Engaging and Interacting with Students in Meaningful Ways

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The focus of this assignment was to share how components of Items 5 and 6 from *The 12 Touchstones of Good Teaching-*which deal with engaging and interacting with students in the classroom-will be added to the lesson I will be teaching. I initially began designing the lesson that I will be teaching in a Literacy Design Collaborative class as a one text, one week lesson. I decided to revamp it for this class as I am not certain students can accomplish all of the components and the final product in just one week.

**Step One: Ways to re-engage students every 10 minutes**

Teaching secondary English, re-engaging students every ten minutes will be a challenge; I do try to break up my students’ time most days to help them re-engage, but I do not think I naturally do it every ten minutes. I have already given my pre-assessment, scored it, and allowed students to set personal learning goals based on the pre-assessment and the rubric which will be used to assess their final essay. For the beginning of the lesson (probably the first day of the week), I have several plans for re-engagement. I plan to begin the instruction with a hook or attention getter activity that is intended to help students understand “human nature.” I will ask all students to respond on paper to a set of questions that most people would answer in similar ways. My questions include some general content and then some questions that start connecting to the story that I will be having them read. After students answer questions on their own, we will move on to share their responses in a full group setting. The shift from individual answering to sharing with the group will be my first re-engagement. After the hook, I will introduce the essential question (What can we learn about people’s behavior and motivations from stories?) and have students pair and share what they think some possible answers may include. After this, I plan to remind students of the rubric and their personal learning goals for this lesson by returning their rubrics on which they wrote their learning goals. From there, I will have them shift to the computer lab to look up the terms from the pre-assessment that will become a valuable part of their final project. This activity will finish day one of the lesson. Day two of the lesson will begin with a review of the terminology. To do this I will draw popsicle sticks and have students share their definitions of the terms, giving instructions during the share about information that I want students to include in their notes for class. To finish the second day of class, we will begin reading the story “The Lottery” by Shirley Jackson. When students are reading, all students may not have a re-engagement every ten minutes by their choice. I usually allow students to read on their own or to follow along and read with me. The students who read with me will have re-engagement breaks as I stop to ask questions about what is happening in the story at various points of reading as I model active reading and thinking. Students who read alone will be asked to participate in active reading where they keep notes in a reading journal as they read silently. This will take me to the end of day two of the lesson. Day three will start with an introduction of the prompt for the essay the students will write after having read the story. Individually, students will break the prompt down into six writing variables that we work with in class. In full class discussion, I will answer questions about these variables. From here, students will begin work on their essays. At this point, I will wander the classroom, looking over shoulders as writing takes place and stop the class if I feel that all students need to hear about a common theme going around the classroom or to give advice from which all writers will benefit.

My shifts from individual thinking to pair and shares to whole group discussion will help to re-engage students into the lesson. Also, the activities from answering questions on paper, participating in small group and whole group discussions, using the computers, and writing in reading journals will keep them actively engaged.

**Step Two: Offer students a choice**

Offering choices is one area with which l I do well in my classroom. Students will have multiple choices throughout the lesson. Their first choice will come in their pair and share; I typically let them choose a classmate with whom they will work. They will also have the choice to read the story individually or with me. I instituted this as a common choice in my classroom a couple of years ago when I had multiple students whose Individual Education Plans required that they have the option of an audio book. For the stories we read in class and with our limited library resources, that is not always an easy option, so I become the audio book. The first year I did this, I found that following along with me and discussing the story also helps readers who struggle to comprehend; strong readers, however, often do not like to read at my pace and can benefit more from reading at their speed and taking their own notes when they feel information needs to be noted. The students’ biggest choice in the lesson will be their character choice. In the prompt, students are given the choice to write about any single character who shows duality of human nature in multiple places in the story (and several characters in the story do) or to write about multiple characters who may only show duality in human nature once. I think allowing students a choice of character will allow them to write about a character with which they can connect for whatever reason. That connection will hopefully help to keep them engaged during the writing.

**Step Three: Identify how you will explicitly align the skill(s) being taught with real-world relevancy**

The real-world relevancy in my lesson stems from the essential question: “What can we learn about people’s behavior and motivations from stories?” I plan to help students begin to make this connection after we read the first part of the story by likening the setting to our small town where the farmers meet at the coffee shop and talk about markets and ladies stay home and do dishes. By placing the story in a town much like Wiley, I can make the story seem more real and believable to the students than it may have otherwise been. As we read, I discuss with students, asking questions like “Do you know anyone who would do that?” or “Have you ever felt like this?” Once the story and the characters become believable, students will have an easier time juxtaposing the story characters with people in their real lives. If students can learn to “read” character traits in people in stories, they can apply the same types of analysis to people in their own lives.

**Step Four: Add opportunities to interact with students about progress on their personal goals, to engage them and to coach them**

As you can see in my first step, switching from small group to whole group gives me ample time to walk around the classroom overseeing student work and giving suggestions and advice. I will do this as students start writing their essays as well. My class size is under 20, so talking with every student as he or she works is usually very easy within each class period. When I return the rubrics and personal learning goals, I will discuss with the whole group the importance of making a plan to achieve their goals. As students are working on essays, I will visit individually with each one about the steps in their plan. Also as the lesson continues, I will remind them to stick to their plans, use their rubrics, and, by all means, if they are feeling uncomfortable to ask me questions.