

Sample Beginning Teacher Journal 7/20/12

Module Two- Planning for Active Learning

Sample One – Grade 9, English Language Arts

Beginning Teacher Journal

Use My Personal Journal to record specific and detailed information and examples related to your module work. Your Journal should include descriptions of such things as

- How you developed new learning, e.g., readings, conversations with your mentor and other colleagues, professional development activities;
- How you applied your new learning and what happened as a result,, e.g., how your practice changed, the impact on students; and
- Your ongoing analysis and reflection related to successes and continued challenges, cause and effect thinking, insights and /or concerns.

You will use the specific examples/evidence from your journal to help you determine if your professional growth plan is working or if it needs to be modified.

January 8, 2012

Test results from earlier in the year are telling me that my students are having difficulty with comprehension. Current data I have is not helping me to determine areas needing increased attention. As I think about my planning of many lessons, I am beginning to realize that I have been directing my instruction to the whole class. Perhaps I have not given enough attention to students' individual needs?

My mentor and I had a lengthy conversation about the CCT. I shared with her that there was some terminology that needed clarification i.e. "coherent, relevant units." Not that I couldn't define the terms but I didn't know exactly what that might look like and how to get there when it came to instructional planning.

My mentor suggested that I take a look at the CCT Performance Profile and make any notes about any misunderstandings as we begin thinking about how to plan instruction to develop comprehension skills.

January 14, 2012

Claudine and I discussed the CCT Performance Profile for Module 2. I identified my current performance related to the profile indicators. My current practice includes mostly whole class lessons. I do sometimes allow students to choose activities but they are not purposefully designed based on the range of students' skills. I sometimes offer differentiated activities when I am teaching a lesson and or may differentiate an activity when I see that some students are having difficulty, but I do not purposefully plan those modifications beforehand.

Due to my realization that I knew little about how to differentiate instruction in a manageable way, I decided to focus on indicator 1 for this module and developed a working goal statement.

We discussed how I might use the Common Formative Assessment results that our grade level team is analyzing this week to help me develop my action plan. This data should give me a clearer picture of my students' various levels of understanding.

I will read *Good Instruction as a Basis for Learning* by Carol Ann Tomlinson.

January 19, 2012

We talked about my Initial Summary and we both feel that it is done. From this summary I developed my goal for this module.

I developed my initial action plan. In the plan, we identified several resources/readings that might help me learn more about differentiated instruction. I will also meet with the Literacy Coach to discuss reading strategies and my students.

We talked briefly about Tomlinson's first chapters and my mentor tried to give some context by discussing how she differentiates for her lower level readers. I will observe her 3rd period class on Friday.

January 22, 2012

My mentor and I discussed the CFA analysis for my 9th grade class whose next unit of study is *To Kill A Mockingbird*. We discussed how I might use this assessment data to help me differentiate planning for my students. 12 students scored significantly above proficiency, 8 scored barely proficient and 6 students were well below proficiency. I have been working with the class since September on developing reading strategies, however, the 6 students who were below proficiency on the CFA do not apply the strategies effectively and their comprehension is weak! I am concerned that especially these 6 students are struggling with vocabulary. Our next unit on *To Kill a Mockingbird* may present some additional difficulty due to the complex vocabulary. The text is difficult and I am afraid that my students will not be able to access the text, lose interest and disengage!

January 26, 2012

I finished about half of *Good Instruction* over the weekend. I learned that planning should begin with the students and not the curriculum. This

means that I need to determine the essential concepts, principles and skills that my students need to know at the end of the unit on *To Kill A Mockingbird*. I learned that teachers can differentiate in three areas- content, process and product. Tomlinson says that by “adjusting the degree of complexity using diverse instructional processes, I can help all of my students access the same content and learning in different ways.” Differentiating the content seems to be the most difficult and more than I want to address to start. I think I’ll focus on the process and products.

