

EDLD 515

Instructional Leadership Project

Brian Bedard



EDLD 515

Curriculum Review and Recommendations

I observed an AP U.S. History course for my curriculum review. The teacher is a veteran teacher and has been teaching this particular class for quite some time. The curriculum is aligned to the AP standards but the teacher made it a point to tell me that he is not just teaching for the exam. I was able to go online and obtain a copy of the AP Course Requirements and the topic being discussed was under bullet point 5 “The Early Republic 1789-1815.” Mr. W___ stated that he is teaching for the students to understand the material. He aligns his curriculum with the AP standards and has had to submit his syllabus to College Board in order for it to be approved. Because this class is taught at a private school there is not much concern for whether the material covers the Michigan Standards and Benchmarks. I was able to go online to the Michigan Department of Education website and look up the state standards and benchmarks for U.S. History. I observed that the all the National Standards for Historical Thinking were being discussed and U3 of the Thematic Analysis of U.S. History Eras (Revolution and New Nation) was being addressed. The class started with placing the outline of what was going to be discussed in this unit and projecting it on the Smart board. The class started with about a 5 to 10 minute excerpt from the HBO series John Adams (played through YouTube and projected on the Smartboard). The class discussion followed this video; with the teacher first asking the students to reflect and on the video, and then asking them to be empathetic and put themselves in the shoes of those in the video. There was an entire class discussion that ensued about the topic. Mr. W___ took volunteers first but also called other on students that did not raise their hands. Students were allowed to take notes in a notebook or use their laptops or I pads. Students will be assessed on this material in a unit test or a small quiz.

In conclusion I think Mr. W_____ did an okay job with this lesson. The students seemed to be engaged in the discussion that ensued. Some were more directly engaged than others, but all students were taking notes about the topic. All students were listening to the discussion. The course integrated some technology, in order to be an attention grabber and enhance classroom discussion. The AP guidelines and material that needed to be covered was followed and although the teacher is not paying attention to the Michigan Standards and Benchmarks, he did follow these. The class was not made aware of the standards that were being addressed in the lesson.

There were many opportunities where the lesson could be enhanced in Mr. W_____’s class. He does a good job facilitating the discussion with the video. I think the lesson could be enhanced by putting the students into small groups and come up with some ideas about what each historical character was going through at that moment and their reasons why they feel that and then having each group present their findings to the class. This would enhance the student discussion and enhance the opportunity for those more shy students to contribute in a small group setting. The curriculum was being followed but I am unsure how many students would remember what was being taught, since many were not engaged. I believe many will have to review at a later date.

Clinical Cycle

For the clinical supervision cycle, I worked with a veteran teacher named Carl W_____. He teaches AP U.S. History, Holocaust, and is the department chair of the History Department. He has been a teacher for 30+ years is a veteran of the Vietnam War and has also worked as an administrator. He has taught the same courses for the past several years.

On October 24th, from 1:10 to 1:55 pm, I observed entire class discussion/notes in an AP U.S. History class. The class was seated in their desks in vertical rows facing the front of the classroom and the outline of the topics of discussion was projected onto the Smartboard. The Smartboard is located on the right side of the front board area. I find it interesting that in most classrooms in the school they are located to one side or the other and not centralized to the front viewing area. The class was involved in a discussion on the notes of the Louisiana Purchase and some of the contributing factors that lead to this. The class was seated the entire time and expected to take notes in a traditional method or use their laptops or Ipads. They were to be involved in the discussion and could either raise their hands to contribute or were called upon by the teacher.

The Pre-Conference Meeting

Mr. W_____’s wanted to see how well his class discussions were going in class. He is a traditional teacher, teaching a college style history course. He prides himself on leading and creating an environment where all students are welcome to participate and contribute to the lecture and to enhance the notes that take place. His goal is to make history human. His concern was if this was really happening in the class or was it a mirage. He wanted to get a more definitive idea on the structure of his classroom discussions and what the participation level actually was.

