

Tammy Cardwell
Dr. Watson
READ5963.50
11/16/13

Professional Development Reflection

As I thought about various types of activities I could focus on during my first professional development presentation, I decided to focus on critical thinking strategies that I have been researching for a few years. I also thought about my audience of educators who teacher kindergarten through fifth grade. I teach reading and writing at the fifth grade level. Most of the educators I was presenting to teach all subject areas in the lower grades. There are a few, like me, who are content area specific. They teach math, science, or social studies.

With all of this in mind, I designed professional development activities that could be used with any subject area. I designed breaks in the training that would allow the learners to work and discuss thoughts and ideas in small and whole groups. I had originally planned to provide light snacks, but we were blessed by our campuses PTO who provided a delicious hot chocolate bar with treats for this professional development day. It was a real treat, and the teachers welcomed the sugar-high after a long day of teaching.

As teachers entered the room, they grabbed their snacks of course, but were also met with a discussion topic that was displayed for all to see. Most followed the prompt and were discussing reading and thinking strategies that they are currently using in their classroom. When our training began, teachers shared their own ideas, as well as others they had discussed at their table. This active engagement really helped me as I spoke, and we all learned great tips and ideas as thoughts were shared.

I was inspired by the conversations my fellow educators had during our turn-and-talks throughout my presentation. Many had read the book "Hatchet" and enjoyed sharing their

thoughts and ideas about the book with those that had not read it. Lower grade levels shared some concern with their students producing feedback with the Thinking Stems, but as we all discussed and shared ideas, they came to the conclusion that they could introduce and model the skills. Second grade thought they could continue to build upon those skills that were introduced by providing students with Sentence Stems in their writing centers that students could complete by the second half of the year. Third grade and up were confident that their students could use these skills with both fiction and nonfiction to deepen their thinking and output of learning. We all felt like students would be more and more successful over time as these skills are built upon from kindergarten up.

My student examples from my current students were the hit of the day I would say. I had eight to ten on each table. Teachers were reading them before the training began. The student produced writings were also my focus for the end of my professional development. The teachers, like myself, were amazed at the depth of thinking some students are making. The writings were the evidence of true learning, and I will make sure that for any future professional developments that I plan and lead to have student examples to display. After all, the proof is in the pudding as they would say.

I ended my professional development asking my audience to think of one skill they learned about and write that skill down on an index card. I asked them to expand upon that one skill, by telling me how they could begin using this skill in their classroom over the next month. The feedback was wonderful. Teachers from all grade levels responded positively, choosing a skill and stating how they would begin using it. Now, almost two weeks later, I have talked with many teachers on campus and I am hearing how they are introducing it.

Encouraged and inspired are the two words that come to mind after my first professional development. I was extremely nervous leading up to this first session. The main thing that I learned from this wonderful experience was how open and supportive my fellow educators are. It was also very similar to my own classroom experiences. I plan and envision my lesson and the possible responses, and the lesson takes on a life of its own. By allowing the learners to take part and share helps me learn as much from them as they might be learning from me. The ideas grow and we end up with a plan that I could have never fully imagined. I was inspired by their ideas and excited to lead another workshop with my peers as we continue to learn and grow with one another, all with the students' learning as our number one goal. In the end, it is our students who benefit from this collaboration.