TDP Sample Reflection

This reflection is being shared with permission of the TDP participant who posted it after experiencing a CTL Teaching Observation. This observation was conducted by two Teaching Consultants (graduate students trained by CTL to conduct classroom observations and debrief with clients). The reflection is followed by a rubric we use when assessing Application and Practice reflections in the TDP, indicating why we judge this reflection to be excellent in a number of categories.

A sample Pedagogy Workshop reflection is also available on the TDP website, at https:// tdp.ctl.columbia.edu/progress/reflectionguidelines/.

Application and Practice reflection

The most valuable part of this process was the opportunity to choose my own goals for the observation. For this observation, I was particularly concerned with classroom discussion and with teaching difficult texts.

The immediate impact on my students' learning was that I started to utilize a wider variety of strategies for encouraging students to participate—and I stopped thinking of them as "tooth-pulling" measures. Instead, I recognized that students benefit from a variety of participation options and incentives beyond just large-group class discussions. While [University Writing] really pushes the Harkness method, Alex and Andrew pointed out that students really were all participating in small-group discussions. Alex encouraged me to set up groups more creatively (by birth month, for example), which helped students learn each others' names and get a chance to talk with all of their peers. Andrew suggested setting up a participation points system. One of my concerns with participation grades is their openness to implicit bias—so having a simple point system seems fair to the students and more streamlined for me as an instructor. It's something I can tell the students explicitly in the first class and on the syllabus.

The observation experience encouraged me to meet my students' needs for participation and discussion where they were, rather than trying to force a particular model of class discussion onto a group of students. When I taught [Literary Texts, Critical Methods] in Spring 2018, I used this lesson. I had a small class that met in a basement on Monday mornings, so I was worried that fatigue might impact participation. I decided to start each class with a gentle discussion question that everyone would answer. This practice improved student participation in a variety of

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ways. It helped students get to know each other more personally, so they became more comfortable responding to each other. It let me tailor discussions to their interests, which gave them more to talk about. And it let quieter students get used to voicing their thoughts in the classroom. In the future, I'd like to use daily questions as part of a plan for students who struggle with participation. A student who can answer the daily question in one class might be able to read a passage aloud in the next class and then prepare a comment on a text to say in a third class.

In the long term, this observation reminded me that working with difficult texts/material takes time. I am a very time-oriented instructor. I'm very good at keeping activities to the amount of time I scheduled them for in the class plan. I often finish class plans 5-10 minutes early and need to plan an "extra" activity in case this happens. Alex and Andrew encouraged me to go back to the techniques I learned in slow teaching seminars with Alexia Ferracuti and to allow that extra 5-10 minutes to be time for students to reflect through free-writing, chatting with a neighbor, or rereading the text.

CTL Assessment of this reflection

Assessment dimension	Level of Engagement	Notes
Engagement with peer feedback	Excellent	This person identifies and analyzes specific examples of the feedback they received and considers this feedback in the context of their initial goals for the observation. They also explain how and why they incorporated this feedback into their subsequent teaching practice.
Evidence of change in perspective or approach to teaching	Excellent	This person reports adopting new approaches to encouraging participation, giving examples and explaining why they chose these approaches.
Focus on student learning/ engagement	Excellent	This person describes the impact of the new approaches on student learning, not only noting a change in participation patterns but reflecting on the change from the student point of view.
Length of reflection	Excellent	Sufficient length (492 words).

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