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EDUC 359

Round Reflection

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Reflection on James Olson's Round

James Olson teaches Spanish 3, Spanish 5, and ESL at South High Community School. For this particular round that James hosted, he had planned a lesson centered around food deserts with his Spanish 3 class to help them begin to use the different food vocabulary that they had just learned in that unit. James' Spanish classes are not divided by grade but by ability, and his Spanish 3 class is a group that has a variety of fluency levels. Some students are heritage speakers, meaning that their parents are fluent Spanish speakers, and some students have very little Spanish fluency.

During James' lesson, he started class with a fast paced bellringer game that got the students to review the vocabulary words about food that they had learned during their last lesson. He had a Word Wall set up with all of the words, but most of the students did not reference the word wall during the review game. He then transitioned the class into group work. Because his class is small, with only 8 students total, he split the class into two groups of four. Each group was given a different map of the United States, one that showed levels of childhood obesity rates and one that showed areas where grocery stores with fresh food available were more than 10 miles away. The students were also given blank maps, and were asked to color in their blank maps based on what they saw on the other maps. This helped the class to calm down after the high energy game, and at the end of the activity, the groups compared maps and noticed that the

areas they had colored were all similar locations. After the map activity, they read a short article in Spanish about food deserts, with a word bank to help them understand more difficult words. After reading the article, they chose a color, symbol, and image to go with the article and explained their thinking (mostly in English but with some Spanish) to the rest of the class. The lesson ended with a grocery shopping game to review the food vocabulary once more.

A major challenge that James faces when he teaches his Spanish 3 classes is dealing with the varying levels of fluency. In order to help all of his students be able to participate and understand, James set up the class in groups for the majority of the classroom activities. These groups were made strategically, including at least one heritage speaker in each. Observing the groups, especially during the article reading, I noticed that they did not necessarily read the article together, but the groups definitely felt comfortable asking each other for help and working well together. When they were discussing the article afterwards during the CSI (color, symbol, image) activity, the groups were pretty good about pushing each other to think deeply about why they chose what they did for the article, and to think more about how they understood the article. Though James could have encouraged the groups to read out loud together rather than trying to read the article to themselves, the group members definitely helped each other to understand the content after they were finished reading. Both of the review games that James included in his lesson also helped to make the content and vocabulary words accessible to all students. During the bellringer game, the competition aspect actually made some of the non-native speakers more willing to try to remember the vocabulary. During the grocery store game, the students were put in pairs, and James had made the pairs based on who would be able to help each other the most. Each group was able to complete the activity, and by the last game, they were also calling on the

Word Wall to help themselves out too. Before the final bell, a group of students had actually gone over to the Word Wall just to quiz each other on what the vocabulary words were.

Overall, I was very impressed with James' class and the lesson that he taught. He has a calm teaching manner and the students are very responsive to him. Entering his classroom felt like entering the classroom of an already experienced teacher. I was also very impressed with the fact that he is pushing his lower level Spanish speakers to start thinking critically about topics in both English and Spanish. Instead of just going over the food vocabulary, he asked his students to consider food deserts and their impact, and got them to read more in Spanish about it. Thinking about my own round and my goals to push my students to think deeply and critically, I was inspired by James to have high expectations of my students. He communicates to his students through his teaching that they are capable of understanding more than just the grammar and vocabulary, and because of that, his classroom feels like an authentic space of discovery and deep thinking.