

Introduction

Strong intro

I am student teaching in a 1/2 multiage classroom at School in This is my first experience working in a multiage classroom and I love it! I love that I am often catching ~~first~~^{second} graders being taught by ~~second~~^{first} graders and second graders teaching first graders. I think it is a great experience for the students to be able to play both of these roles in their two years in the classroom. All the students in this class are amazing in their own ways and I love learning about them and helping and watching them learn.

Is this what you mean?

Classroom Demographics

This is a multi-age classroom with a total of sixteen students. There are seven first graders, three whom are girls and three whom are boys. There are nine second graders, three whom are girls and six whom are boys. Therefore, the ratio of first to second graders is 7:9 and the ratio of boys to girls is 6:10. For the second graders, this is their second year with the same teacher.

The classroom is not especially diverse in terms of ethnicity. There is one Chinese student and one Russian student who was adopted. There are no English Language Learners in the class. None of the students in this classroom receive free or reduced lunch. Looking at the whole school, in the 2002-2003 school year 18% of students were receiving free or reduced lunch (VT Department of Education). Only one student has a full-time Instructional Aide. The aide is there to help the student with staying on task, organizational skills, and to provide help in specific academic areas. The student is diagnosed with ADHD and is medicated. He also receives outside the classroom help with his speech. None of the other students have aides or Individualized Educational Plans. Three students did receive Reading Recovery services earlier in the year. Four of the students in this class have relatively little or no parent support.

http://crs.uvm.edu/schlrpt/

A+

Homework folders, information letters to be signed, reading logs for home, etc. are often not being returned to school and there is little parent-teacher communication.

for the 4 or for all?

Academic Structure

Is, and if so how is, instruction differentiated?

Instruction is differentiated in my classroom. Looking back to the Tomlinson text, *How to Differentiate Instruction in a Mixed Ability Classroom*, I see evidence of differentiation in all areas of instruction and learning. Learning for the students is planned with student's readiness, interest, and learning profile in mind and instruction is differentiated in content, process, and in products.

impressive recall!!!

Briefly, the areas of teaching, study, and learning for the students in this classroom are: Morning Meeting, Morning Work, Reading, Spelling, Math, Read Aloud, Silent Reading, Writer's Workshop, and Theme. Once a week, there is also a Literary Project or Cross-Country Skiing, Multiple Ability Time, and Sing Along. About four times a year there is an afternoon of E.L.F (Environmental Learning for the Future). I have not seen yet, but will this coming week, something called Academic Choice. Specials include Physical Education, Art, Music, Chorus, and Library.

really?

Groups are used in the classroom and they are varied, depending on what part of the day it is or what the focus of learning is. Desk arrangement is in groups of four that have been assigned. There is at least one first grader at each group. Reading groups are made according to ability. There are five groups, with two-five students in each group. Math groups are made both randomly and by ability, depending on the lesson. These groups are usually made up of four-six students where they work as a group, in pairs, and individually. During writing and theme time, students sometimes work in pairs, depending on the activity. For Academic Choice students may choose a partner to work with. Groups are also made between classes. There is another 1/2 multi-age across the hall, so math and spelling are grouped by grade and each taught different content.

Curriculum is differentiated in content within reading, math, writing, theme, and morning meeting. Math content changes as the students continue to learn, reading content changes usually according to what theme is being studied, writing changes as different styles are studied, theme changes after each unit, and Morning Meeting

activities and discussion vary slightly everyday. In terms of process, the way the students learn the content is also differentiated. Students learn new information through discussions, hands-on activities, reading, being read to, writing, singing, seeing, listening, games, individually, with partners, and in groups. Instruction style varies; sometimes it is through whole class mini-lessons, other times through teaching to small groups. Often a mini-lesson is given with students together on the rug, empty hands, and then they go off to work individually to process the information. Other times instruction is only through teaching to small groups. Products, the student's use of the information, practice with, and demonstration of learning, is also differentiated. Examples I've seen are students responding through writing (many styles), drawing and painting or coloring pictures, posters, murals, and other visuals, worksheets, skits, games, dioramas, and songs. Students are sometimes able to make choices in how they learn and demonstrate their learning. Other times students are assigned because of different levels of readiness.

wow!

yahoo!

