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EDUC 359

Round Reflection

March 1, 2016

Reflection on Mike Mainuli's Round

Mike Mainuli teaches English at South High School. For this round, Mike's class has been reading *The Things They Carried* by Tim O' Brien. His students had been assigned to write their own "story-truths," short pieces of creative non-fiction from their own lives. The students were connecting these story-truths to the character of Rat Kiley, who was a storyteller in the book. The lesson started with students presenting these stories, and then with a class discussion analyzing the character of Rat Kiley.

Mike's class was a very great class to observe. Quite a few students shared their stories before they transitioned into a class discussion, and it was really interesting to hear the final creative pieces that these students' came up with. These presentations also revealed the students' knowledge of story-truth versus happening-truth—the idea that one can simply list the facts about what happened (happening truth), or they can play up the details and get creative when telling the story-truth. Each student seemed to take their own interpretation of story-truth versus happening truth. One student in particular read his story of how he first talked to a cute girl in his kindergarten class, and how she came over to his house to see his hamster. The class actually questioned this students' happening-truth because of the way he told his story-truth. Some students seemed to see story-truth as being much more exaggerated and distanced from the real

truth. This led to an interesting discussion that transitioned really well into the discussion of the book.

Because these students are Goddard Scholars, Mike explained that there is a higher expectation for these students to have read the texts and be prepared for class. Based on the discussion that the students had in class, it definitely seemed as if the students had read and were going back to the text to support their answers. However, during the discussion, it definitely seemed as if the students were talking more to the teacher than to each other. Mike often rephrased or recasted what students said, but I did not notice the students building off of each others' points or responding to each other as much as they could have.

The major delta that I would have for Mike based on what I observed in this round would be for him to really consider the ways that he structures class discussions and what he says to his students in order to push them to build off of each other and dig deeper in their analysis. As I was observing his class, it reminded me of what Meghan is always telling me—in the words of Pete Weyler, “never say anything a kid could say!” Seeing Mike lead his class in a discussion reminded me of how teachers should really be conscious of our role in facilitating a discussion. Rather than repeating what students say, which encourages them to listen to the teacher instead of listening to each other, teachers should focus more on helping students to listen to each other and learn from each others' points of view. I definitely noticed that Mike quite often repeated his students—which was definitely helpful because of how loud it gets in the classrooms in South—but he did not usually ask his students to consider what they thought about each others' ideas in the discussion.

Overall, I could definitely see that Mike's students are understanding the text and reaching for the learning goals that he has set. After observing his class, it made me consider ways that I can get my students to engage in deep analysis of the texts that we will be reading, especially as we are moving onto a unit centered around a novel. More importantly, observing Mike's class reminded me of the teachers' role as a facilitator, and it helped me to see how I could be more cognizant of my "teacher talk" when leading my own class discussions.