A Case Study

by

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Why, When & Where

This case study was done in my senior year at Bloomsburg University in order to better understand student behavior within the classroom through observations and reflections. After a variety of information was gathered on the student, I created a sequence of lesson plans based on that student’s behaviors, interests, learning style, and overall personality. Through all of this, I gained a better understanding of how to think about lesson development based on all of these factors. In order to be an effective educator, teachers must create interesting, insightful, fun, and creative lessons. Although one lesson may not be as fun for one student as it is for another, differentiated instruction allows teachers to give every student the opportunity to learn in the way that best fits them.

My high school, Fliggle High School (a pseudonym) has 477 students; 50% male and 50% male. There is a total of 38 teachers in the whole school with a 1:13 teach/student ratio. I observed in a 10th grade Communication Studies classroom. Grade 10 contains a total of 113 students: 2% Asian, 3% Hispanic and Black, 93% White. Of these students, 21% of them are eligible for free lunch. Fliggle High School is located in a very small town in Pennsylvania where students have the choice (depending on where they live) to either walk to school or take the bus.

My time was well invested at Fliggle High School. It was a great opportunity to become more involved with thinking about lesson plans in relation to individual students. I found that the student I observed was inspirational and insightful; I learned from her as not only as a teacher, but as a person as well. I admired her free spirited personality and her confidence and it was truly a pleasure to spend time with her. I would like to thank Kayley for her smart wits and advice and Mrs. Steel for her kindness and reassuring words.

**A Case Study**

**Part I: Collection of Artifacts**

Artifact I: Student Observations

**Synthesis/Reflection**: Mrs. Steel runs a very effective classroom by using the same routines daily so that students know what is expected. This was actually my second time observing Kayley because the first time we went she was absent that day. When Kayley first walked in, she immediately said hi to me and asked me if I was Bloomsburg University student. As I continued to watch Kayley for the class, I noticed she remained engaged for most of the period and always completed what was assigned by Mrs. Steel. She had a water bottle at her desk and didn’t get distracted by it once. I even think now that whenever I have a bottle of water with me in class I fidget with it and drink repetitively from it because it distracts me if I am bored during a class. I think by remaining so concentrated the whole time it showed that Kayley was a well behaved student and maintained momentum to continue working. While she was reading, it took her a while to turn to the next page but that did not deter her from continuing to work which shows that she is a devoted worker.

**Observations:**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Time** | **Student Behavior** | **My reactions/thought** |
| 10:50 | Kayley says “hi” to me when she walks in | Kayley is social/confident |
| 10:57 | Kayley is engaged with assignment | She is concentrated and likes what she’s doing |
| 11:00 | Asks Mrs. Steel a question | Kayley cares about her assignment |
| 11:03 | Hands her work in to Mrs. Steel | Kayley values feed-back from her teachers |
| 11:04 | Kayley begins her silent reading | She follows instructions well |
| 11:07 | She is still on the same page | Maybe she is a slow reader |
| 11:08 | She turns to the next page of her book |  |
| 11:10 | Kayley is still reading even though her classmates are off task | Kayley is not disruptive/likes what she is reading/follows instructions of Mrs. Steel |
| 11:15 | She is still engaged with reading | She is concentrating |
| 11:18 | Remains engaged |  |
| 11:20 | Kayley goes over her outline that she handed in with Mrs. Steel | She finds value in getting feedback from her teacher and is hard working |
| 11:25 | Kayley makes corrections to her outline | Kayley is determined to get this done before class ends |
| 11:26 | Very involved with her work |  |
| 11:27 | Kayley is the only student to go back to Mrs. Steel for help (even though Mrs. Steel told her class to do so) | Kayley wants to get every kink figured out in this assignment so it’s done correctly |
| 11:30 | Asks Mrs. Steel: “How much should I have done?” | She cares |
| 11:32 | She is one of the first students to start working on 2nd draft | She’s a hard worker and likes having a sense of accomplishment |
| 11:33 | Kayley asks me if I am student teacher | She isn’t intimidated by people easier and she is confident |
| 11:37 | She asks her peer about her intro paragraph | Kayley likes getting multiple feedback |
| 11:38 | She tells me that Mrs. Steel is great; takes a sip from water bottle | Kayley appreciates Mrs. Steel’s hard work and dedication to her students |
| 11:39 | Kayley gets help from Mrs. Steel who says: “You got it! Great job!” |  |
| 11:41 | \*Class change\* She says bye to me and I notice she has flowers drawn on her backpack | She’s creative and friendly |

