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EDDN 637

Instructional Synopsis Observation Report

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For my observation, I was in a third-grade classroom with 18 students which included three English Language Learners(ELL). The class contained one teacher in a general education class setting. The three ELL students were at emerging stages of language acquisition. Two of the lessons observed are ELA based, with objectives that correspond to character development and synonyms.

In the lesson observed, the objective was that students would be able to use text evidence to identify character development in books. To begin the lesson the teacher orally read the learning objective aloud, to give students a brief introduction to what the lesson would be. Students gathered on the small carpet where the teacher began explaining how just as in real life, characters in fiction books often change from the beginning of the story to the end. I believe that in this sector of the lesson, it would have been helpful to have students engage in a discussion or activity that would help them self-connect to this learning objective. This lesson lacked a hook at the beginning of the lesson to stimulate students' interest. Using a hook is fundamental in a lesson to gain students interest and increase motivation. Capturing students' interest will allow them to become more involved in the lesson. With increased engagement, information may flow more freely and even achieve higher levels of cognition to make connections(Marshall, 2020).

The teacher wrote key vocabulary on the board which included the words *claim*, *support*, and *text evidence*, and went over the definitions as a whole class. Vocabulary is an essential portion to any lesson, where ELL students need additional resources and support to best aid them in comprehension. Without individual materials or without prior exposure to vocabulary it can negatively hinder their understanding of the lesson or assignment. Pre-teaching vocabulary words will allow students to have a repeated exposure to unfamiliar words. Research concludes that this strategy helps ELL students improve their comprehension of a text as they read(Miller, Veatch, 2010). The materials used include an enlarged version of the book *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats, individual books of *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats, white board, smart board, and graphic organizers. The incorporation of graphic organizers are

essential when working with ELL students to assist in visualization, construction of ideas, planning to write and sequencing information.

During the lesson the teacher modeled one example with the class how to look for a key trait in character change in whole class instruction. She explained to the students that the changes are purposeful and meaningful. Some questions she asked the students included “*What evidence can you find to support your claim? What is your opinion of the main character’s behavior?*”. The teacher explained to students that they were going to make a claim about the main character and then use textual evidence to support the claim with their reading partner. Although the teacher showed students how to look for a trait, I believe it would have been beneficial to model an example with another text on how to connect evidence to support the claim. Modeling is a form of scaffolding which would provide ELL students a visual and physical example of how to complete the activity. To differentiate instruction, students were paired homogeneously by their reading levels. Students were also provided with graphic organizers where they came up with three claims about the main character in the beginning of the story they read, and evidence to support the claim. ELL students were required to write two to three claims with additional support from the teacher. As students worked with their partners, the teacher circulated around the room during the activity providing support to pairs. As assessment, the teacher also listened to peer conversations and read then collected the graphic organizers as an informal assessment at the end of the lesson. To wrap up the lesson, the teacher asked students to share their claims with the class aloud. The teacher knew which students had the best supportive evidence when walking around the room, and pre-selected them to share. As per diversity, there was no inclusion of a multicultural element in this lesson. It’s very important to incorporate diversity in order to promote a welcoming inclusive environment. Teachers should use materials that help foster engagement and skills in an engaging, culturally relevant way in order to meet all student needs, especially ELL students.

In this classroom the teacher has introduced two forms of classroom management strategies, an individual form and whole class system. A sticker chart is on the front board with all the students' names with eleven blank spaces lined horizontally across. On this sticker chart, students have the ability to earn stickers for a multitude of ways. For instance, students may exert positive behavior such as being a helpful peer, cleaning up their station, staying on task,

reaching an individual goal, working well in group work/pairs etc. Once students reach eleven stickers, they are able to choose from the prize box. Individualized reward systems allow students to want to display a targeted behavior to reach their award. Although sticker charts are meant to reward, in this classroom students can also have stickers taken away. Psychology Today claims that it is important to not take away any stickers for poor behavior, because the focal point must be on solely the rewarded behavior(Przeworski, 2014). Students also have a class marble jar, where students can earn marbles for positive class behaviors, compliments from teachers etc., but they can also lose marbles. Students must collaborate as a class to earn marbles in which will earn them a themed party of their choosing. Both strategies implement extrinsic positive behavior reinforcers in the classroom.

In the second lesson observed, the objective was that students would be able to identify common synonyms that convey shades of meaning. Students all met at the meeting area on the carpet to begin the lesson, students sat in assigned spots which located the ELL students in the front of the carpet. The teacher began the lesson stating she would ask a student to complete a task. The task was “walk to the other side of the room.” One student started by completing the task as a demonstration and walking from one side of the room to the other. The next task was to “march to the other side of the room”. When speaking, the teacher ensured to enunciate the tasks, and use slower verbal language. When asking each student to demonstrate a new task, the teacher used repetition of the same sentence structure with solely an adjustment to the verb in the task. The teacher continued with different examples such as strutting to the other side, and stomping. This hook kept students engaged and motivated to continue with different examples.

Once students were gathered back on the carpet, the teacher wrote the word Synonym on the board and explained this was key vocabulary for this lesson. She asked students to turn and talk to their peers and try to see if they can connect what a synonym is according to the demonstrations that just occurred. The teacher let students talk with their pairs, but the ELL students sat quietly. The teacher should have intervened during the turn and talk and ask scaffolding questions to encourage ELL speakers to one another about what a synonym could be. After discussing what a synonym is, the teacher connected how all those examples had similar meanings to the original word “walk”. Immediately the teacher began to read their book and did not have an activation of prior knowledge for the lesson.

