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Round Reflection

Round 11/15: History Lesson 2: What is “culture” and where can we find it?

Looking back on my first round, I have a lot of different feelings. I think about all the things I would change or do differently but also how I was able to accomplish almost all of my learning goals. I also believe I have given myself a strong starting place to improve and expand my teaching practice. The lesson went well and I was proud of what my students and I did. That being said, watching the videos back and reviewing the rounds sheets I noticed many things that, in the moment, I was not able to see and recognize.

First, I was impressed with my students ability to “become researchers.” They took the challenge of finding examples of culture within the text very seriously and were able to find examples for almost all the elements listed on the chart in all of the texts given. During the share-out portion of the lesson, especially in the videos, I saw evidence of students being eager to share their findings with the whole group and being able to show me where they found that within their text. For almost every element of culture, every group had a hand raised and many different students from each group shared out. This showed me that they all contributed to the collection of evidence as well. Groups where only one student did most of the work would not have been able to have had multiple students sharing thoughts on the evidence.

Second, I was impressed with my own ability to crunch for time. This may be a place for improvement as I think allowing more time for exploration and modelling of expectations and directions may have helped quite a bit. I do think that being 10 minutes late to start the round really impacted the whole lesson. I do credit myself and my students for working hard to include many different aspects and reach many goals within a short period of time. We read a new text, defined a new vocabulary word for this unit, collaborated in small groups, found evidence, recorded findings, and had time to share-out at the end. All of this was accomplished within about 40 minutes. In hindsight, if I were to reteach this unit, I

would break this lesson up over a few days or periods because it did feel rushed slightly and probably would have benefited with more time. However, under the restraints I am under, and the high expectations I had for my class, I think we ended up with a lot of positives and takeaways from this intensive lesson.

Another positive takeaway was my ability to incorporate other disciplines. By using texts the students were familiar with, I was able to access prior knowledge through common experience. Children were excited about the texts because they knew what they were looking for without having to reread the entire book. Using the new text, “The Talking Cloth,” students in that group had bot harder time. Students were still able to connect to the books themselves and connect the books to culture and the elements of culture. Building these cross-subject connections is important for students to deepen their understanding in all areas. I was happy they had so many connections and were able to pull knowledge from so many areas into the history lesson.

One area I could change which I know would cause a positive impact on a future lesson is modelling what collaboration looks like. Many of the students had a good time finding evidence and making connections however the collaboration in many groups could have been better. I think many students were unsure about what being a “researcher” meant and by modelling more about what that looks like. I believe that collaboration is a skill that we must cultivate across curriculum in every subject but rarely get to do. My class specifically has had little time spent collaborating on projects and sharing out results. I knew this going into the lesson and I knew I was going to allow them to practice this skill more.

That being said, in the video, I noticed that the confusion around the assignment was apparent. I was under the impression that groups were having difficulty sharing the singular reference text and that they were having a hard time sharing ideas and valuing opinions. In the videos, which we will watch in class, you can clearly see two of the four groups struggling to share the book, share ideas, and collaborate as a team. Sometimes, the directions were the issue, in which case I need to model my expectations better and define specifically what a “researcher” does and looks like. I also saw that generally, students could

have benefitted with more structure around roles and taking turns. I overestimated their ability to self-regulate these things. I did assign the recorder role to each group but the other three people were expected to share the books equally and take turns supporting and exploring with one another.

Overall, I think with more time and dividing the lesson up over a few days, I could have had more opportunities to model and explain my expectations and let the groups work more in unison. Although we got a lot accomplished in the amount of time we had, allowing the space for more discovery and clearer directions with more scaffolding would have helped the students be more successful in the objective as well as deepen their understanding about what culture is, where we can find it, and how to behave as a researcher.

After reviewing the video and discussing it with my peers, I feel a sense of relief. I was very overwhelmed in the hours before, during, and after the round. I felt I had not done well but I felt reassured with the feedback I received. The critiques were fair and helpful from everyone and the affirmations helped me see things I overlooked that went well. I think I built a strong base to build upon and improve my teaching. It was not the best lesson I could have had but I feel as though I made respectable mistakes and can easily apply the suggestions made to me to improve the quality of my teaching moving forward.