

Learning Environment Reflection

Kelly Matthews

October 1, 2012

September 24, 2012

Period 1

I felt really discouraged after Friday's class. My 9th graders were not participating in the discussion, they were not paying any attention, and they were not learning (besides a select few). The mentor teacher gave a speech at the end of the class about the students having to take responsibility for their learning.

Attitudes changed today. It was clear to them that I was not backing down from the 100% participation policy for class discussions. I was definitely trying to be more consistent with coaxing answers out of unwilling participators than I had been previously. Most of the students were more alert and willing to participate and share with the class. I personally tried to seem more friendly and more praising of them, and I think that this worked. The students who participated in the discussion seemed to have an easier time with the guided practice, than those who did not participate.

I am not backing down from 100% participation. These students have three teachers in the room who are there and willing to help. They have a lot of support. It's difficult because I have a couple of students who are able to move at a quicker pace because they either get it or they pay enough attention in class to pick up the material. The behavioral issues in this class are a huge distraction and I will keep trying to diffuse these interruptions.

Period 2 + 3

There was an exam for these classes. I did not do much besides pass out the exam.

September 25, 2012

Period 1

Monday went so well that I decided to implement some of the strategies discussed in class about decreasing learned helplessness and the need for corrective feedback. I saw improvement and understanding in a select few students. Most students in this class are ESE and they are used to always having immediate help. I'm not sure if this increases learned helplessness, but some of these students seemed as though everything they had learned in the previous day had been totally forgotten. I'm struggling with providing this differentiated support. I'm not sure what is too much, too little, or the appropriate amount.

I am now hesitant to limit corrective feedback for students. The students seem to have latched on to this subject and understand it (The subject is evaluating functions). I did not back down from 100% participation.

Period 2 + 3

Today was club day for the seniors, so a large portion of my class was absent today. They were given an independent study assignment to prepare for the upcoming unit (polynomials). The assignment was designed to be do-able outside of class. I took this "free day" as an opportunity to try and seem more personable and more approachable to the students. I want them to feel as though they can ask me questions about their work and

that I can make them feel more competent in what they're doing. The students seem prepared for tomorrow.

September 26, 2012

Period 1

When I tried to solicit prior knowledge from the students to add on to the concept they has been working on, it seemed as though they had never learned the concept of evaluating functions in the first place. I was very frustrated. The co-teacher stepped in, as she saw that I was getting frustrated, as were the students. I tried to go around to the students who understood the concept to help them add on to get to where I'd planned to be for today, as I don't want the students who are higher achieving to become bored or confused. The overwhelming amount of confusion from the rest of the class tends to affect certain students, such that these students adhere to a mob mentality of "we're doing something new, therefore I'm completely lost," even though they were understanding the concept prior to adding on (We had been finding $f(x)$ for various x ; we were trying to move onto $2[f(x)]$ and $f(x) + 3$, etc.).

I know that I need to reformat this topic. There should be no excuse for this kind of "mob mentality." The students are completely capable of finding $f(x)$, so they should be able to substitute in that value in order to find $5[f(x)]$. I let this get way ahead of me by not containing the confusion.

Period 2

We are going over a skill students should already know. We are adding and subtracting polynomials and the students are getting antsy. Ms. Long suggested that we give a pop quiz to the students because they need a jolt. I tried to approach the topic as similar to combining like terms, a skill on which they have already been tested. It was easy for me to carry on a class discussion about this because all of the students seemed confident with the skill. I tried to work on taking time to give appropriate praise where it was due, as well as stopping undesirable behaviors without taking too much time away from instruction. The students seem to understand, so hopefully this pop quiz will be easy for them.

