas, and could it be used successfully in the next lesson or the next grade level?"

Criteria II: Impact on Practice (*How the teacher's planning practice is different*)

- "I will plan to model Prediction, Text Features, Summarizing, Interpretation, and Reflection through the activities that connect to Nancy Boyles' reading strategies and the DRA graphic organizers."
- After modeling strategies and graphic organizers . . . my plan is to provide guided practice, using the many differentiated organizers."
- "I will use *Boyles' Active Reader Report*, as a means of reflection and a way to monitor students' use of strategies."

Criteria III: Impact on Students (*How the teacher anticipates student performance/learning will improve as a result of changes in practice*)

- "I plan to meet with students to assess their progress. This will help students use metacognition, thinking while reading, to reflect on what they have learned."
- "I feel that continuously modeling the use of strategies and focus skills will encourage students to think about what they are reading and ultimately strengthen comprehension."
- "They will begin to see more clearly how this helps them to understand the story and begin to use these strategies more independently."
- "I should recognize an increase in the use of specific skills and strategies that have been taught and see improved DRA scores."

Indicator: 5. Teachers will plan instruction in order to engage students in rigorous and relevant learning and to promote their curiosity about the world at large by: Including strategies for teaching and supporting content area literacy skills, and when appropriate, numeracy skills (across the curriculum).

Goal:

I will learn how to plan literacy instruction to better meet the individual needs of my students. As a result, my students will develop a greater interest in reading and use specific reading strategies to improve comprehension.

Initial Summary:

Most of my planning in literacy has come straight from the *Storytown* series that we use in the district. This series provides a weekly lesson plan which includes vocabulary, spelling words, leveled readers, center activities, grammar, focus skills and worksheet packets. I followed the plans and soon discovered that the weekly skills were too fast paced with too much content in too little time to adequately teach the weekly skills and strategies. Most importantly, students were not learning or implementing the strategies being taught in their writing or on their weekly lesson assessments. Even though I thought I was providing supplemental activities, during 20 minute work stations, I realized that I had to fine tune them to include areas that supported literacy strategies and skills that support students' DRA focus of instruction.

Reflection Paper:

As I began the module, I had just finished report cards and realized that a majority of my students' reading grades had dropped. I was baffled by this because I had been following the weekly *Storytown* plans, implemented workstations, and was differentiating based on fall DRA scores to create leveled reading groups. I used discourse and accessed prior knowledge before most of the weekly stories, but I wasn't seeing the scores I had expected. Confused, I went to my fifth grade colleagues and discussed my concerns. We were all in agreement that the reading series we were using was too fast paced for most of our students. There were many strategies and skills, but not enough time to really focus in on each. Between introducing and teaching the new weekly whole group story, spelling strategies, vocabulary, focus skills, and leveled stories, students did not comprehend or apply, independently or correctly, the ideas and focus skills of the stories.

I began to feel very overwhelmed. How would I reteach all of these strategies and skills? We were halfway through the school year! There was so much to think about and plan. I met with my mentor and we discussed all of my concerns. I also realized that except for the workstations, I had left all the planning to the teacher's manual. I felt that all the work was done for me and didn't realize that I should have been planning for the individual needs of my students. I relied on the manual to plan for me and it proved to be unsuccessful. The first step



was to evaluate my planning for active learning using the CCT Performance Profile. My mentor and I discussed all five indicators in depth and we both agreed that CCT Indicator 5 is where I needed the most improvement. My planning in literacy was very limited. From there we discussed comprehension strategies that I could consistently use during my small groups. I was still concerned about how I would create a focus for planning. My mentor gave me *Learning by Doing*, by Richard DuFour to read.

I began to read Learning by Doing, and it wasn't until the third chapter that I figured out why my mentor gave me this book to read. I knew that I had to plan for active learning, but I was overwhelmed by the content and which skills to focus in on. The title of chapter three was "Creating a Focus on Learning: What do we Want Our Students to Learn, and How Will We Know When They Have Learned It?" This was exactly what I kept asking myself. Dufour states that before planning, teachers need to clarify these questions:

1. What is it we want our students to learn?
2. How will we know when each student has learned it? In order to answer these questions effectively, Dufour recommends that teachers consider the following when planning:

Using state standards and district curriculum as guides.