Students in this class sometimes have a choice in the ways they can participate. During free time and during multiple ability time they can choose from activities and whom they would like to work with. Other times there is specific instruction on how to participate.

What I notice is missing the most in my classroom in terms of differentiation is around groupwork. Groups are mostly used only during math and reading. The purpose of these groups only seems to be to make the teaching more manageable to be able to give more attention to individual needs. Both good things, but I rarely see groupwork where the students are actually working *together* and working for a common goal. Students are usually grouped according to ability or at random. I rarely see the opportunity for students to work in groups according to interest or in groups of their choosing.

You've nailed an important criteria here

I also notice that in the Morning Meetings, the activities and greetings change everyday but there are only a total of about 5-8 each, then it starts all over again. The routine of morning meeting seems to be sometimes too repetitive and monotonous for the kids. Some days it seems it has lost its purpose, or we are just "going through the motions."

> yep.

Lastly, I notice that in terms of instructional style, the kids are not given much opportunity for investigations or experimentation. The instructional style does vary, but these are processes that I rarely see the kids having an opportunity to work with.

Teaching to the Whole Child

We do have Morning Meeting everyday in our classroom. Everyday we greet each other, read the morning message together, and do an activity together. This is great, but I do not see or hear much discussion or many activities around community building, respect for one another, getting along, or working together, nor is there much time for students to share feelings, concerns, or ideas with teachers and the class. We don't have open-ended discussions around the children's feelings or thoughts. There doesn't seem to be much room for the students to be in charge of their class as a community and make decisions for themselves. I was not in the classroom at the beginning of the year though; so much of the "building community" probably happened at this time. The students did make "Class Rules and Dreams and Hopes" posters, so this is evidence of building community and sharing feelings. Students also are aware of multiple intelligences or abilities because they have Multiple Intelligence time on Fridays, but I'm not sure the students really know what this means. They might look at it as what each of them most likes doing.

maybe

The Team

There are many people involved in the student's learning besides the classroom teacher. Students learn with and from others at different specials, with other team teachers, parent volunteers, aides and special educators. Parents often come into the class to help with math groups and parents are the ones in charge of E.L.F. Students are swapped between teachers according to grade for certain areas of study. Special educators work with specific students and our one aide not only works with the assigned student, but also tries to work with all students. The teachers work together so that all first and second graders are studying the same area for Theme. Special Educators work with teachers to plan for scheduling and to work together for the child. Parent involvement and connections are made through weekly newsletters, school meetings and student presentations. Subject specials and teachers work together so that there is connection for the kids between the classroom and the special.

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who orchestrates who has the score?

Time

Time is nicely varied throughout the day and week-to-week and the daily schedule is not set in stone. Each day, students go from working individually, to whole class, to groups, then different groups, and so on. The way they are learning and able to learn changes throughout the day. In addition, within each time period of the day, teaching style, activities, and work is changing for the students. Sometimes students have free time or choice time; sometimes working together, other times working silently and individually.

Status Order

To assess status in my classroom I asked each student the ten questions on the attached survey. I did this by telling the kids I wanted to learn a little more about each of them and the class as a whole and asked if I could "interview" them. Surveys were done with individual students outside of the room. I read each question to them and as they looked at/read each also and I recorded their answers on my own paper. The results are attached. The calculated Status Order is as follows:

Name	Grade	As	Ps	S	Rank
LM	2	7	2	9	1
JMR	2	4	4	8	2
AC	2	2	5	7	3
LA	2	3	3	6	4
NC	2	4	2	6	
WOM	2	3	3	6	
TA	2	4	1	5	5
LO	1	0	5	5	
CM	2	2	2	4	6
GC	1	0	2	2	7
SP	1	0	2	2	
NW	2	1	1	2	
AT	1	0	1	1	8

KI	0	1	0	0	0	9
DM	0	1	0	0	0	
TPG		1	0	0	0	

Vignettes of Children to Be Followed Over Time

The students I chose to follow over time are four that fall in the bottom half of the Status Order table. They are considered lower status students according to the results of my survey; some more low status than others. This means that learning, or potential *of for* learning, for these specific students is greatly affected in a negative way because of their status in the classroom. I did not choose the four lowest status students. I wanted to follow two first graders and two second graders, and therefore chose two low status first graders and two low status second graders.

