

Cory Morrow
12/4/2007

Final Reflection Paper

The literacy unit I taught was based around the author Kevin Henkes. I felt Kevin's books would be great for teaching kindergarteners comprehension concepts. The unit primarily focused on introducing and teaching simple story elements, getting students to make personal connections with texts, and continuing to build letter and sound skills through writing. Kindergartners also worked with using pictures to make predictions and retelling a story but these concepts were not assessed.

A pre-assessment was not given since the concepts were new to these kindergartners. Instead the first two days of the unit were used to learn about what simple story elements are and how we use them in reading and writing. Each lesson in the unit followed a pattern. I would read the students a Kevin Henkes book. Next we would either discuss new or familiar characters and events, or draw comparisons among the characters feelings and our own. Then to demonstrate understanding students would either work on a related worksheet or write in their journals. Throughout the unit I collected student work samples and took discussion notes in order to assess the progress of the students. Towards the end of the unit I realized I needed a more formal assessment of story elements. Students were more than willing to participate in class discussions where they could talk about their personal connections, but seemed more hesitant when it came to story elements. The assessment showed me all students could identify story elements by using either words or pictures. It also showed me students needed further work with the setting and deciphering important events from unimportant ones. Even though the unit is over I know what to continue focusing on during literacy.

In order to analyze my focus students learning and progress I did an extra post-assessment with them. After the unit wrapped up I read Syrena, Marcelo, and Andrew a story and had them fill out a story elements chart. Based on the prior assessment I felt Syrena would do well, but I expected Marcelo and Andrew to need assistance.

Syrena has continued to grow in her reading and writing. By the end of the unit she was writing complete sentences. She also actively participated almost leading the class discussions with her ideas. During this extra assessment she was able to fill out the entire chart without help. In order to assess her ability to make personal connections I looked at two worksheets and her journal work. Syrena was able to reference her own feelings and experiences through her writing. On the last day of the unit I challenged Syrena and a few other students by having them form their own sentences in a unit wrap-up activity. She did very well with this. Her journal work also shows Syrena is using her sound recognition to spell words on her own. Syrena's unit work and assessments indicate she needs to be challenged more so than the rest of the class. Since the unit I have tried to challenge Syrena by having her write stories.

Marcelo and Andrew began the year out on a different note. Both boys struggled with letter recognition and could identify any sounds. Marcelo was able to write his name and form some letters unlike Andrew who could not even write his name. Surprisingly Andrew has excelled and now participates in class, takes pride in his work, and is actively trying to learn his letters and sounds. Marcelo on the other hand is hesitant and has made progress but not as much as intended. While both Marcelo and Andrew participated in class discussions and completed the unit worksheets they needed guidance and modeling. Both are now being placed in small groups to work with letters and

sounds. I feel they will continue to progress and Marcelo will gain more confidence as his literacy skills develop.

Naturally I was very nervous to teach on the first day of the unit. I knew these students had no knowledge of story elements and I was not sure if I could come down to their level to explain story elements. Thankfully I did well explaining story elements and it helped to compare two different types of Cinderella stories before jumping into the Kevin Henkes books. The first few days of teaching I was very adamant in following my lesson plans, not wanting to veer away from anything I wrote. However as the unit progressed and I grew more comfortable I began teaching what I felt the students needed more work on.

The students really seemed to enjoy Kevin's book. When talking about story elements it helped that he used the same characters in a lot of his books. Students picked up on this and were very proud when they recognized a character. From observing my CT I realized it was important to interject questions as I read. This kept the students focused and thinking about story elements. I did this for each book read and when it came to discussion time they seemed more prepared to discuss. While the class discussions were beneficial I would have not done a discussion for each lesson. Typically the kindergartners would read a story and then just go work on a literacy activity. The discussions were something new but tended to drag on and these young students would become restless.

While planning I really tried to sequence the lessons so I switched back and forth from each concept but I always referenced the concept not being taught that day

somewhere in the lesson. I think this really helped emphasize each 'I Can' statement and gave the students a little variety. There was one lesson dealing with connections that went particularly well. As a class we brainstormed words that describe friends. I then typed up a sheet with these words and placed each student's picture on sheets of paper titled "My friend ____ is." The students were placed in groups of 6 with an adult at each table. Each group took turns cutting out a word that described each friend at their table and gluing it on their picture sheet. I then took their picture sheets and made it into a book for them to read. This activity went very well and therefore I wish I could have incorporated more interactive activities into my unit. If I were to do this unit again I would switch back and forth between individual work and group work.

Throughout the unit students were discussing story elements and relating their emotions with characters in the story but I felt their journal work was not producing enough writing. Since these concepts were new I was more lenient with the students, allowing them to draw pictures if they could not write words. Even though they may not have been comfortable writing about a story element or a personal connection they needed to be pushed to do so. I also felt I was modeling the worksheets too much for the students. My CT felt it was important I really model and show the students what they needed to do, but I began to notice they would just copy words or pictures I had demonstrated on the board. If I were to do this unit again I would incorporate more writing. I would also maybe model one worksheet and then have them try a separate worksheet on their own.

The flow and materials of my unit were very appropriate. While their worksheets or journal work did not always turn out exactly as I expected I know the students have

formed a strong foundation with story elements and personal connections. Looking back at discussion charts I realized students were really making connections with the unit goals. Overall the unit was a success and while there were things I would change there were also many things that I am happy I did. Throughout the unit I collected worksheets, posters, and pictures that I think would be great to include in my portfolio to show off the accomplishments of my Kevin Henkes' unit.