

## Reflection One: A Science Lesson

**What?:** I taught a science lesson to a group of seventh grade boys and girls from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Most of the students in this class are struggling and several are repeating this grade for the second year. Many of the students are challenging, in terms of behavior. The lesson focused on simple machines. I began by having the students write a few notes about what they knew about simple machines. Everyone was involved in the discussion. Next I spent 15 to 20 minutes describing each of the six simple machines and demonstrating with models. The students were able to watch, to reflect, and then to work with the simple machines. We discussed as a large group, worked in small groups that I supervised, and reflected individually about what we wrote, what we saw, and what we touched. In addition, I encouraged vocabulary building and note taking with a handout we completed together. During the time left at the end of class, the students worked on hidden word puzzles I created just for this lesson.

Since I have taught this class for several weeks, I was very aware of the importance of keeping the students involved, of keeping the lesson going, and of constantly reinforcing the information in a variety of ways (discussion, hands-on, note taking, games). I wanted the information to be accessible. I gave illustrations of simple machines using things the students are familiar with. I was pleased when one child made the connection between an inclined plane and ramps for wheelchairs at the hospital where his mother works, and when another made the connection between a pulley and an elevator. All the students were interested in handling the simple machines I brought in during the lesson. Some of the definitions and equations took more time than I anticipated, so I had to skip the “independent practice” section of my lesson plan, but I thought it was important to teach how simple machines are a part of our everyday lives.

**So What?:** I used the textbook as the lesson’s foundation, but I constructed my own teaching props, and there was a good deal of interest because of the immediacy of the subject material. The lesson was very successful. My students were even able to reduce some complicated machines in the world around them to simple terms. Science helped them to explain the world. I showed them that science is useful and that is valuable because it is useful. The least effective part of the lesson was the puzzle, because it was not clear enough to be useful as a reinforcement tool. I had to do more explaining than I wanted to. Overall, the class was not quiet during the lesson, but much of the noise was constructive. For the most part, information that could be efficiently mastered in one lesson. The introduction of the simple machines alone, without definitions and equations, would have been more than enough; but all in all, the lesson was a positive experience for myself and for my students.

**Now What?:** This lesson showed me the value of making academic information relevant and real (see, feel, touch, hold). This class is very social and active, and this type of lesson lent itself to group interaction and discussion. I was able to use these strategies effectively because I was prepared. Maintaining control of the classroom is easier when students are interested, and it is up to me as a teacher to help them see why they should be interested. It is necessary to acknowledge where they are (their need for social interaction) and to recognize what tools will most efficiently get them to where I want them to be. This lesson reinforced the importance of preparation and appropriate teaching strategies based on the needs of my students and the information I am teaching.

Bullock, A. & Hawk, P. (2001) *Developing a teaching portfolio: A guide for preservice and practicing teachers*. Columbus: Merrill Prentice-Hall.

## Reflection Two: A Videotaped Lesson

**What?:** This piece of evidence is a videotape of a lesson I taught to a general math class. The lesson was on two- and three-digit divisions in which I reviewed students for the standardized test. The videotape was a requirement for a class, but I am glad it was. It was required to allow me to evaluate myself teaching and to determine how effective the lesson was. The lesson was taught using an overhead projector and the students also worked out problems on the chalkboard. The strategy used for teaching the lesson was mini-lecture. The ([clinical] teacher wanted me to teach the lesson this particular way.

The videotape of the lesson is related to teaching because a teacher should constantly evaluate himself or herself to see how effective the lesson was and what if any changes that can be made. A teacher should be a reflective practitioner who continually assesses the effects of his or her choices and action on others; this helps the teacher grow professionally. The teacher should also use the videotape to teach the same lesson at a later date.

**So What?:** I believe the lesson went all right but it could have gone better. Some students participated, while others didn't. The students were alert mostly because they know that the lesson was being videotaped. They also knew that their teacher was watching them [clinical teacher]. While I was teaching, I felt as if the lesson was somewhat effective. But after watching the videotape, I felt differently. The students were bored with the lesson. Some were yawning and others had their head down.

One strength of the lesson was that the students seemed as if they knew the material I was teaching or the lesson was a review for the standardized test. The ones that did participate knew all the answers and could work the problems independently. There were several weaknesses of the lesson. One weakness was that I wasn't aware of the things there were going on around me. When viewing the video, I saw students talking, yawning, and even passing notes. Evidently, the students did all of these things while I was working our problems on the overhead. This really irritated me.

**Now What?:** In future lessons, I need to be more creative with my lessons. The plans should be more student-oriented. I know from this experience that overhead projectors will be of minimal use in my classroom and then I use them, the students will teach the lesson using the projector. When I start teaching, I don't think that I will lecture a lot to my students either.

As a teacher, I have to be aware of my classroom environment. Students will take advantage of you, if you let them and they will also do things behind your back. I have to move around my classroom to make sure the students are on task. This videotape really helped me out and I'm glad that we were required to do it.

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