Student-teacher Evaluations

Data and Reflection



As I read through my students’ evaluations of me during my student teaching so far, I’d have to say I’m not really that surprised by their evaluations and comments. I think a good teacher (or a *potentially* good teacher) can sense what he/she does well and what he/she doesn’t do quite so well. I know I’m nice, and I know I’m caring. The caring aspect is what made me want to be a teacher in the first place. I *do* care about these students I’m working with. They can see that. All of their comments about my good qualities are about my personable personality. I’m glad they see me as a friendly person they can talk to. Many students also said I’m “fun.” I feel this is a good quality as a teacher, especially at the middle school level. I participated in a web conference sponsored by Kappa Delta Pi, and the instructor said that a good sense of humor is the best quality to have as a middle school teacher. I was worried before starting my student teaching that my personality wouldn’t show through because I’d be too nervous or too uptight, but it seems that my students have seen my personality and they appreciate it.

I’m very relieved that my personality is one that mixes well with this profession because one’s personality is harder to change and improve upon than other aspects of teaching (i.e.: classroom management). I feel that some people have a natural ability to interact with students. As I read through students’ comments, I’ve started to split my “shining” qualities—at least the one’s students have picked up on—into two different sections. One section deals with my personality. Students said things like: “You’re really nice;” “You are very nice and outgoing. You make class fun;” and “I think the fact that you are super nice is great. You try to get along and interact with everyone, and I like that.”

The other section deals with my attempts to connect with students. I realize the important role teachers take on. We’re so much more than teachers; we’re role models and caregivers and counselors. We need our students to trust us, and we need our students to know we care. With this caring relationship comes respect, and when students respect you, they will be more likely to listen and learn in class. My students said things like: “I think a good quality is you connect with the students. You don’t teach at us, you teach with us;” “That you get to know all of us;” and “You get to know how the class learns and thinks.”

As I look on the things I need to improve on, I see a trend. My nice and fun personality makes it harder to be viewed as a stern authority figure. It really surprised me that not only did my students pick up on the fact that I struggled with classroom management, but that they requested that I improve upon it. This made me realize that students really do want structure in the classroom. They want a teacher who has the classroom organized and implements rules and expectations. To me, this was a reassuring realization. Students don’t want chaos. They want order. And when I think about my own learning in classes, I know that I feel the same way. It’s frustrating when the class is noisy. It’s stressful when the class is disorganized. And there is a negative atmosphere when the teacher and students are not working cohesively as a unit.

I am prepared to implement rules and expectations while I student teach. I received the lowest scores for this section of the evaluation. Only 50% of students believed that I was excellent in enforcing consequences for broken rules. I’ve decided that within my first few days of student teaching I will have a discussion with students about my expectations for their behavior throughout my time with them. I’m working with eighth graders, and they still need written rules to abide by. I plan on working with my three classes to discuss the rules for our classroom. With each class I will write the rules decided upon on the board. After discussing with all three of my classes I will create a poster in a contract form for students to sign. This way, when consequences need to be enforced throughout my teaching, students will know and understand which rules were broken.

I’ve also been encouraged lately while working with another teacher at my student teaching site. She conducts her classroom in a manner similar to how I picture myself conducting my own classroom. The way she handles classroom management is how I hope to handle classroom management. She is direct and quick to respond to behavior problems. I took note of her responses to negative behavior. When one student was turned around in his seat while she was teaching, she simply stated “X, turn around and pay attention.” When two boys were making rude comments, she simply said “Boys, don’t be rude.” I don’t know if it’s because she has built a rapport with these students or what, but her tactic really seems to work. And it saves her the hassle (and embarrassment) of trying to yell over students.

One student wrote on my evaluation, “When there is a huge distraction in the class, to take care of it ASAP.” I believe I know the exact occurrence that made this particular student write this comment. At one point during one of my lessons, two boys were aggravating a girl sitting at their desk cluster. She was overwhelmed and felt like she was doing all of the work. I didn’t handle that situation very well. I should have immediately intervened and done so in a direct manner. Instead, the situation escalated, and the girl (or the boys for that matter) did not have a particularly good learning experience. I will learn from this management mistake.

I plan on adopting a few “buzz words” to use in my diction related to classroom management. The teacher I observed used the words “focus” and “on-task” very frequently throughout her teaching. To me, these were great words to use. They aren’t harsh like “be quiet,” but they are effective and efficient. And ultimately, isn’t this what we really want from students-- for them to focus and be on task? I plan on adopting these two phrases as my own while I teach.

Another area where I need to improve is my ability to work with students more individually throughout my lessons. I originally thought that leaving lots of time for students to ask questions and ask for help would be enough, but I was wrong. I need to learn to read my students to know if one of them may be struggling. I hope that as I work with students more I will learn who typically struggles with what types of work. But until I know them well enough, I will need to be sure to make myself available to help students on a one-on-one basis. I also hope students will feel that they can come to me outside of class for extra help. I tried to make this fact known during my unit, but I think I will need to be more persistent about it next spring.