Artifact II: Student Interview

**Synthesis/Reflection:** I am very grateful to have had the opportunity to interview Kayley. She continued to catch me by surprise for the 50 mins. that I had to talk to her. She is truly an interesting person and I liked that she was so involved in the small things in life, like flying a kite, climbing trees, or oddly enough, digging holes. She was very talkative and I could tell that she liked being the leader because she was so assertive and confident while she talked with me. I really valued her insights on education and I could tell that she was intelligent and understood herself pretty well for being only a 10th grade student; she was well aware of her strengths and weakness, for example, she knew that she struggled with books that were too long because they couldn’t keep her attention. This reminded me of when I was observing her and I noticed that it took her awhile to move to the next page while reading. This is something important to keep in mind while creating lessons that Kayley can remain engaged with. I think her own self-awareness shows her maturity because she takes school seriously. After talking to Mrs. Steel, I found at that Kayley does average in all of her classes, but of course has an A in her music class, which is a reflection of her love of music. She was a pleasure to talk to and I think that every teacher should value the honesty in most feedback they can get from their students

**Interview:**

*Interview was done during the class period outside on a picnic table (it was a beautiful sunny day!)*

* **W**hat is your favorite subject in school, why?

My student replied with enthusiasm that her favorite class is band/chorus; she loves music. She enjoys challenging herself by learning other instruments and enjoys group work. She referred to the motto: “Fly together or die together!”

* What hobbies/interests do you have outside of school?

Cross country/FUSION club (local organization that does community service). She also enjoys dance, youth group, INTERACT (volunteer group). She plays viola, piano and is currently teaching herself clarinet. In school, she is part of the percussionist group of band and she is also the pit director in band.

* What kind of writing do you do outside of school?

She says she has been published 6 or 7 times and likes writing short stories and greeting cards

* What kind of learning do you like?

My student said that it doesn’t matter as long as the environment is somewhere you can focus; she said that she get’s distracted very easily. However, later on she said that she does enjoy class discussions as well as debates.

* Do you like to read for fun; if yes, what books?

Yes. She enjoys shorter books, especially memoirs and historical fiction. She also made it clear that she does not enjoy Sci-Fi

* What is your favorite book?

She keeps a list of books. A few of her favorite are *Milk Weed*, and Winnie the Poo. She was quick to justify her reasoning behind liking Winnie the Poo in 10th grade: she **loves** the words and the way that it is written. She explains that the more description a book has, the more she likes it. She refers to these as “slobber words”

* How do you usually hear about new books?

They find me; I don’t find them. She also said that often she looks in thrift stores and that usually titles capture attention—“title tingle”—as she likes to call it.

* Have you done a literature circle in class?

No, because that’s for AP classes, but she’s open to the idea.

* Does anyone in your family read?

No

* If you could be doing something else right now other than being in school today, what would it be?

Running or kite flying. She also included practicing her instrument, singing or drawing. Also, she was very happy to inform me that she’s excellent at the pogo stick as has a record of 1,834 hops.

* What is your favorite animal?

Lady bugs, giraffes, and norwalls (she had a hard time choosing)

* What do you want to be when you group up?

She wants to go on a mission in Africa and “do her thing.” She also is interested in making movies and directing them; she doesn’t believe in being a “grown up”

* If you ever were to write a book/article/etc., what kind of genre would it be for?

Fiction, non fantastical, or comedy

* What do you do with your friends for fun?

She likes to toast marshmallows, have water balloon fights, dig holes, climb, make musical instruments out of things, and make movies

* What has been your favorite year in school and why?

Kayley liked 5th grade the most because she had the **best** teacher. The teacher was forgiving, always told relatable life stories in class, and always listened

* Have you read *Harry Potter* and/or *The Hunger Games?*

Kayley “did not click with HP.” She told me they were not descriptive enough. She went on to tell me that she strongly dislikes the *Twighlight* series and that she and her sister cut a hole in the pages of the book and used it to store a Kit-Kat bar. She went on to describe the writing as having a poor quality of writing.

