

Reflection of Instruction

As the student population across the country changes to become more and more diverse it is important to make sure that teachers have practices in place to be able to meet all of our students and their needs. In my internship, I have had to practice different instructional practices to make sure that all of my learners can understand the content. I have done this by differentiating assignments, collaborating with other teachers to come up with plans and best practices, and listening to student feedback.

When planning assignments, differentiation is one of the most important things to me. Students do not all learn in the same ways or at the same rate. As a result, assignments have to be differentiated to meet all classroom needs. I think one of the best ways to do this is by introducing student choice. When students can choose the topic and modality of an assignment or project they can pick how to best show their knowledge. During the World War II unit in my US History class, all students that scored at least an 80% on the unit pretest were given the option to do an extension project on a WWII topic of their choice instead of taking notes in class. Several of my students were engaged in completing in-depth research about a variety of topics. The students also got the opportunity to present their research however they wanted. I had a student write a research paper, but I also had a student who struggles with reading and writing who made a Lego diorama. If the students had been forced to write papers that student would not have been able to showcase their knowledge as well. I also believe that if these students had been forced to sit in the classroom with their peers taking notes on information that they largely already knew they would not have been able to connect with the material in the same way.

Being able to collaborate with other teachers and specialists on campus was immensely helpful during my internship. Every other Friday the sixth-grade teachers on my team would

meet during our planning and we would talk about different students that we were worried about. In this meeting we could discuss student behavior and the other teachers were able to give their advice if something was working well in their classrooms. My campus also had several other professionals that I could talk to if I needed ideas on how to help a student. In one of my history classes I had a student who was always making the most wonderful connections to all of the material, but I felt bad because I often had to cut her off or tell her that we would have to come back to her ideas. After all, we had a lesson that we had to get through to stay on schedule with the other classes. One day I was talking about this student with our gifted specialist. I mentioned the issues that I was having and how I wanted to hear what this student had to say but did not always have the time. He gave me the idea to start a journal where we could write back and forth. She could write her thoughts down in the notebook and I could respond after class when I had time. After we put this in place I was able to listen to this student's ideas and I marveled at how her mind worked. She was also able to focus on the material better because she did not spend half of the class waiting to be called on. Without talking to the gifted specialist I would have never thought to do this.

The last strategy I used to reach all of my students was to use student feedback. I did this several ways during my internship. An easy way to do it was to have students anonymously rate their understanding before and after a lesson. The hope is that students have more understanding after the lesson. If students do not gain an appropriate understanding you can reteach specific things. I have also had students rate specific parts of my lesson. One of the first lessons that I taught during my internship was about the causes of the great depression. I knew that this would be a little difficult to understand because different economic concepts that led to the great depression are difficult to understand. To help students understand the sequence of events that

led to the great depression I found a simulation online. After I taught the lesson and did the simulation I had students anonymously rate the simulation specifically. The results were very positive. Because of this, I saved the simulation instructions on my computer so I can maybe use it in my classroom.

A difficult part of being an effective teacher is making sure that your instruction reaches different demographics of students. This was something that I struggled with, especially at the start of my internship. To make sure that I was able to reach all students I differentiated my assignments, talked with other teachers and specialists, and listened to student feedback.