I observed my mentor introduce a new novel by having students free associate words and ideas. When we met at the end of the day, she told me that she will use student responses as a form of pre-assessment of prior knowledge and vocabulary related to the theme of the novel. She will use that to help her differentiate her plans for next week. I need to pay more attention to pre-assessment of prior knowledge and especially in terms of vocabulary before beginning this novel with my students. I’ll have to talk more with my mentor about this.

We also discussed using the information in the Student Inventories that my students completed at the first of the year as I plan differentiated activities and products for our unit. (I haven’t really made good use of this information.) I also shared with My mentor my wanting to focus only on product and process for this module and that once comfortable with those, I’ll begin exploring content differentiation for other units. She agreed this sounded more manageable.

February 2, 2012

I started reading Marzano’s book on using vocab.to build background knowledge.

My mentor and I discussed some ways in which I could differentiate both process and product. We decided that flexible grouping may be an effective way to differentiate process. We talked about some different ways I could group students: readiness/ability, interests and/or learning styles. I discussed some ways that I have been offering students choices about the projects they need to accomplish and how this might be a natural form of product differentiation. I said I would continue to read further, using some of the other suggested articles. My mentor asked me to think about what I wanted my students to know and be able to do at the end of the unit and that would help me determine products.

February 9, 2012

I have identified four student learning goals for the upcoming unit: 1) know the main events, conflicts and characters in the story; 2) identify and discuss two major themes of the novel; 3) analyze how at least two characters’ lives were changed at the end of the story and 4) evaluate Atticus Finch’s reasons for defending Tom Robinson and the effects of his decision on him, his family and his community.

I may start with the definition of theme and create theme statements that the students could use to locate evidence as they read.

I also spent some time talking with the literacy coach yesterday. I talked to him about the CFA results and my concern about the struggling students dealing with *To Kill A Mockingbird* especially in terms of some of the vocabulary possibly hindering their comprehension. He agreed that vocabulary was going to be important for understanding the text. He said that readers need to have different ways they can interact with the vocabulary, like using the words in discussion, writing, them, graphically representing them, etc. He also reminded me that one strategy that the students had been using fairly successfully were the QARs – maybe I could build on that strategy in terms of getting the students beyond a literal understanding of the novel.

I started doing some research on the web and found two good sources to support Marzano’s book. I am concerned that is not in my plan. Need to

talk with my mentor.

February 12, 2012

I shared my thinking about the goals for the unit and how I might start the unit with the theme statements. My mentor wondered if I was doing too much of the work for the students. She asked if there were ways that they could come up with ideas for themselves. As I discussed my concern about the difficulty of the text, I realized that vocabulary would be the first hurdle. I needed to get students to understand the story but they needed to be able to read it. We talked about different ways to introduce the vocabulary. My mentor reminded me to think about process and product. What did I want the students to know and be able to do after the instruction? She also suggested that it might be a good way to introduce theme by having students associate the vocabulary with the themes that would be discussed. I already knew what vocabulary words I was going to teach so this seemed like a good idea.

I was excited about using this activity and felt we had done well but she challenged me by asking if all of my students needed the same instruction for the vocabulary. I had to think about this. I wasn't sure. Perhaps the best way to be sure would be to do a pre-assessment. The free association might be the pre-assessment. We agreed that this would be a good place to begin. How will I proceed with the lesson based on student responses? I need to think more about that.

I need to finish Marzano, it would be so much better if I can incorporate both: background and vocabulary

I was exhausted when I left school today. This is hard work and we haven't even designed one lesson yet. I never really thought so much about the plan before. I am beginning to realize how important it is to really think about the plan before hand.

February 17, 2012

I worked more on my initial lesson plan.

I configured groups based on two criteria: the learning style inventory and the CFA scores. I wanted students of similar ability to work with one another so that I could differentiate process and product. Groups 1 and 2 will each include the three students who scored lowest on the CFA and two students who scored just barely proficient. Most of these students identified themselves as visual learners and tended to be interested in music and art. Group 3 includes the four students who scored barely proficient and one student who scored slightly higher, but still needs added support. Groups 4 and 5 will include the remaining students who scored above proficient. These students need additional challenges.