The supervisory approach that was selected was self-directed as described in our text by Sullivan and Glanz. He is a veteran teacher and knew the things he wanted to see observed. Through our discussion, I had to use the techniques we discussed in class and in the textbook. I recycled his questions back to him and reiterated to him the message he was trying to convey

in order to come up with a clear way in which we wanted to collect the data. We decided on using the seating chart and having me use tick marks to see which students and how many times each student participated in class. I asked him if he would like me to put down an R, if a student raised their hand to answer one of his questions and a normal tick mark if he called on a student.

For the pre-conference, Mr. W_____ and I met in his classroom before school. I began by asking him about the progress the class had with the material. It was a busy atmosphere. Several students had to come in and get a copy of the quiz that was distributed the previous day. I know many of the students and it was a non-issue. Mr. W_____ fosters an open environment and many of the students know who I am and were not concerned at all. It was still a quiet atmosphere although it was busy. Many of the students took the quiz in a different classroom nearby and returned it a few minutes later. He told me about the class and I asked about the material that I would be observing. He told me the topic was part of Chapter 11 and the title is the Triumphs and Travails of the Jeffersonian republic (1800-1812). The essential question of the lesson is the administration's use of the Elastic Clause even though Jefferson vehemently opposed this before he was in office. He told me, in general, it was about the Louisiana Purchase and that the students should have read and answered some questions on their own before the beginning of the lecture. He was right on pace with the previous few years and mentioned to me how this group of students had some political and ideological views that differed greatly from his own. He was interested to see what would take place and he mentioned there were no disciplinary issues even though his views differed from many of the views his students possessed. We discussed the method of observation and I wanted to

reiterate that I was not judging in any way and I would provide him with a copy of seating chart that I used and the marks I made before we would meet again. He was a little more apprehensive at this time and seemed a bit tired. I knew he had missed a couple of days the week before and I knew it was in regards to a medical condition that had been popping up occasionally over the past couple of years. He was still more than happy to have me come and observe and I stressed to him how much I appreciated it. During the pre-conference, he mentioned the current day would be a good day to come and observe considering what had been happening to him medically.

The Observation

When I arrived in the classroom for the observation later that day, November 6th, Mr. W___ was taking the attendance and the class was waiting. He brought up the outline on the board. It was apparent he was more nervous this time than he had been the previous two occasions. I watched as he introduced the topic and asked questions and students asked questions to him as well. The students were quiet and attentive. It took him a while to pull the information from the students at times. He had to rephrase his questions. One of the reasons this might have been the case was the class was early in the morning that day. The class was introduced to the topic and went over the notes. There were some required readings that they were assigned to read before this class period. Mr. W_____ asked the questions pertaining to this material and pertaining to the day's notes. There were 24 students present in class on that day and no one was absent. Out of the twenty-four students, twelve participated in the entire class discussion. Two students answered or were involved in the discussion on four

separate occasions. There were twenty opportunities the teacher allotted for the students to participate in that class period.

Post Conference

Mr. W_____ has been a teacher and an administrator for over thirty years. He has observed and been observed both formally and informally. (At our school our principal, has done observations, not evaluations of every teacher in the building and has a discussion in his office after the observation is written. It is a similar process, but there is no specific focus on instruction that is taking place and the ball is still in the principal's court. It is kind of halfway between an observation and an evaluation.) I chose Mr. W_____ because he is on the stretch run of his instructional career and may be retiring in a few years. I wanted to understand what it was like to work with teachers that were veterans and yet he still wanted to improve their craft. Before the post conference took place, I asked Mr. W_____ where he would like to hold the post conference. He mentioned that he would like to hold it in the history office, which is across the hall from his classroom. I took a seat on one of the couches and he took a seat on one of the other couches and then took a seat on an elevated chair. I could feel from the body language that he was a bit surly and this might be a difficult conversation. I asked him first what he thought about the seating chart I had provided him with. He said he "Didn't know." I allowed for silence at this point. He mentioned the same thing I mentioned in the previous section about certain students participating and others not. Although he did not say this, I got the feeling that he was not happy with what he saw. The reason I say this, is because he immediately went into the fact that this is an AP class and so difficult to cover the amount of material in the allotted time before the exam takes place in

