

Reflection of Data Driven Decision Making

Data is one of an educator's most valuable measures in the classroom. Using data to make decisions is essential to ensure the best learning environment for students. Data is also an excellent tool for proving student learning. In my practicum, I have used data to change instruction, support students with behavior plans, and better understand student learning.

One of my favorite ways to obtain data in the classroom is through informal evaluations or assessments. I often teach the same lesson several times a day to different blocks and I am always slightly changing lessons based on observational data. One time in particular while teaching a lesson about Ancient Rome I noticed that students were having a difficult time sitting through the direct instruction portion of the lesson. About halfway through the lecture students became more fidgety and talkative. To help combat this I tried to include more opportunities for students to answer questions. While this helped to refocus students, they were still not as attentive as they were at the beginning of the lesson. For the next class, I broke up the direct instruction by moving activities around. Instead of giving the lecture in one long block I split it in half and played a fun video in the middle. This gave the students a break where they didn't have to listen to me. This ended up working like a break and this combined with asking open-ended questions led to more student engagement throughout the lesson. In this instance, I was able to use the informal data of student behavior to better engage students throughout a lesson.

I have also used observational data to support students who are on behavior plans. Several of my students have behavior plans that ask the teacher to give students points based on how well they demonstrate different positive behaviors. The positive behaviors on these sheets are different according to what each child needs. One student, in particular, was given a bingo sheet to complete with different behaviors in each square. This student struggles with social

settings and is very quiet in class. Due to this most of his bingo squares ask him to speak to a peer or a teacher. One day a couple of weeks ago my mentor teacher and I noticed that he was starting to come out of his shell and going out of his comfort zone to complete his tasks. When he completed his sheet and got bingo he got so excited. Watching, noting, and documenting the behavior of students is data and it is of critical importance for students on these plans. One of my favorite parts of teaching is seeing students thrive after appropriate, data-driven supports have been put in place.

Another way that I use data in the classroom is with assessments. I generally like to use informal assessments like exit tickets and polling to collect data because they are less stressful for students. During the unit about the 1920s and the Great Depression, I taught a lesson on the causes of the Great Depression. The lesson consisted of direct instruction and a simulation where students explored the causes and ramifications of the stock market crash in 1929 and the events that followed. After the lesson students were asked to complete an exit ticket where they described a cause of the Great Depression in their own words. While reading the exit tickets every student was able to accurately depict at least one cause. Some students were able to do this with more detail than others but no student was incorrect. Using this data, I could say that my lesson was effective.

Using data in the classroom is imperative. Collecting all data, including informational observational data, and being willing to change instruction based on collected data is a teaching best practice and provides the best learning environment for students. In my practicum, I have used data to better instructional methods, provide supports for student behavior, and prove student learning.