Learning must guarantee that students can score proficiency on state and district testing.

Assessments created must provide timely information on each student's proficiency so those students that struggle are provided with additional time and support for learning.

After you have referenced the appropriate resources, DuFour suggests that you ask yourself these three questions about the learning:

1. Does it have endurance?
2. Does it have leverage?
3. Does it develop student readiness for the next level of learning?

Dufour's questions really taught me how to focus my planning, especially these last three. I now knew that I needed to find material and content that would be retained over time and not just taught to the test. Also, I learned that when planning I needed to ask myself if proficiency in a standard would increase students' knowledge in other subject areas, and could it be used successfully in the next lesson or the next grade level?

With all of these driving questions, I set up a meeting with our school's reading specialist. I discussed all of my concerns and asked her all of the questions that I learned from DuFour. After looking through some activities for focus skills, I was still unclear about where I should start. I told her that my students really have a hard time summarizing. We talked about why this might be. I told her that it could be the stories in *Storytown*, but I strongly feel that my students get overwhelmed with going back through the story to find the important events. I



think this might be due to the fact that they don't know where to start or how much information to include in a summary. Then, she pulled out the DRA2 book and showed me two organizers for summarizing. One was a scaffolded summary, which used sequence words along the sheet to help guide students, and another sheet gave reminders, in the directions, to include the important characters, events, and details from the beginning, middle, and end of the story. I thought that these would be great to use with my students and that the DRA's skills were what I needed to work on with my students. I came to this conclusion because of DuFour's second guiding question, which stated that assessments must guarantee that students score proficiently on district and state testing.

The reading specialist and I continued to discuss the DRAs in detail, especially because I had never given them before. I began my first year of teaching in October and the DRAs were completed before I had started my position. With so much to learn, I had overlooked the DRAs, but quickly realized that I needed to become familiar with them since I would be giving the Spring DRAs in May. Our reading specialist and I discussed this issue and planned to schedule training for me. I made an appointment to meet with her and the literacy coach so that they could familiarize me with students' focus of instruction and how to administer the test.

I knew that in order to move up or excel on the continuum of effective teaching I needed to plan to use materials and resources to build on students' ability to interpret, synthesize and respond to content related text. I felt confident that I had found a focus for learning. By teaching skills and strategies that focused on the DRA, I would meet the state and district standards, help students in other subject areas, other lessons, and the next grade level, teach to students' individual needs and strengthen skills that could be retained over time and not just taught for a test. I now knew that I could move onto the next step, which would be to find more materials for small groups and workstations. I also had to go through students' focus of instruction to plan activities that would support deficient areas.

In the following days, I met with the literacy coach and the reading specialist. During my meeting, we went over the skills included in the DRA focus of instruction, which include: Reading Engagement, Oral Reading Fluency, and Comprehension. They both familiarized me with the skills. As far as DRA training, the literacy coach suggested that I observe her administering the DRA to a few of my students and then she would stay with me while I gave the DRA until I felt comfortable. At that time, the literacy coach gave me two books by Nancy Boyles, Constructing Meaning and That's a Great Answer. She explained that these books had



great lessons, strategies, and activities that would support my planning. She was right; they proved to be extremely helpful in my planning process. My only regret is that I didn't find out about these books earlier!

Instead of using *Storytown* activities and plans, I continued to plan, using ideas and strategies from Nancy Boyles' books and students' DRA focus of instruction. In Constructing Meaning, Boyles shares six great strategies good readers use: Connecting, Guessing/Predicting, Picturing, Noticing, Wondering, and Figuring Out. During my planning, I made copies of these strategies and placed them on the wall. This will provide a visual with a definition of each strategy, so it is readily accessible for students to refer to at any given time. I also made copies of the strategy cue cards for students to use during small groups. My plan is to place them on the table and while students are reading they can pull a card and discuss how that selected strategy helped them to better understand what they have read. Another plan is to have students draw or write these strategies on small post-its. They will then stick the strategies on the inside of a folder and place them in their leveled group books or even in independent books when they use a strategy. I plan to meet with students to assess their progress. This will help students use metacognition, thinking while reading, to reflect on what they have learned.

