

## Journal Reflections (2012/2013 school year)

Teachers need to grow into their profession. In fact, there is probably room for growth in every area of the teaching profession for every teacher. Probably the hardest thing to do is to find one focus area. I feel very fortunate to have administrators and colleagues that are supportive and informative in my development as a professional.

One area for me that I've always felt I needed to work on and this area kept coming up as a weakness in my annual reviews is my assessment of my students work. I teach kids as young as 1<sup>st</sup> grade and as old as High School seniors, so to find a plan that works for all age groups is challenging. For all grade levels that I teach, I started out with a standard way of assessing where I would look at the students work at the end of the project and grade it using a rubric that I developed without any feedback during the process. I know this way needs to change. The students need direction throughout so that they are getting more from the lesson.

I want to search for a more efficient way that the students can be more involved in their learning. I think that my way right now which is to take their pieces and grade them at the end with a rubric that spits out a grade is not as productive as it should be. I've also been frustrated when I look at their work while grading it at the end of the lesson, and think to myself....This student obviously missed some things along the way and now it's too late to change anything. I wish at those times I could've caught their misunderstandings or lack of effort or anything that caused the result that they finished with. If that was done, the student at that time would've had a chance to correct some things or change their direction that would give them a better chance for success.

I have a new rubric that I've been using but I've found that it sometimes doesn't directly work with some projects. The criteria are too vague and although meant to be universal to all works, they are not. The new refined rubric needs to have the criteria be specific to the lesson so that the students get a more direct assessment. For example, one of the categories is creativity and the description asks the question....does their work extend or change from what the students have done in the past? If the student doesn't have or if I am unfamiliar with their previous work that question is irrelevant. It may be a question that has merit for an advanced student but few students have a grasp on their own style enough to recognize how they are changing it. Now, one can argue that it's my job to help them become more aware of their own personal style and that would be a relevant area to assess. However, it may not be a focus in certain projects. Especially ones where the students are working with a media they have never used before.

This year I've experienced students that have been "surprised" either by their rubric score at the end of each lesson or by their final grade. This tells me that they are working sort of blindly through the process without any direction. They are getting off track early in the process and are unable to get back in the right direction. If a student is honestly unaware of their progress or lack of, then I need to enact a policy that enables the understanding of the entire group. This way the students know they are fulfilling the

requirements of the project as they are making the steps. It will eliminate any surprises at the end of the lesson.

I've drafted a post-lesson survey with some questions that will give me some information about what the lesson experience was like for the students. I plan on using this information to find certain areas about the lesson that has predominately been a struggle for most of the students. Maybe I wasn't clear in an explanation or went through a demonstration too quickly. I can then make the adjustment in the instruction the next time or pay closer attention to the classroom understanding level at that point in the lesson.

I've drafted some pre-lesson surveys that are going to help me with the student's assessment. Here's how it's going to work. I've refined my rubric to include allowing the students to rate/score themselves along with my ratings. I have 5 criteria that the students will be grades on. Those criteria will come and ne checked at different points of the lesson. The last two criteria are standard and will be the same for every lesson but there are three criteria. I will fill these in prior to the lesson or during the lesson based on the information from the pre-lesson surveys or from observations of the class on areas I think need to be checked for understanding during the process.