Student #1

Student #1, DM ranked ninth (last) in status order, among two other students. He is in first grade. No students chose DM when asked the academic structure or social structure questions. Because of DM's status, his opportunity to learn in this classroom is very low. He tries very hard to be as "good" at school as he thinks others are and he tries hard to be as fun as others seem to be to him. Socially, he often works alone and sometimes has trouble getting along with others, but is not necessarily the one doing the antagonizing. DM was part of the Reading Recovery program for the first 21 weeks of school and still receives some extra reading instruction from a reading specialist most days of the week. Talking with my cooperating teacher and working with DM, I have learned that he does not have much parent support, if any at all. He often does not bring his homework folder back to school, home notices go unsigned, his home reading log is never filled out, and on Valentine's Day he was the only student that did not have valentines for the other kids. He also rarely has a hat and mittens to go out for recess or cross country skiing.

at least groups

ouch.

My first memory of DM is when my cooperating teacher was out of the room and so I was in charge of making a transition from recess to lunch. DM obviously picked up on the fact that I was unsure of what to do (students were waiting for me to call them by groups) and so he came up to me and gave me directions on what to do. Now I notice this characteristic in DM everyday. I continue to see or hear him want to speak up when

things aren't going the way they are "supposed" to, or when other students aren't doing what they are "supposed" to. I notice that he loves his day of being the "helper." He makes sure everything is done that he is responsible for as helper, and he enjoys being the one to call on kids for answers during morning meeting, acting like the teacher. He is very generous about helping out in the classroom and is very eager too. During free choice time DM often chooses to use the computers or play with Legos. He is usually by himself. DM also really enjoys Read Aloud time; he always wants to be upfront and asks lots of questions. He is very disappointed and gets frustrated when he misses out on Read Alouds or any other whole class instruction, activity, or discussion at our class rug. (When he is pulled out of the room it is for individual reading instruction.)

good for you —

Sounds like a slower ready to burst!

Student #2

KI is the second first grader I chose to focus on. She also ranked ninth in status order. Because of KI's status, her opportunity to learn in this classroom is very low. KI consistently does her best with her schoolwork and also does her best to get along with others. She also does not have a lot of parent support, although there is some. KI asks me to read with her during silent reading time and seems to enjoy reading. During free choice time she is usually building playhouses with blocks by herself. This is something other girls are doing in the classroom too, but as a group.

One memory of KI that sticks out to me the most is a time when she and another girl were not getting along. Actually, the other girl was not being nice or respecting KI and so with teacher facilitation the girl wrote an apology to KI. As soon as KI got the letter she wrote a "Have a Heart" note back to the girl. Have a Hearts are school wide recognition notes for students being kind, helpful, etc. This showed me that even though KI was hurt by the other girl she was still doing her best to get along and be friends.

* has the other of her nicer since the incident

Student #3

The third student, a second grader named CM ranks sixth in status order. Because of his status, CM's opportunity to learn in the classroom is low. CM is a friendly student who tries hard in school and at being nice to everyone. He is a student that usually will put his hand up after the teacher asks the group or whole class a question. He has a lot of parent support; his parents often help out during the school days and are consistently

checking in on how he is doing. During free choice time you can often find him playing with others at the Lego station.

There are two big observations that have particularly stuck with me about CM. One, he loves to tell stories and to make connections. Whether I am working alone with him or we are in a whole class discussion, he usually does or would like to tell a story making a connection to what we are learning about. During writing he has been writing fantasy stories, which have not been what my cooperating teacher is looking for. The second observation I have about CM is that he gets very frustrated and disappointed if he feels like he is not as "smart" as or at the same level of other students in the class. He seems concerned with what the teachers think and what the students think. It is really obvious that he wants to be seen as one of the best readers, writers, the one with a lot of answers, etc. He doesn't want to be the one being helped or needing help. He is never though, rude or un-accepting of help, only sad I think. I think this is a lot of his motivation for the hard work he does

good for you!

anger might be better!