This book gave me a way to combine building background knowledge with vocabulary instruction. My thought process kept going to my new learning: think of your students first and anticipate challenges. If I want my students to understand the themes in the book they need to have a sense of the time in which the novel took place and what were the relationships between black and white, rich and poor people in the South. I found many online resources that had photographs of those times. I was so excited, I could front load the vocabulary with all the photographs while I was building their background for depth of understanding. This slide show will benefit both visual and auditory learners and will bring technology to the English classroom. All students will be able to connect *To Kill a Mockingbird* with that time period of our history

If I need to further differentiate for vocabulary, students will use the vocabulary words in context with sentences from the text. Students will discuss meaning and determine if the word is associated with prejudice or justice. Students will do this activity in their groups. I think I need to plan additional activities for the students who don't get the vocabulary right away. The rest of the class will start reading the first chapter of the book.

At the end of the lesson, all students will complete an exit slip that asks them to write down what is justice and what is prejudice. They can support their answers using the words from the vocabulary.

February 18, 2012

Thinking about lesson two, I realize that groups 3-5 will have probably complete reading the first chapter. I will ask them to come up with a title for the first chapter and explain why the title fits the chapter. Thinking back to what the literacy coach said about QARs, I think I'll have these groups create some questions based on an abbreviated version of Bloom. I've talked about higher level questions in class and I've created them for the students pointing out which questions were at the high level and explained what kind of answers they needed to give. I think they can create some of their own. I'll give them support with a sheet with some sentence starters that get at these levels of Bloom: comparison, inference, analysis and evaluation. Since groups 1 and 2 will probably need assistance with reading the opening chapter, I will guide their reading and provide an audio reading of the text for them to listen to as they follow along in their books. I will have them illustrate the setting using the words of the text to guide their drawings. This will tap into their artistic intelligence. Differentiating these activities will allow me to help students access the chapter and demonstrate their understanding by creating different products. The whole class will benefit from the discussion that follows.

February 19, 2012

The third lesson will focus on character development. We learn a great deal about Boo Radley in the first chapters of the story. To help students understand this character I will differentiate the process for the groups. Groups 1 and 2 will focus on completing a character trait graphic organizer. These students need to identify basic traits before they will be able to draw conclusions about the character.

The other groups will focus more on doing a close reading of the chapter to see how the author's descriptions of Boo help us to see what the neighborhood is like. They will locate specific quotes and decide what the quotes tell us about the neighbors and their attitudes. They will also read a short article about urban myths and apply that information to the characterization of Boo. Groups 1 and 2 will answer the questions- *What are Boo Radley's characteristics? What image do you get of him based on the descriptions? How does the text shape our view of the real Boo Radley?* They will then sketch Boo Radley and provide specific quotes that correspond to their illustration.

The groups will share their information. I will facilitate the discussion to help all of the students join their information together to draw some conclusions about what happened to Boo and what his character tells us about the people of Maycomb? By getting the students to look more closely at character development, they should be ready to analyze other characters in the story as we read the novel.

February 23, 2012

I shared the planning that I had done over the vacation. We talked more about the second lesson.

We reviewed the Guidelines for the reflection paper again. I need to include specific examples of how I have applied what I have learned to differentiate these lessons and analyze the potential impact on student learning.

March 1, 2012

I just sent the first draft of my reflection paper to my mentor. We'll meet on Thursday to discuss.

March 4, 2012

I met with my mentor. As a result of our conversation, I added some additional information on my thinking process as we talked about the initial plans and how I have anticipated challenges for students. I really feel good about this unit. I know that I have really considered the needs of my students to plan instruction that will help them to access the reading or challenge them to think more critically. I am very excited about this unit and can't wait to teach it.