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EDUC 359

Round Reflection

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### Reflection on Shannon Donnellan's Round

Shannon teaches 10th grade History at University Park Campus School. For her round, she had helped her students plan and prepare for a mock trial of Andrew Jackson, focusing on the Indian Removal Act. Each student in the classroom had a role to play, inhabiting a historical figure from that time period, or serving as prosecutors, defense attorneys, judge, and jury members. The lesson began with some time for the students to finish preparing for the trial, and then the trial took up the rest of the class period, with the jury deliberation scheduled for the next day.

I was incredibly impressed by the structure of this activity as a whole. Each student was given a packet to fill out that essentially served as a script for the trial. The students had been given class time to prepare these scripts, and were asked to look at primary source documents to find the best information to support the argument of their "character." Shannon explained during the post-round that she had specifically given certain documents to each student depending on each student's individual needs—"high flyers" in the classroom were given more difficult documents to parse through, while ELL and IEP students were given shorter, less complicated documents. Everyone was able to have the experience of working through the material, at a challenge level that best suited their own needs.

During the trial, each student was also given a note-taking form to fill out, forcing them to pay attention to the events of the trial. I saw very few students distracted or on their phones, and most of the class paying very close attention to their peers during the trial. It definitely seemed as if the class was really excited to see each other pretending to be historical figures; some students really did their best to get into character and back up their responses with evidence that they found in the texts. I did notice that some of the jury members were not filling out their note-taking form, as the jury role did not require them to actively participate in the trial. However, the jury members were reminded that they would need to make their decision in the deliberation process based on what they saw during the trial that day.

One delta for Shannon that we discussed during the post-round was that while her students had prepared questions and answers for the direct examination during the trial, each side did not necessarily take the time to specifically focus on answers they could use during the cross examination. For a few students who were playing the roles of different witnesses, they were not always able to come up with historically-rich answers. If Shannon were to do a mock trial like this again, I suggested that she specifically give a space on the students' scripts for them to consider what the opposition may ask them during the trial, and how they could be prepared to answer those questions. Despite this, the students overall seemed to show a deep understanding of the Indian Removal Act, and the roles of different historical figures who were involved during this time.

From my experience working with the 10th grade, I know that they do best with very interactive, project-based learning. Based on what I saw in this round, it really seems like Shannon excels at designing lessons that engage every student and force them to think like

historians. I definitely want to bring her strategies—especially her use of graphic organizers/fill-in-the-blank worksheets in tandem with an authentic, immersive classroom experience—into my own classroom to use with my 8th grade students.