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EDUC 359

Round Reflection

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Moving Towards Independent Work

Of all the rounds that I have taught so far, this round forced me to think the most about how I can push my instruction goals beyond compliance—as in, getting the students to do what I ask—and into quality. My focus on this round had been to get my students to work effectively and independently in their groups, completing the activities that I had assigned without me having to stand in the front of the room giving them direct instruction. While I was successful in getting the class to work well in their groups and complete the activities, I realized after the experience of this round that I should be expecting more than just completion.

For this round, the lesson that I created was meant to be run entirely by the students, while I floated around the room, observing each group. I had planned a Save the Last Word activity which was going to use a homework assignment they had previously done to help create discussion about what they had read in their book groups. I had also planned a bonus challenge in creating effective discussion questions for the groups to complete when they finished the Save the Last Word activity. All of the materials plus an agenda for the day were in an envelope left on their desks for the groups to open and read through together. In the classes before, I had set up the book groups and allowed the students in each group to assign roles to each member. In each group, there is a Discussion Director (who asks questions and keeps discussions going), Administrative Assistant (who takes notes), Enforcer (who makes sure the group is following all

of the directions), and Crowd Control (who makes sure the group is not having side conversations or being disrespectful to each other). Since the groups had spent the last class assigning these roles and determining guidelines for themselves, I had hoped that during this lesson they would use their roles in following the activity. Many groups did look back on these roles, but some groups needed some reminders before actively using the roles during the lesson.

During the round, it was very apparent to me that most groups were able to complete the activity that I had given them on their own. Some groups moved a little slower than others, and some groups were constantly off task and needed to be reminded to refocus. Other groups completed everything quickly and were looking for new topics to discuss. As I was making my way around the room observing each group, I was able to see whether or not they were able to follow my directions and answer clarifying questions, but the other teachers observing my round actually sat with each group and were able to get a better sense of what each group was discussing. Based on these teachers' responses during the post round, across the board, it seemed as if most groups got everything I asked of them done, but rarely ventured to discuss more than at a surface level. Looking back at the way I structured the activity and assignments, I placed too much of my focus on guaranteeing compliance, and not enough focus on trying to push the students to think deeply about what they were reading and discussing. I could have been more explicit in my directions and in the questions that I asked in guiding them towards making connections and thinking more about how Junior, the novel's main character, feels about the decision that he has to make to change schools. Rather, I simply had asked the students to find and discuss quotes (during the Save the Last Word activity) that they felt described how Junior feels about life on the reservation. Also, as many of the teachers observing my round suggested, I

should have modeled the Save the Last Word activity for the students so that they could see what level of analysis I would like them to achieve.

Ever since this round, I have been looking for as many ways as I possibly can to focus on the quality of the work that the students produce (or analysis that they can come up with). As Meghan suggested during the post-round, if I scaffold my lessons in a way that gets the students to think more deeply and challenges them to produce more quality work, the compliance will follow. Before this round, I had done the same lesson with 8B, and found that the lesson did not go as well as I had hoped—and definitely did not go as well as it did during my round with 8A. Looking back now, perhaps it was really because the activity asked them to follow directions rather than challenging them to think more about what they had read. The experience of this round has truly helped me to see how I can improve my instruction and push for quality in my students' work.