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Teaching Analysis
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Planning lessons for teaching students has proven to be more difficult than I had originally thought. I have developed and taught a few lessons in the past but this time was different. When developing these lessons I was trying to cover a lot of material in a short amount of time. While this was not my choice, it was the task my cooperating teacher had charged me with. I had to think long and hard about the essential content. I also had to make sure that I was teaching the concepts that would be referenced at a later date so that students wouldn't be completely lost when they were expected to recall prior knowledge.

I had written all of my lesson plans and had everything planned out when my cooperating teacher informed me that some students' IEPs required accommodations that were not in my original lesson plans. So I had to go back and revise the lesson plans. The largest accommodation I had to make was that of providing an opportunity for students to actually hear the text being read. My cooperating teacher recommended that the most efficient method for making this accommodation was to have volunteers read small portions aloud while the rest of the class followed along.

My first day of instruction went well. I realized about ten minutes into the lesson that I had committed one of the major taboos of teaching. I had planned a lesson that was primarily lecture. I broke up the lecture by having students read the chapter aloud (to accommodate students with IEPs) and soliciting student input that was related to the content being covered. Many students were disinterested and on the verge of falling asleep as I watched their heads bob up and down. The class went fairly quickly for me but I am sure for the students felt like it was one of those lessons that drag on and on and on.

I knew that I needed to do something different for the next lesson so decided to implement a jigsaw activity. The content for the second lesson lent itself well to this type activity. I broke the students into groups and assigned them a specific section to read and discuss. When I saw that the groups had covered their section, I rearranged the groups so that one person from each section was in a group. Their task was to teach the other members of the group what they had learned in their first grouping. This activity worked a little better than the first day's lesson. However, it was difficult to keep some students on task (in both grouping arrangements). There were also some issues of groups not working well together. All in all, it got students more involved and got them thinking a little more critically about the content.

The third (and final) lesson was five days later (after Fall break and the weekend). I began the lesson by reviewing the content from the second day's lesson. I was very disappointed in the students because they didn't know the answers to the questions I was asking. It might have been a simple fact that they had had five days off and simply didn't

remember the content. I had referred them to a chart in their textbook that had the information I was going over. All they had to do was look at the chart and tell me what it said. After a rocky mini-review session I taught the third part of the chapter using the same basic method as the first day, only this time I solicited even more student input. The students were more responsive this time around. I speculate that they were more responsive for one of two reasons. The first reason would be that they were becoming more comfortable with me and better acclimated to my teaching style. The second reason could have been due to the simple fact that they had just come back from a long weekend and were feeling rather refreshed. Either way, I felt that more learning occurred the third day than the first two days.

Looking back at the whole experience of teaching for those three days I realize that it is not good enough to simply write a lesson plan and follow it regardless of what is happening in the classroom when giving the lesson. A good teacher will revamp or change elements of a lesson in the middle of giving it if he or she sees that it is not working. During my third lesson I knew I was losing students so I captured their attention by providing an example that related to the content but was also entertaining for them.

I discovered that as I learned each student's name and called on them by name they responded much more readily. They seemed to respect me more because I knew their name and wasn't simply pointing at them and saying "you." I know from my own experience as a student that I tended to "warm up" to a teacher who took the time to acknowledge that I had a name. The next step after learning the students' names is to learn about their personalities and interests. With that knowledge, I can better tailor my lessons to their personalities and show them that I am genuinely looking out for their best interests.

The students had a tendency to get off topic very easily. At the same time, they believed that their comments and stories have a direct relation to the lesson. However, it only takes one story to throw the train off the track. One of the most difficult things I found to do was to pull students back to the topic without making it seem like I didn't care about their stories or was disinterested in what they had to say.

When I stood in front of the class I had a tendency to walk around a lot. I didn't stand in one spot. Instead I moved around so that I looked as though I was trapped inside of an invisible box. This made me appear anxious and restless which the students saw and mimicked. Once I stopped "pacing" around the students seemed more focused and willing to participate.

The opportunities I had to teach students were incredibly valuable. In the end, I learned just as much as the students. The reflection section at the end of the lesson plans proved to be incredibly valuable as well. I was able to look at the reflection from lesson one and modify lesson two so that I didn't make the same mistakes or have the same problems. There is a lot to learn from simply thinking about the events of the lesson and how it could be improved as well as what worked well and could be used elsewhere.