The materials in this lesson included the book *Monsters Can Mosey: Understanding Shades of Meaning Book* by Gillia M. Olson and Ivica Stevanovic, Chart Paper, Student Visual Thesaurus, Thesaurus, Blank Tombstone Pictures, List of common words for ELL students, Paper Tombstone with common words used worksheet and iPads. As per lesson plan procedures, the teacher read the book *Monsters Can Mosey* aloud to students. She explained to students that the objective was to record synonyms for the word “walk” in the story being read. The teacher wrote “walk” in the center of a chart and then would pause, and record for different synonyms in the story used with the help from the students' guidance. To make the learning interactive, students would act out the synonyms from the book such as, prancing, tiptoeing, gliding etc. The teacher then would take out a blank tombstone picture and tape it to the chart with the word “walk” with the synonyms. The teacher added the word “walk” on to the tombstone and explained to students “walk” is now a dead word in their writing, that instead of using that word they can use any other descriptive word from the chart they made together.

After the teacher reviewed students' previous writing pieces, she came up with a list of words she noticed were commonly used amongst the class such as, *big, little, said, good etc.* Students were each paired off and received their own chart paper and tombstone. Students had to choose common words they would add to their tombstone and then write synonyms around it. Some key questions the teacher asked the students included during modeling was “What's another word for *say*?” or “Which word means very *big*?”. Students were able to brainstorm with partners for synonyms and with the use of a thesaurus. Students then were to write a sentence with the “dead” common word and then rewrite the sentence around the tombstone on the chart paper with the new synonyms.

To differentiate the lesson for ELL students, instead of pair work they would work with the teacher. These students were also provided with their own list of words to choose from preselected by the teacher. Students were able to use a virtual thesaurus which provided them with a visual bilingual synonym web. This virtual thesaurus allowed for students to manipulate what words to choose and save words while also learning the definition if needed. The words are displayed as a thinking map to give students a clearer visual of the synonyms. The number of common words were reduced where the teacher helped students come up with sentences. To modify further, I believe the teacher should have had sentences pre-made for students or at least provide them with sentence frames/starters, which would allow them to focus on learning the

objective of grasping synonyms and not so much creating the sentence. When working with ELL students, sentence frames can help provide vocabulary structure they can't produce on their own yet (Student Achievement Partners, pg. 1). To close the lesson the teacher asked students to share different "dead" words they used and what other words they used to replace dead. After a group discussion, the teacher stated that it's important to keep in mind that in their writing the goal is to avoid continuously using the "dead" words and replace it with synonyms that are shades of meaning. The teacher states that these words refer to what we feel or think, and choose the word that better expresses what they want to convey, just like they came up with during the activity. An informal assessment was used in which the teacher asked students to take out their previous writing piece and circle at least 3 "dead" words they think they see in it. Students would then take post-it notes and write synonyms that they can change it to. Students worked on this individually as the teacher observed if students were able to identify "dead" words and choose replacement words. In this lesson in a form to connect with students it tied into the theme of "Halloween" by incorporating a monster themed book and using tombstone worksheets. This lesson plan incorporated a holiday to engage with students' interest and motivation, which I noticed was of value during the reading where students remained engaged during the entire book.

As per the curriculum, I would recommend a heightened attention to instructing effective reading comprehension for ELL students. It is important to develop the proper instruction, intervention, and goals for students when designing a curriculum. Code-based skills and meaning based skills are what educators must work on with students in order to gain advancements in reading comprehension from students. Code-based skills rely on students' abilities to sound words out and alphabet knowledge, whereas meaning-based skills refer to vocabulary. Vocabulary is essential in literacy development. English Language Arts Standards categorize three areas, reading literature, reading information text, and language. In these areas, educators must choose the correct interventions to best support students, for instance understanding the difference between a student who needs assistance in code-based skills such as reading words slowly, or meaning-based skills where a student may have difficulty with comprehension of an unfamiliar vocabulary word in a passage(NYSED, 2022).

Written language is a strategy that will support the advancements of ELL students' literacy skills in the classroom. Educators must utilize effective instructional practices that will

promote students' cognitive skills. For instance, selective writing prompts must be used that students are familiarized with that allows them to expand their thoughts with the right scaffolding supports. In the curriculum, lessons must incorporate vocabulary that correlates with the unit to maintain a connection throughout learning points. When designing writing in a curriculum, to abide by TESOL standards, students must become familiarized and constantly exposed to scaffolding materials such as graphic organizers, thinking maps, etc. in order to assist them to demonstrate mastery of writing skills(NYSED, 2022).

ELL students require major support in literacy instruction, which also involves well developed classroom discussion in a curriculum. Apart from reading comprehension, and writing, language must be taken into consideration to ensure ELL students practice their L2 often. To ensure students can practice language, educators must foster environments where students can increase engagement. Choosing specific texts is essential, for example not only using grade leveled books and content but using a variety of texts from distinct levels that can help ELL students better develop comprehension to participate in the classroom. Educators must not limit peer interactions, but encourage it by using turn and talks, debates, small group work etc. to allow students to have more collaboration time(NYSED, 2022).

When creating a curriculum, educators must focus on three elements which include, reading comprehension, written language, and classroom discussion while simultaneously connecting TESOL and NYC content standards. These elements all play a crucial role in an ELL student's experience in a classroom. By providing students with the proper instruction and intervention it will allow students to have the best opportunity to grow and master literacy skills. Incorporating the identifications of code-based, and meaning-based skills, providing proper scaffolding materials, using a variety of different leveled texts, and providing many opportunities to engage with peers in meaningful conversation it will foster a positive learning experience for students catered to individual abilities.

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