May. He mentioned how he really dislikes AP and wishes they would get rid of it. He mentioned how there are some students in the class that do not truly have an appreciation for history and don't like history in general and it is difficult to motivate them and to get them to love and appreciate history as much as he does. He also mentioned how the outside pressure from the parents on their kids is sometimes so unrealistic that there are students in the class that have a difficult time keeping pace with everything. I let him vent and gave him the supportive words from our textbook (Sullivan and Glanz). He seemed appreciative. I shared some stories from my classroom and my experiences with the AP (Calculus) as well. I let him know that my scores were not what I wanted but the students are successful at the next level. I informed him how many of my students know, based on the universities they attend, will have to take separate competency exams before registering for math classes and will have to more than likely have to take calculus over again. We both shared our frustrations, but I made sure to bring the topic full circle and ask him how he could involve more students in the discussion. He stated, "I don't know Brian. I don't know. There is just not enough time." I thought about what we did the first day of class in EDLD 515. We were set up into the conversation U to talk about a question and debate it back and forth. I also mentioned how this year, I did a poster board presentation assignment. The students were put into small groups and created a poster board. He was not receptive to any of this and it did not seem as if he was going to do any of the things I mentioned. I was teaching later that evening in my night class and right before class was about to begin. I received a text from him stating that he was going to use the conversation U the next day. Needless to say, I was beaming. I left the meeting feeling as if, I had done an awful job and would have to do this all over again or that my approach was wrong

and I would fail as an administrator. As soon as I received the text, I knew I did the right thing and had the correct approach. I knew since I was working with a veteran teacher. He would take more time to digest the suggestions and utilize them in the class. The experience was extremely positive, although it did not feel that way the entire time. I am grateful for the inclusion the teacher afforded me. We have the same lunch at our school, and he sat by me the next day after it went. He only had one of the two classes of this subject before lunch and he said it went extremely well. He saw more and different students participating and speaking than he ever had before. I also mentioned how by the guys moving around along the U are communicating to him their grasp and feelings towards the material in a non-verbal manner. He really enjoyed this and so did I. (I think I enjoyed it more than he.) He mentioned how, and I am not kidding these are his words, "I guess you can teach an old dog new tricks." Thank you for this opportunity. I benefitted from it as a future administrator, as a teacher and as a person. I really felt like I made a difference and it reenergized me.

Professional Growth Plan

Detroit Catholic Central

Teacher's Name: Mr. Carl W _____ Date: 10/26/12

Building: Catholic Central High School Administrator: Mr. Brian Bedard

School Year: 2012-2013 Veteran (At will site-so no tenure)

Goal 1 (define): I will research and implement methods and strategies for facilitating engaging and worthwhile classroom discussions.

Purpose of the goal (explain): The purpose of this is to increase the participation level of all students in classroom discussion.

Teacher Responsibilities:

- Expectations-I expect to try new methods and strategies and take a qualitative look at the lesson and reflect on the effectiveness.
- Strategies- I will clearly lay out the style of discussion that is going to take place and the rules of that type

Administrator Responsibilities:

- I will research and email Mr. W_____ about some of the of the different classroom discussion strategies that exist. I will also research some possible YouTube clips that show the implementation of that strategy. I will research potential workshops that this teacher can attend in regards to increasing and facilitating worthwhile classroom discussions.

Criteria for Success: I have succeeded with this goal when I have used multiple teaching strategies that engage students in a classroom discussion and take a qualitative look at the discussion that is taking place. I will also observe increased and more thoughtful responses on essay type questions relating to the topics discussed in class.