Before we start using these strategies I will model them first, during whole class instruction. My plan is to use the book, The Three Questions by Leo Tolstoy, to model each strategy. I plan to read a chunk of this story aloud to my class and then pause to discuss/ think aloud the comprehension strategy I am using. Then, I will read the next chunk and continue this process until I've read the book in its entirety using Boyles' reading strategies abundantly. I will continue to use this type of modeling for both comprehension strategies and focus skills during my small group instruction as well. As my students observe my own use of specific reading strategies, they will begin to see more clearly how this helps them to understand the story and begin to use these strategies more independently.

In the area of Reading Engagement, the following strategies were recommended by the reading specialist. I plan on placing reading logs in my library to monitor independent reading and support reading at home. Also, I will continue to encourage students to have a book readily available in their desks to read during quiet time. Another plan is to read aloud/ think aloud to the class to model intonation and expression. Also, I plan to discuss the importance of reading with parents during parent teacher conferences. Lastly, I plan to use student reading surveys, which will tap into students' favorite genres and authors. This will help me to supply my classroom library with enjoyable and relevant reading materials. My students will begin to develop a greater interest in reading if I am more aware of the types of books that are greater motivators. Encouraging parents and families to read and/or discuss books or parts of books together can only increase reading time and potentially have an impact on reading performance



In the Area of Oral Reading fluency, I decided that I would keep the fluency center to improve rate, expression, and accuracy, by providing various reading materials and timers for repeated practice. I would also continue to have students read to me during small groups to assess intonation and word analysis. After they read, I will discuss areas that need improvement and also comment on strengths in their oral reading. I will continue to encourage students to have a book readily available in their desks to read during free time. Another plan is for stronger students and me to do more read alouds to model intonation and expression. Also, I plan to discuss the importance of reading and discuss strategies good readers use with parents, during parent teacher conferences. These strategies were taken from the DRA Teacher Guide supplied in the DRA kit.

In the area of Comprehension, I plan to model Prediction, Text Features, Summarizing, Interpretation, and Reflection through the activities that connect to Nancy Boyles' reading strategies and the DRA graphic organizers. After modeling strategies and graphic organizers for each comprehension section, my plan is to provide guided practice, using the many differentiated organizers from the DRA2 Teacher Guide, Constructing Meaning and That's a Great Answer. During workstations, students will be provided with the opportunity to practice these skills independently. Finally, after students have had adequate time to practice skills, I will use Boyles' Active Reader Report, as a means of reflection and to monitor students' use of strategies. I should recognize an increase in the use of specific skills and strategies that have been taught and see improved DRA scores.

I feel that continuously modeling the use of strategies and focus skills will encourage students to think about what they are reading and ultimately strengthen comprehension. Modeling skills and strategies is an area I have been weak in, mainly because I don't feel that I always have enough time, due to the large amount of material that must be covered in a weeks' time. I know that by planning time to explicitly model reading strategies and skills, students will learn through their observations of my modeling. I am saddened by the fact that I haven't done that more; especially since this has been an important part of my very own learning process. Boyles states in Constructing Meaning, "Too many teachers rush through the modeling stage, then when individual performance with reading comprehension strategies falls short of teachers expectations , we regret our hurry-up, get- the- show -on- the -road approach." I will continue to plan for modeling in reading and in other content areas, like mathematics, as I believe that it will prove to have a positive impact on learning and application of skills.

In the future, I will continue to ask myself Dufour's guiding questions to help me direct my planning. While at first, I thought it to be a blessing to have an abundance of reading material and lessons all planned out for me, now I realize the downfalls it had on a my students' learning and retention of skills. More material in a shorter time period is not always the answer, but planning and teaching skills well, based on students' needs, will prove to have a more profound effect on my students' learning.

