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Teaching and Learning II

Dr. Jeranyama

Round Reflection #1

I am relieved that I was able to finish my first round. The decision to do it with the 8th graders made more sense to me, since I am looking to take on teaching this age group. During the round, I had set up the lesson so that the groups were able to work through the Punnett square problem set. Also, they were able to use a hands-on model with the gummy bears and try to determine which family has a homozygous genotype and recessive genotype for color.

The fact that it involved food made it all the more engaging for them. They were all participating and at least trying out the activity. I became concerned during the middle of the lesson because of how little progress they were making on completing the Punnett square parts. I also noticed that they were having difficulty figuring out what the directions were telling them to do. The directions were long and in small print, which is not ideal for supporting them.

Among the things that I would do differently next time would be to provide some more practice where they have to combine multiple skills together before attempting a worksheet like that again. Prior to this, they had a lot of practice with me to get the hang of completing Punnett squares. I think I should have used to some assessments to figure out how comfortable with the material they were. I realize in this activity they are also tackling pedigrees which we haven’t discussed at all up to this point.

Some of the feedback I got from observers was to really focus in on adapting my lesson materials and seeing where I can unpack concepts and space them out more. Kaitlyn Kelley acknowledged that I must have put in an enormous amount of time into the preparation of these gummy bears. It really did take hours to prepare each of the sets and I hope that in the future, I can reuse this lesson after some adaptations. It would be a shame to put all that to waste.

James talked about how I shouldn’t be afraid to ditch a plan if it is bombing. I think that I was trying too hard to get the activity to work, rather than looking objectively at the students' needs and focusing on learning. It is definitely hard letting go of these things and I hope becomes easier with time. Tom Del Prete had mentioned that Ezenia, who is one of my top students, was even struggling with the content. She was able to describe how the concept of genotype and phenotype worked but couldn’t quite put it all together. I should ask students and rely on them more to indicate when I have to adapt.

I would definitely agree with the feedback that people gave, I wish I had thought the lesson through more rather than trying to rely on a cool lesson I found through the NSTA website. I am more aware of the need to figure out my students' levels and how to help them access content. Regardless, I am grateful that so many people attended the rounds and gave me suggestions to work with.