Period 3

This class tends to be my higher achieving class. Instead of having to give corrective feedback, I can usually have certain students help each other out. There is one student who just doesn't get it. I'm not sure why, he seems like a very smart and sweet kid. I'm going to start going out of my way to be nicer and more supportive of this student. He seems to understand the concept of adding polynomials, but whenever I add on a concept, such as subtraction, he gets completely lost. I feel as though I have to change my demeanor towards him. Also, I must figure out how to support him while keeping control of the class, as they are almost always ready to move on. I have tried to limit corrective feedback in this class. The students have a good understanding of the material, but they want their hands held at every step of the process. They constantly ask if they are doing this or that right and they usually are. I must figure out a way to limit these behaviors. I want to be approachable, but I don't want them to think that I'm going to validate every step of every task I assign them in class.

September 27, 2012

Period 1

We are continuing to evaluate functions for certain inputs, but most of the students seem to have already forgotten the material. I have reformatted questions so that students find $f(2)$, then $2\{f(2)\}$, then $f(2) + 5$, and so on. Before, they seemed to be confused by having the problems have different inputs, so I now am giving them the same input so that they can connect the idea that $f(2)$ is equal to a real number, and that we can substitute this number for $f(2)$ in the problems that follow. They can evaluate functions correctly, but when I ask them to add or subtract or multiply a found function value, they fall apart. They claim that they haven't learned this, and I don't want to belittle them. I am trying my best to praise the students for what they are doing well, and trying to stop the codependent behaviors. I am trying to reinforce that they must be responsible for retaining the information we learn in class. I am struggling with balancing this with providing differentiated support. I don't want to cultivate the learned helplessness. This has been my overarching learning environment adaptation for the week, and I am struggling with it just as much as the students are struggling with learning functions.

Period 2

This class was basically teacher led because we have planned a pop quiz for this class and we needed to save time. I went over their homework with them and had them help me provide the answers to the assignment. It was a very quick class and I didn't have time to really lead a discussion. I always call them by their names and try to call on a variety of students. They seem to know that they may be called on at any point. The discussions have more and more participants.

Period 3

This class was being too talkative so the mentor teacher did not give me very much time to instruct. She popped an impromptu quiz on them and it took the whole period.

September 28, 2012

Period 1

We kept reviewing evaluating functions today, and everything seemed to "click" more. I tried to individually track the students, as they were all working with guided practice for much of the period. The mentor teacher tutored some of the students who had been struggling the previous afternoon, and these students seemed to behave better and participate in the discussion. This really did change the dynamic of the classroom for today. Mostly everyone was on task. I tried to give praise to students and appear to be a helpful person rather than an invader who just made school harder for them. Sometimes I feel like they think that the work would be easier if Ms. Long was teaching them. The novelty of me teaching is wearing off, and now I'm trying to stop the resistance. For example, I had a student tell me that he didn't need to do his warm up because he "doesn't need this class" because he was a tenth grader and all he needed was to pass the EOC to get out. I refuse to give up on this student. He is already behind on the graduation track, and he is one of my biggest challenges.

Period 2

This class was better behaved than they had been for the whole week. The quiz scores were okay, but they know that they need to pay attention in class. I am hearing less and less chatter from this class. Of my two MCR classes, this one tends to be lower achieving, but second period is closing the gap between the two. I feel that this is because they are realizing that the amount of time they spend talking correlates with the lowness of their test scores. I don't want to eliminate talking because I eventually hope to foster independent mathematical discussion in the classroom. Hopefully this trend will continue because I want them to talk about math without me constantly poking and prodding them.

I went over multiplying polynomials and gave guided practice. I tried to get to all of the students who had questions. Of course, I know and use their names constantly and I hope they feel that I care about their well-being. One of my goals for my apprenticeship is to close the gap between the two MCR classes.

Period 3

We planned to give the same pop quiz to this period as we did yesterday for second period. Therefore, I tried to go over some methods of multiplying polynomials in the warm up. I tried to have the students contribute to the discussion, but I had to manage the time wisely, as we had a pop quiz to administer. This took up much of the period. I don't like giving these pop quizzes. The students seemed really sad about having to take them. I feel as though they don't contribute much to the learning process. I did get some good feedback from them, and I know that I have to change the lesson plans for next week, but I feel that this quiz may discourage a lot of my students, rather than teach them that they shouldn't be so chatty during class.