Student #4

My fourth student, NW, is another second grader. He ranks seventh in status order, among two other students. Because of his status his opportunity to learn in the classroom is low. NW does well in his academics, but has a hard time getting work done without reminders and some pushing. I am having the most difficult time with him. He struggles to pay attention during group activities, often getting distracted easily or being silly and distracting others. I have had him take timeouts from group a few times because of not following directions or hindering others from learning. A lot of times he does not listen to an explanation or direction and then, when it is time to work, immediately says, "I don't know how to do this." When he works alone he seems to get his work done faster and with less confusion. He has parent support and his mom is one of our parent volunteers for math time.

What I notice the most with NW is his plea for confirmation from the other students that he is funny, cool, fun to be around, etc. I notice that a lot of times when he is being silly during groups it is an attempt to make others laugh. Other times during the day he always seems to be trying to be in on a conversation or activity with certain students in the classroom. Also, he continually tattles on kids.



what a combo...
Shows utter confusion about how to gain peer support

Strategic Instructional Moves

Each of these students needs and deserves instruction in the classroom that will improve their status and allow them to learn to their potential. The first step for me in this classroom would be to focus on building a better sense of community in the classroom and teaching skills and knowledge to get along and respect each other. As I noted briefly above in the Differentiation and the Teaching to the Whole Child section, I do not feel that there is has been or is enough time spent in the classroom learning about how to work as a group or how to respect one another or themselves. There does not seem to be a strong sense of community in the room, nor does it feel like everyone knows how to do his or her best at getting along. Children also don't have a lot of time to share feelings, concerns, or ideas with each other. That to me seems like a huge obstruction to all the children's learning, and specifically the four children I chose to follow. ✓

Instructional moves specific for student #1 would be to focus on his strengths and interests in school and as a member of the class and allow him to use those more in productive ways that could improve his status. Possibilities might be to have him be a group leader (facilitator) when possible and to have him teach something he enjoys or is good at to the class. Also, helping DM as much as possible in the areas where everyone else has their parents (i.e., reading logs) will enhance his status. For example, when students read 100 books the teacher publicly awards them. I will read with DM and record his books for him so maybe he has a chance to be recognized like the rest of the kids. excellent

For student #2, I think providing opportunities where the other students can and do work with her and spend time with her will alone have a positive impact on her status. It seems that she is often not given the chance to be with other students. If I could find out things she had in common with other students, then I could plan groups according to interest and therefore maybe start some communication between students. If in addition this was something KI was specifically good at it would raise her status. I would also like to help KI with her reading log since she does not have much parent support. yes!

CM, student #3, needs to be allowed the opportunity, or more opportunities, to share his interesting stories, connections, comments, and ideas. If I could play off these

things that he is especially good at and publicly recognize them, he might not be so worried about the other things he's not quite so good at. I would plan to structure approaches to curriculum so that CM could use what he is good at.

To enhance student #4, NW's status in the classroom, I think varying time and instructional styles and approaches to curriculum more would allow for more learning and lower the amount of times he is asked to "stop it, go sit out" etc. in front of everyone. I think giving more chances and variety of ways this child has to show what he knows and is good at, the less need or desire he will have to show the students that he is cool or funny.

Again though, I think that what these children most importantly need first, is the expectation, knowledge, opportunities, and support to be a community, to work together, to play together, to work through troubles together, and to work for things together. They need to see they can be connected and have reasons to do so. They also need more opportunities to share their feelings and instruction on how to do that. Lastly, their needs to be a focus on how every student is good at different types of learning (multiple abilities) and those different abilities in each student need to be recognized publicly and need to be allowed to be used.

hopefully

the more focused venue of groups will help this

a beautiful paper

insightful and smartly strategic

Status Survey:

1. How old are you?
2. How many sisters or brothers do you have?
3. Are you the youngest, oldest, or in-between?
4. What is your favorite snack?
5. Who in the class would you like to sit next to on a field trip? (Social status question)
6. What pets do you have at home?
7. What is one of your favorite books?
8. Who do you think are the best readers in class? (Academic status question)
9. What is your favorite part of the school day?
10. What is your favorite thing to do outside of school?