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Teaching and Learning III

Dr. Jeranyama

Rounds Observation: Laura Matthew

 Laura teaches at UPCS and is also teaching the middle school grades like myself. I found it interesting to attend a round that involved the same students that I teach. She decided to hold her round on slam poetry and had the students identify the elements of poetry within the videos she had prepared. Students had an opportunity to see videos of live performances at a competition and then see Laura herself perform a piece at the end of the class.

At the beginning of the class, she had the students come in and find their partners while they got setup to start class and take their mindful minutes. I personally have discontinued the use of mindful minutes after talking with my students about it. I think they just like the break from it. I do apply it myself to help with classroom management when I address my students. I feel like students can understand mindfulness when I describe what’s going through my mind when I have an issue with them.

During the mindful minute, Laura was handing out cards to each group that each had a unique poetic feature on it for the students to identify. They had already learned the definitions of these terms separately so this was a building on their prior knowledge of poetry. I am reminded of an art class I once took where I had to share comments on my classmates work but had a larger collection of terms and definitions in a packet. Students were able to comment on the video while using the terms and describe when and how they heard it used.

 I actually really enjoyed the class and the videos that were shown, I have a few friends who are into the spoken word poetry scene. I have never attended an event of that scale but found it fascinating nonetheless. I definitely got the chills from the messages that the performers were sharing and wonder if it had a similar effect on the students.

 Having observed Laura before, I have seen that she has improved greatly as a teacher; she plans out her lessons really thoroughly. Her work shows that she takes great interest in the topics that she shares with her students. She had a lot of questions that asked whether students were engaging with the material and in what way. There were other questions on how she could improve her delivery and another for open comments, which I thought was great. It was interesting to see that some students I have issues with she does not and vice versa. It would be useful to talk to her about her approach or suggestions with these students and see if it helps either of us.

I found that I could make more specific comments since I already work with these students and get a good dialogue on what behavioral aspects were normal and not. The class ended with her doing a performance of her most favorite poem, she intentionally gives the worst and most uninspired reading. It totally hooks the students into engaging with the comments and finding ways to improve her delivery. She ends up allowing on student Xavier to read the poem in his own best voice in doing so; he shows a side of himself that doesn’t oft appear in my science class.

 I like the idea of critical thinking appearing in performance and think about the ways that I can incorporate the concept into my lessons. I have a week coming up where students will be learning about symbiotic relationships, maybe there’s an opportunity for them to act things out. They enjoyed the opportunity to do mini skits in the past so I am eager to try again.