

Reflective Practitioner

As an observer in a third grade classroom, I had the chance to see more of what it is like to be a teacher and part of that is being a reflective practitioner. This means that as a teacher, one will reflect on how a lesson or activity is going and will change things as needed to be sure that continuous learning is taking place. I can say that I did see this happening a time or two in the classroom I was in.

Specifically, there was one day that I remember Mrs. Borden wanted her class to work on communication. She gave them the task of getting into four different groups: the oldest child, the middle child, the youngest child, or an only child. The trick was that they could not talk to one another. The kids immediately started moving around and began to use their hands to do actions. One large group really began to take shape and a few other small clusters, but the groups were not very distinct. Mrs. Borden reminded them they couldn't speak and to really separate the groups. However, not much changed and kids began to make signs, which also was not allowed. This is when Mrs. Borden ended the activity and checked to see how the kids did. It did not go so well.

Mrs. Borden began to turn on that reflective practitioner mindset. The original idea was that they would perform this activity twice with a different category the second time. However, after the poor first attempt, they moved on to something else. Some of the reasons for doing this was that the kids were struggling to make clear groups, it was taking too long, and the rules were no longer being followed. It was important for Mrs. Borden to realize that it was not working and change her plan of attack. She didn't however want to scrap the idea completely, so she made the

comment that they would try the activity again a different day. This worked for her because she was able to get the class under control and regain their attention rather quickly.

Some important things needed to be a reflective practitioner, is to be detail oriented and to know your students. By recognizing small details, one is able to see what is going well and what is falling apart rather quickly without doing much investigating. To know your students is important, because you would easily be able to see why things aren't working. For example, if they are a talkative bunch and the activity involves no talking, this could be a struggle and may not go as well as originally planned.

For myself, I recognize that it is extremely important to recognize what is working and what is not rather quickly. Thus, I plan to work on getting to know my students the second they walk through the door, This will help me to build relationships and figure out who they are as people, which is important in reflecting while teaching. I also want to work on seeing the small details as well as the big picture. Both provide good insight into how an activity or lesson is working. It also is important to figure out why something isn't working and to make note of that so you have it for future years.

One problem that could be solved using reflective practitioner is a complicated math lesson like expand and trade subtraction. Mrs. Borden taught this lesson while I was in her classroom and knew it was difficult. If she had a plan and it was not working because the kids were getting crazy answers and could not follow the steps at all, she may have had to change her plan of attack on the spot. Lessons that are more complicated could take more thinking into what the best way to teach it is.

Finally, Mrs. Borden's class provided me with good insight into what a reflective practitioner looks like and how I can prepare for my future as a reflective teacher. It is an extremely important skill that I hope to begin working on now. There are so many benefits to being reflective.