Artifact III: Student Work

**Synthesis/Reflection:** While I was observing these few weeks at Fliggle High School, Mrs. Steel’s class was working on practice the five paragraph essay for the PSSAs. In order to keep her students engaged, Mrs. Steel allowed her students to choose whatever it was that they wanted to write about. Kayley picked her high school’s track team. When you read her paper, it is extremely creative: it’s filled with detail, onomatopoeias, and “slobber words,” as Kayley would call them. I think this speaks for her overall creativity that is really prevalent when you get to know her. Her ability to write in such detail reflects her engagement and devotion to what she is writing about, and you can tell she enjoyed writing this paper. Her writing voice is very present in her writing, something that I think is really important. I am impressed that she found her writing voice at such an early age. In her paper about track, she covers all the details, ranging from what you do to what you should bring with you in case it rains. I think all of these steps and tips that she presents in her paper reflect her linear and organized way of thinking. She seems very process orientated which is why I think she makes a great leader among her peers. Her organized way of thinking provides structure for whatever it is that she is working on.

( I have her student work in hard copy and will include it in my portfolio)

Artifact IV: Teacher Interview

**Synthesis/Reflection:** An interview with Mrs. Steel was a very insightful way to gain information on not only my student, but teaching in general. I believe that Mrs. Steel showed me how to take all the theory of educating I have learned thus far in my major and turned it into a hands on experience; I learned more in observing her class and interviewing her than I have in any classroom from my four years in college. Because of Mrs. Steel’s relaxed attitude and excitement to help a novice educator such as myself, I was able to reach a personal level with her and really get the insider on teaching. Through this experience, I am confident that I have a better understanding. I know this will be important when I begin thinking of what kind of lesson plans are appropriate for Kayley’s learning styles. In order to accurately and efficiently convey the information that I received from Mrs. Steel during her interview, it is easier to write the information in narrative while paraphrasing what she said about my student, Kayley.

**Interview/Observations:**Mrs. Steel enthusiastically offered me tons of information and helpful hints on not only teaching, but being a good mentor for students. After being a teacher for 36 years, Mrs. Steel informed me she would be retiring after the 2012 school year. When she told me this, I could see the worry in her eyes; I asked her if she was excited to be retired. She hesitated and responded that teaching is her identity; it’s her “thing,” as she put it. She said that now that she was finished with teaching, she would have to find something else to cling on to in order to keep her busy. Mrs. Steel laughed and then said with a smile, “I told my husband that maybe I’ll have time now to clean the house.”

When the interview switched to talking about Kayley, Mrs. Steel got very serious and immediately asserted how special and unique Kayley is…she has told me this every time she talks to me about Kayley, and I would have to agree without a doubt. During this interview, one thing I found most interesting is how Mrs. Steel described Kayley’s communication with her. Mrs. Steel told me that every time Kayley has a question in class, she will always start: “Mrs. Steel, I have a question about….” Mrs. Steel also told me that whenever she has multiple questions she says: “Mrs. Steel, I have three questions. Question one…question two…question three.” The need to introduce each new question is just part of organized way of thinking that Kayley has.

Kayley is clearly a very bright girl who is highly motivated and has love for learning. She is one of the coolest 10th graders I have met, and I think this is because she is someone who lives for adventure and doesn’t have much concern for the negative opinions of others. Mrs. Steel explained that Kayley learns best from written instruction as well as hands-on projects. She is a helpful student and everyone in her class genuinely seems to like her. Kayley also has a twin sister who is similarly unique. The final thing that Mrs. Steel had to say about Kayley was how she is very forgetful; she explained by telling me that she will tell Kayley the answer to something four or five times before she actually gets it or remembers it. Despite this oddity, Kayley remains a highly intelligent 10th grader and still maintains good grades, ranging from high Cs in other classes, to As. I truly admired her and she moved me when I interviewed her and she is fortunate to have such a wonderful teacher like Mrs. Steel.

After reflecting on my interview with Mrs. Steel, I realized she is what all educators should strive to be. She makes learning fun while positively motivating students but also disciplines them in a respectful way. She never ended on a negative note with any of her students and you could tell how much students truly loved being in her class. After working as a teacher for 36 years, the system of education will be missing a good soul when she retires.

