Reflection 4

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In order for teaching to be an effective practice, teachers must and deliver content effectively so that students are able to understand, master, and apply the skills they have been taught. There are many different models of planning as well as different teaching strategies, but there are some that yield consistent results in classrooms. The success of effective planning and instruction are measured through assessment, which shows how much students learned and were able to retain. Planning methods, teaching models, and assessment all go hand-in-hand when creating a positive, effective learning environment.

When preparing lessons, there are various planning methods required to engage students in the learning process. One such planning method is backwards planning. Here, a teacher begins with the end in mind. First, a teacher must identify the desired results of what they want their students to be able to accomplish. This is usually where a teacher asks themselves, ‘What do I want my students to be able to understand?’ or ‘What should students be able to do?’ These questions, along with standards, begin the planning process. Next, a teacher must determine the acceptable evidence. This is where they are to decide what type of assessments will be given to measure and record student growth. These could be performance assessments, projects, quizzes/tests, work samples, or observations. And lastly, a teacher plans the learning experience. These are the assignments that will be used to gauge how much the students have learned.

In my field experience, I have seen my cooperating teacher (CT) do this many times. Most recently in math, she was able to locate the common assessments that would be given to the students at the end of each nine weeks and she is using those assessments to guide her teaching. She took the second nine weeks assessment and gave it to students as a pretest. They did not have to answer a question if they did not know the answer to it, they just needed to put a star by it. She had each student come up us and we graded their tests on the spot. In checking it immediately, she was able to see which
concepts the class struggled with as a whole. We spent the next couple of says going through every answer on the assessment to ensure that the students understood the concepts.

In addition to different planning methods, there are also different models of teaching that are appropriate in different learning situations. One such teaching method is direct instruction where the teacher directs learning and gives the content to the students. This type of instruction is necessary sometimes for students to truly grasp ahold of ideas they need to understand. To further their learning students can work in cooperative groups where they are able to interact in their assignments and enrich each other’s learning. This can also serve as a ‘peer-tutoring’ time where students are able to help teach other work through misconceptions they may have. Two higher level models of teaching that I rarely see are inquiry-based teaching and the Socratic model. I feel that inquiry based instruction would be most effective in math and science where students often have to collect data and solve problems. These subjects often engage students in abstract thinking needed to draw conclusions. Another teaching method is the Socratic methods which is often used after a class reads a common text. Here the teacher may formulate questions for students to respond to in discussion, but they are not the primary facilitator of the discussion, the students are. Students must be able to synthesize their text in order to be able to ask and respond to questions. These are two models that I would love to use in my future classroom.

Finally, it is so important to know what students are able to do before any teaching begins. This is often done through pre-assessments, formal or informal. This is important because some students may have already mastered a concept while others may not have any prerequisite knowledge needed to learn new concepts. It is important to know a students’ readiness level in relation to the content goals. Pre-assessing allows a teacher to form instructional groups and assign appropriate tasks for learning.
Pre-assessing is one thing I wish I saw more of in my field experience. I have only seen this be done once, and used for learning. This is a practice I will use regularly in my classroom.

Pre-assessing, planning, and instruction are all important processes when creating a positive, productive learning environment. Each of these should be used to help students reach their full potential and master concepts.