

Discussion with Dave Coffey: What?

On Monday, March 11, 2013, I had my first content observation with David Coffey. Desiree and I planned a multiple intelligence lesson plan on the zero product property. The purpose of this discussion was to receive feedback on my usage of formative assessment and direct questions throughout my instruction. I knew that I implemented various formative assessments throughout my lesson, but I wanted to know if my students really understood the concepts. I needed to know if my open-ended questions stimulated the students thinking and how successful my questioning was. Therefore, I formed the following questions before our discussion:

- How can I ask better open-ended questions?
- How can I get the students fully engaged into the lesson?
- How can I make sure the students really understood the concepts from the lesson? How would I be able to tell this?
- Is multiple intelligence and choice, effective in every classroom? Why and why not?
- How can I make sure that I will continually assess my students?
- How can I allow students to make their own connections during the lesson?

During the lesson, the students reviewed what they already knew about the zero product property. The students wrote their thoughts on the white board, which lead to a group discussion. In the previous class, we gave the students a multiple intelligence survey in order to separate them into their learning groups. We found that the majority of the student's preferred making posters since they were visual/spatial learners. Two students wanted to try something new, and decided to write a rap about the zero product property. It was interesting to see the similarities and differences amongst the poster groups. Each poster had the same representations, but was organized differently. The rap was most memorable moment from the lesson. The students created a great rap even with a beat which described the zero product property. I was impressed on how successful the rap was and their peers really enjoyed the math rap. At the end of the lesson, the class decided which group presented the best zero product property projects. The class decided they preferred the rap was the best, so the two students will be rewarded on pi day with extra treats.

After the lesson, I sat down with Dave Coffey to discuss how the lesson went. Overall, we felt the students were engaged in the lesson since they were given a choice. The students were able to decide how they wanted to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the zero product property. Dave and I discussed, how I could ask better open-ended questions throughout my instruction by using the five step process: what, how, why, when and what-if? He explained that these questions will probe the students learning. Also, I learned that I must be aware at various spots within my lesson as to where students may need me to ask open-ended questions for them to clarify and form connections. I really wanted my students to understand the

material. Dave made a point of how I assessed the students in my pervious lessons. I responded with hand signals, direct questions, exit slips, and reflections. I would like to incorporate more student reflections in an interactive notebook for the students to reflect at any point in the lesson. This would allow the students to write down main ideas and concepts that they want to remember. The students could also use a “Turn and talk” with their neighbors to discuss and talk about their answers in order for the students to participate in the discussion. Another important idea that I learned during my discussion with Dave was that he suggested creating a list of questions before the lesson and have an observation sheet on hand so that I can gather data about the students understanding. This would allow me to better prepare for areas where students may struggle and how I can provide assistance to re-engage them back into the lesson. Based on my observations, I can sequence the discussion or presentations in an order to assist with our class discussion. This would allow the students to highlight what new ideas they want to add to the lesson. Lastly, I learned that I need to clearly state what my expectations are for their work and what I will be looking for. I wanted to allow the students to have room for creativity, but I quickly realized that I need to implement more structure within the lesson. I must clearly state what items I expect them to incorporate in their presentations and have them contemplate what else they can bring to the lesson.

The whole discussion with Dave helped me understand the clearer picture of the instruction process. Our discussion made me realize that I need to keep the culture of the classroom in mind as well as continuous assessing the students to receive feedback. I need to make sure the students understand the main point of the lesson and my expectations for them in the lesson. By keeping a list of open-ended questions, I can stimulate the students thinking and engage them in the discussion. I feel that this discussion helped me significantly and this will allow me continue to grow as a teacher.

Discussion with Dave Coffey- So what?

After our lesson and hour discussion, I gained an abundance of new information on the instruction process for teachers. It was great. I feel more comfortable of how to instruct. I learned that I need to keep the culture of the classroom in mind as well as clearly state the purpose of the activity in order to create the learning environment. I learned while instructing lessons, I should have a list of questions with me and keep track the students response on an observation sheet. This will allow me to get feedback as well as to identify where in my lesson the students struggled. Why are they struggling? Can I re-explain the misconceptions and how can I provide this? I am knowledgeable with the multiple intelligence lesson and therefore was able to engage my students with the zero product property but perhaps this may not have been the best topic for the lesson format. The students really preferred having the choice, but they must know the teacher’s expectations and promote their knowledge through new connections.

Like lesson planning, instruction is not just something you can throw together at the last moment. Instead, both lesson planning and instruction is a skill every teacher learns. If a teacher prepares his/her lesson ahead of time, then the instruction will become more natural and effective. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the student's culture, the learning targets in mind, and have the skill to construct a lesson that will reach each student at their learning level. I need to keep this in mind as I walk into each class hour and while I plan my unit and assignments for this semester.

Discussion with David: Now What?

After walking out from the afternoon discussion, I have a better understanding on instruction. I will continue to ask for feedback from the Cooperating Teacher, whom I could ask about their planning and instruction process and how he includes the student's culture into the planning process. I will also work with Desiree and see how we can improve our lesson planning for the unit since we are in the same classroom. It's a great learning opportunity for me to see how Desiree provides teachings since it allows me to witness her education style. This promotes my thinking of how I can improve with my teaching. Also, I understand that I can ask for assistance from my Math professors and College of Education Professors at GVSU. I have networked with other teacher assistants in my content area to discuss how effective they are with instruction and whether the class culture effects their instruction. I will continue to discuss my planning and instruction process with Jon and Dave as well as my classmates to see how I can improve my lesson planning and instruction. The more feedback I receive in my pre-service semester will mode me to become successful teacher as I graduate. This will allow me to close the gap between students as I become a better lesson planner and educator.