Artifact V: Interview with Mr. Cooper

**Synthesis/Reflection:** For my second interview I asked Mr. Cooper, the band instructor, to tell me a little bit about Kayley. The reason I went to him for my second interview was because Kayley expressed repetitively in my interview with her that she *loved* music; I would even consider her love of music an understatement. While interviewing with Mr. Cooper, I tried to find out an array of things about Kayley, not just about how she performed in class. By gathering more information about her that is unrelated to just school work, I feel like I am able to learn more about her as an individual, not just as a body in a classroom. As I began to wrap up the information necessary to complete this case study, I began to realize more and more how interesting Kayley was, and how much I admired her; not only for uniqueness, but her blind eye that she had towards failure or outside opinions and judgments of others. I began to envy her for her blissful attitude and realized that I had to live more like her; her positivity was contagious and this was evident in any adult that had something to say about her, including Mr. Cooper. Upon leaving the high school for the last time, I knew that I was going to miss Kayley and hearing all the interesting stories about her. Even now, I find myself wondering about her, and coincidently saw a student on Bloomsburg campus the other day that striking looked like her; she was such a pleasure to meet. My interview with Mr. Cooper is best represented through paraphrasing and written as a narrative.

**Interview:** Mr. Cooper was, of course, enthusiastic to tell me about Kayley. He informed me of Kayley’s devotion and passion for being in band and how she had never missed a single practice, unless for a very *very* good reason. Just like Mrs. Steel, Mr. Cooper said that whenever Kayley has a question, she always states: “Mr. Cooper, I have a question…” According to Mr. Cooper, Kayley has great leadership skills and all the other band members have great respect for her. Mr. Cooper also added that she has a good sense of humor and knows how to take the right things serious when she needs to. He also added, with a chuckle, that she is “certainly a talker;” I couldn’t help but giggle. Mr. Cooper told me that Kayley remains engaged almost the whole time in band because of the responsibly she has as being pit director. He also pointed out that she loves playing around with different instruments in the band room; she has a “natural rhythm.” I asked Mr. Cooper if he knew how Kayley likes to make instruments out of random objects outside of school and he reassured me with a smile that he is well aware. He told me about how she often tells him stories about how she was hitting a pan or cereal bowl at home and what it sounded like.

As the interview came to a close, I could tell that Mr. Cooper had a genuine concern for Kayley and was proud that she was one of his students. He ended by saying that “Kayley is one of those students that you really admire; fostering her talents and ambitions is a truly rewarding experience, and she is a student that always makes teaching an exciting experience.”

**A Case Study**

**Part II: Lesson Sequence**

**Lesson Plans:**

***Rationale***

For my student, I have chosen the text *Holes* by Louis Sachar. This book would be really interesting for Kayley because it involves adventures, the main character is a leader, there is an appropriate amount of detail, and the book is the right length to ensure that Kayley remains engaged. These things are important to my student because she has voiced a considerate amount of detail when she was interviewed stating that she is a leader, and enjoys being involved with social activities. The story remains interesting and also, “digging holes” is one of Kayley’s interests. Even though this book is directed towards middle schoolers, I picked it because based on my observations Kayley would be able to stay focused and engaged with this text. I even questioned Kayley if she had ever read the book *Holes,* and although she has not, she said that she would like to. By picking this book, it opened up many doors to incorporate writing and creating movies, two things that Kayley is very interested in. Also, this book involves a lot of team work, which Kayley would describe as “fly together, or die together!”

***Big Question(s)***

How well does text transfer to a film production and what process are involved to ensure that the film is accurately and well adapted to appeal to readers/viewers?

***Assessment(s)***

Students will work on a series of assignments that lead up to a final production of a screen play. Prior to this, they will analyze film in comparison to text, write their own screen play, and then collaboratively decide in groups which screen play they will use to make a short film/production.

***Plans***

Students will first watch parts of the film to see if it effectively captures the tone and mood of the book *Holes*. In the next lesson, students will pick out a passage/scene from their text and turn it into part of a screen play. As their final assessment, students will either film their production at home of their screen play, or perform it in class. During productions, the rest of the class will act as movie critics and evaluate each performance and will be handed a copy of the screen play to assess whether or not they feel like it captured the text.

Lesson I:

**Objective(s):** Students will examine film in order to see how it interprets the text.

**Lesson activities:**

**(Introduction)** As an attention getter, I will ask students if they can think of any movies/television shows that portray a certain tone to audiences by the way it is filmed. e.g.; The Office, Parks and Recreation, etc. Once some students have volunteered, I will ask why they think film makers use different camera angles when filming and how this affects the movie.

**(Guided Practice)** I will now show certain scenes from the movie “Holes” and have students write notes on how certain scenes are similar to or different from the book. After this, students will get in pairs and discuss with a partner whether or not they think the film was an accurate representation of what they have read in the book so far, and how they pictured it differently in their head while reading; was the setting different? Were the actors in the movie adapted well from the text? I will then call on 3 to 4 students and have them explain to the class what they thought about the clips.

