

Journal for Bill Willis

Journal Entry: Wednesday June 6

I taught a lesson to the grade 1/2 class. The subject was Art. My lesson was on how to draw various cartoon animals, specifically, an elephant and mouse. The lesson took thirty minutes.

What I did well:

I used a good teacher voice to start the class. I used a lot of variation in my voice. I praised kids who were quiet and sitting down, and urged others in a calm, caring way to do the same.

During the lesson I stopped and corrected misbehaviours. Mostly this involved kids who were bouncing up and down on their beach ball chairs and talking instead of listening. Why does Mindy let them sit on beach ball chairs? This is a mystery that I will have to have explained to me.

I successfully covered everything in my lesson plan, and on discovering that I would finish early, also showed them how to draw a person that wasn't a 'stick man'. I did a good job pretending that this was part of my plan all along, easily accomplished because I in fact had no plan written down.

I moved around the room a lot, to look at the students' work as I was teaching. I asked lots of questions, such as "*why is your elephant wearing running shoes?*" and "*Did you make your mouse's ears square on purpose?*" I didn't get angry when one student told me the mouse I'd drawn on the board was cross-eyed.

What I could improve if I were to do this lesson again:

I had no success at all getting the little guy in the front row to stop talking. He talked incessantly. He talked to those around him. He talked to himself. He talked while I was telling him not to talk. And then he talked some more. Nothing I tried seemed to work. Mindy laughed afterwards when I told her about this. I didn't think it was nice of her to laugh. Is that supportive? How am I ever going to learn to be a better grade 1/2 teacher? Anyway, what she does works for her. Or so she says.

I also didn't do very well in getting the students to listen to what I was telling them. 'Draw a circle' didn't work too well. Many of their elephants ended up looking like anorexic earthworms with legs. But I did have one success. One girl finished her elephant and added all sorts of details to it, and it was a very good drawing. That lifted my spirits. It was almost as exciting as having a student get 100% on a Diploma exam!

How would I grade myself on this lesson?

I think I earned a very solid B+. I have no evidence to support this, other than the fact that all students produced three drawings, stayed in their seats, were enthusiastic, and none of them got lost anywhere. When Mindy returned, she was very pleased with the work her students had done. In fact, she was bubbly. I'm not bubbly. But I did smile a lot. Does that count?

I look forward to my Art class with the grade 3/4/5 class. They don't sit on beach balls.

Supervisor's Comments:

I would grade your lesson as a B. You are going to be a good grade 1/2 teacher someday. Don't worry about being nervous ... it's normal.

However, you should try to hide your unease from the students. One way I would suggest is to stop looking at the ceiling and mumbling to yourself.

Your teacher voice is very good. I liked the way you got everyone settled at the start of the class. However, you probably shouldn't have waved your arms around so much.

One fault I would find with your lesson is that you did not draw it to a satisfactory close when you were done. Looking at Mindy when she returned to the classroom and silently mouthing "Thank goodness you're back!" probably isn't sufficient. Neither was the rather rapid exit you made from the classroom.

It's true that you have a lot to learn, but you're doing great. You've come a long way. Next time, I want to see an actual lesson plan. Don't forget to cite your sources.

Journal Entry: Thursday June 7

My supervising teacher Kate made the suggestion that I 'might consider trying the same lesson with her 3/4/5 class'. Since I know that you're supposed to always say 'yes' to supervisors' 'suggestions', I agreed. Somewhat reluctantly.

I taught a lesson to the grade 3/4/5 class. The subject was Art. My lesson was on how to draw various cartoon animals, specifically, an elephant and mouse. The lesson took thirty minutes.

What I did well:

I made a concerted effort to use everything I've learned about classroom management, to ensure that everyone was attentive and that no-one interrupted. There were no problems at all, which reminds me how important classroom management really is in making sure that students learn.

However, I suspect their good behaviour may have had nothing to do with what I did, since most of them seemed fascinated by being taught how to draw cartoons, and many of them seem to be very talented. But I'll take credit for it anyway.

I also adapted my lesson plan to account for their abilities. I showed them how to shade for colour and shadow, and how details can add realism to a cartoon.

What I could improve if I were to do this lesson again:

It's really hard to erase details and shade on a whiteboard. Next time I would use a big sheet of poster paper suspended on the front board, and use a thick pencil.

I also need to learn the kids' names. I didn't do a very good job of asking questions; I mostly called on whoever had their hand up. One student got chosen a lot more than the others.

How would I grade myself on this lesson?

I think this was definitely an A-. Everything went pretty well. I didn't spread the questions around very well, but other than that, my lesson was delivered flawlessly. No-one even mentioned the red marker ink all over my

hands from attempting to shade my elephant. Apparently it was on my face too. That might explain the laughter.

Supervisor's Comments (Kate):

I agree that you did a pretty good job, and the kids were certainly attentive. However, I want to know where your lesson plan was. I didn't see one anywhere. You did prepare a lesson plan, didn't you? I want to see it on my desk tomorrow morning!

I think your grade here should be a B+. You called on the same student over and over. We talked about that ... you have to get everyone involved in the lesson!

Reflections on my growth as a teacher

I have had very little experience teaching at the Primary level (grades 1/2/3) and have always been reluctant to do anything in those classrooms. But we all have to grow. It's part of being a teacher. I have mastered my fear.

Having found myself in the grade 1/2 classroom several times in the past month, usually not by choice, I've discovered some things. I learned that I can teach effectively at that level, and it no longer terrifies me to be in charge of a grade 1/2 classroom. You think I'm kidding. I'm not. (Although I have not yet had the opportunity to deal with runny noses or kids locked in a bathroom stall).

Teachers never stop learning. We all can improve. That's part of the job.

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Student teachers and sometimes first-year teachers have to keep a journal similar to this one when they're out in a school on a practicum, or being evaluated. They have to analyze the effectiveness of their teaching, examine ways that they can improve, and reflect on their growth as a teacher. And they have to do it all in writing.

And of course, they will ALWAYS use a lesson plan!