**(Independent Study)** I will model the assignment for students by showing them an example of a screen play that I have written for a passage from a different text. By having a model, students will have a concrete example of what their final product should look like. Students will now work alone and will choose a passage from the book that they will write a screen play for. I will walk around the classroom to make sure every student is on task. In order to guarantee every student finds a passage, I will have a copy of the text with me that will be marked with passages that would be appropriate for a screen play. If any students need help thinking of one, I will point them in the direction of the passages that I have in my book.

* + Students should have their passage picked out before the end of class is over.
  + Inform students that next class they will begin writing their screen play and it will be followed with a peer review that will be done in class to ensure the screen play makes sense.
  + Tell students that before class is over, they must hand in to me the page number and a brief description of the passage that they chose to write their screen play on, along with a brief explanation saying why.

**(Formative Assessment)** In order to assess students’ understanding of the assignment, I will collect their papers that have the page number from the text written on them, as well as a brief summary of what their passage is about. Each student will also have to write briefly why they think their passage is important to the story.

Lesson II

**Objectives:**

**Lesson Activities:**

**(Introduction)** My attention getter will be reading part of the interview with Louis Sachar, explaining what's hardest about transforming a book into a screenplay.

Tell students Louis Sachar wrote the screenplay for *Holes*, as well as the book, although this is not always the case with movie adaptations.

*What were some of the challenges of adapting Holes for a screenplay?*

*The hardest part for me was just being able to see it as a movie... to get the rhythm of the movie in your mind instead of the rhythm of the book. And a lot of people, when I mentioned that [Holes was made into] a movie, say to me, "Oh, that's perfect! You know, I visualize it so well when I'm reading the book." But it's different, because a lot of that visualizing they're doing is in their minds. I might have just given a few little clues - saying it's hot, he's thirsty - and then they draw from that this whole picture. But for the screenplay you have to describe every picture, and you have to do it in a very succinct [brief] way. It's not left to the imagination. You have to tell the director and the actors and the camera what they're looking at, what they're actually seeing. So that was more difficult.*

**(Independent Practice)** I will now ask students what they think the word “rhythm” means in this context; how does a writer find good rhythm?

* I will now give students a checklist that explains more what their one or two page screenplay must have. For students who are still unable to find an example, I will supply them with more ideas.
* Remind students that their chosen scene should include dialogue and really show what the characters are like. In order to help them organize their ideas, I will give every student a graphic organizer.
* Allow students time to write the scene as a script (one page or longer). Remind them that the *Holes*script does not use the exact same words from the novel. Their script should capture the characters' personalities and the point of the scene. In addition to the words the characters say, instruct students to include, in parentheses, descriptions of what the characters are doing, where they are, how they are expressing emotion (e.g., shouting, being calm). As an extension, students can draw pictures of the scene. I will now provide students with the assignment sheet that covers the requirements for their final film assessment.

**(Guided Practice/Assessment)** At the end of class, students can get into pairs to talk briefly about what they have completed so far. While in pairs, I will walk around at the end of class and informally assess each student by asking them what scene they are doing and looking at what they have done so far. Each student should have his/her screen play completed within the next two class periods in order to begin preparing for the final assessment.

Lesson III

*(This lesson will occur after giving students 2-3 days to film their production or prepare to present in front of the class)*

**Objective(s):** Students will present their film/performance to the class in order to be assessed on how well they adapted their screen play from the text

**Lesson Activities:**

**(Independent Practice)** During this lesson, students who made film adaptations of their screen plays will present them to the class.

* I will hand each audience member a peer-review rubric so that they can “critique” the films. This will give students the power to think as movie critics which will allow them to think rhetorically as a viewer of film and what they think is essential when adapting a film from a book. I will show students a previous student-film as a model; this will get them thinking about what they liked and did not like about it and why.
* After each student-video, I will collect the rubrics and give students a blank one for the proceeding films until all groups have presented.
* I will encourage audience feedback and constructive criticism.
* Each “director” from every group can give viewers one last statement about their film and what they were trying to accomplish in their production; was scenery most important? Dialogue? Tone?

At the end of class, we will take an anonymous vote which will determine which group will win the “Holey Award,” an award recognizing the hard work of the director, actors, and writer involved with the screen play!