

As I began this process, my mentor and I took a look over the CCT Performance Profile. After reading through the Continuum of Effective Teaching, I was able to better identify my current strengths and weaknesses within my instructional practices. After looking over the self-assessment, I quickly realized that one of my biggest downfalls was monitoring my student's progress. At the time, all I had been doing to monitor their progress was to question students during lessons and a daily homework check that was strictly based on completion of work, rather than accuracy of work. Overall, this was not adequate to help myself better plan my instructional lessons to suit my student's needs. I strongly believed that by changing my monitoring skills, I would become a more efficient and effective teacher.

As I began TEAM's module three, I had also created a personal goal for myself. The goal was to have no more failing grades. To see a student get a failing grade on a unit test that is comprised of four to five weeks of materials is a horrible feeling. It makes me wonder where did I go wrong and what could I have done to help these students better succeed. To help them succeed I needed to enhance my monitoring skills. With these new skills, I will hopefully be able to know the current level of understanding that students have for the current and previous topics. From this I will be able to adjust my lessons to better suit individual and whole class needs with the overall goal of no more failing grades.

To start off the module, I decided I needed to do something to get a daily check to track my students understanding. While at Hofstra University my professors frequently discussed the idea of an exit slip. An exit slip is a small piece of paper that has one question that encompasses the main idea of the lesson you have just taught. I began this process daily and right away I did not like the feedback I was getting. I was receiving a lot of incomplete and rushed responses. I liked the idea of the exit slip but knew it needed an incentive to make it more successful. Once the bell rings in a high school, students go into an instant need to flee the classroom. Even if I'm still talking I can see in their facial expression that they have the desire to run out the door. To make my exit slips more effective I decided to add the incentive of an exam bonus point for a successfully completed exit slip. Instantly, I saw a rise in the success rate in my exit slips, now I truly believed I was getting a strong indicator of how things were going in my classes.

Once I began collecting the data I had to find a way to use this to my advantage. At the end of the day I would quickly grade the exit slips and tally them to see how well or poorly the students did. From my data I made some decisions. If seventy five percent of the class got it right then it was a successful day. I choose this number because as I looked over the exit slips, many of the wrong answers were not due to lack of understanding, they were due to small mathematical errors. The next level was between fifty to seventy five percent correct, I believed that this was an ok day but the class would need some more reinforcement. To help reinforce the topic I would add some more problems to the following nights homework along with the new material we were learning that day. I would also retouch on the topic within the next days "do now."

Usually I'd put up a few questions, have the class work on them and give help when needed. The next level was from twenty five to fifty percent correct. This was looked at as a below average day. On these days I believed that students weren't quite getting the topic, but the students had a solid base. From these days, I would start the following day off with a mini lesson on the non-mastered topics. I'd do this in an attempt to touch up on anything that I saw as weaknesses from the previous day and to hopefully have students give input into what wasn't clicking with the material. From these mini lessons I hoped to be able to move onto new material while only taking a portion of the class to re-teach yesterday's topics. Lastly, I have the below twenty five percent correct level. This has only happened once and that was with the topic of completing the square, to convert a quadratic function into vertex form. This called for another full day on the topic and as a teacher who wants his kids to succeed I have no problem pushing back my material to help my kids understand something. Previously, before the exit slips, I would have missed this opportunity to help my students. I would have taught the lesson on one day, gone over the homework on the next day and then moved onto our next topic.

I liked how things were going with the exit slips but I decided I needed to get a little more specific. I did not want to wait till after the class to know if things had been going well. While the class was going on I wanted to know how they were doing, what was clicking and what wasn't making sense. From this I would be able to change things up on the fly to better help my students. One of the easiest things for a teacher to do was one of the hardest things to do in my classes. Asking questions has been a very difficult thing to do in my classes this year. I tend to have a very quiet and shy group of students and for someone looking to get feedback on their knowledge I was struggling. Even a general question like, "how was your weekend?" got little to no responses. From this I needed to find a way to either get them to speak up or another means of checking for understanding during the class.

I decided to go observe two veteran teachers to see what they did to check in on their student's progress. Both teachers are highly respected in our school and I wanted to see what they did to help make sure their students understood the topics. In general both teachers had a way of asking questions that either had some humor to it or made the kids feel really comfortable about speaking up. Teacher A would go about asking his students "what's so scary about this?" This was a great way to mask the question of "what doesn't make sense to you?" I strongly believed that his students felt better answering that kind of question because I did not come with the stigma that the student didn't understand what he or she was doing. Teacher A also did a nice job of quickly assessing a student. In one instance a student asked a question about similar triangles and how you know which sides correspond with each other. Teacher A first answered the questions and then quickly drew up a question to ask the student to check and see if his feedback had helped the student. This was great; from this quick re-check he was able to monitor the student and even get a quick check on the whole class. Teacher B on the other hand also had an effective way of getting students to speak up. What she did was make it extremely clear to her class that she wanted to help. She had

a nice demeanor in which she made it clear that she would stop class and discuss whatever you needed her to discuss in order to make sure that you understood the topic. Her students definitely had a comfort level that was leading to the great rounds of questions that I was seeing. Teacher B took every question, no matter how simple or complicated they were and made them feel important by answering them fully for the student.

Another thing I did to help with my short term monitoring was to read excerpts from the books Teaching To Learn Learning To Teach and The First Days Of School. One of the main things the books talked about was setting up a classroom seating arrangement so that you can walk around to assess. There are many seating designs shown within the books that can help with assessing that luckily my classroom is already set up in. From these readings the thing that stood out the most was to constantly walk around to monitor your students. By walking around you cannot only effectively keep students on task but you can also see how well or poorly the students are doing. From walking around, you can see who understands and who doesn't. It also helps to get a quick view of the overall class, which can help with the lesson as you move forward.

To reach my goal of no failing grades I needed to tie these quick checks into my lessons. In particular the walking around has been a big success. It's by far the easiest thing you can do to see how things are going. A few weeks ago I set up a lesson on solving a system of equations by graphing. I assumed that my students would know how to graph lines since that had been done in many classes prior to algebra two. I assumed wrong and if it wasn't for walking around I might not have caught onto this. I started the lesson with a quick talk about graphing and then gave my students a few practice problems. While walking around I quickly realized that a lot of students were not successfully completing the task. I assumed they would all remember how to graph lines but I was wrong. From this quick check, I was able to stop the students and have them go through a quick graphing review. This review took maybe three minutes but made the overall lesson run a lot smoother. If it wasn't for walking around I'm not sure how this lesson may have gone. Another benefit of walking around is that it has led to more questions being asked. Like I said before, I have a real quiet and shy group of students so by being out within the students, kids can stop me and ask me a question without having the pressure of asking me in front of the whole class. This has defiantly been a plus, because it lets me know where not only the whole class is but the individual student's level of understanding are.

As for the questioning techniques, those have had not had the same success as the other techniques I have practiced. I have seen mild improvement in the attempts to get kids to speak up when they have a low level of understanding. I have tried using the same style as teacher A with some success, the kids seemed to get a little bit of a laugh out of the way I try to ask the question but I'm still not getting the great improvements I was looking for. As for teacher B's style I have not had the best in class improvement but overall I get more students to come to extra help now. I like to mention a few times throughout class that if something isn't make sense please stop by before school, after

school or during school to get some help. I want them to know how strongly I care about their success in my class. From this I have had numerous kids stop by to ask questions during extra help times. Obviously I'd like kids to ask questions in class but I have no problem giving the one on one help to students when needed.

As I worked through the module I realized that I had a daily way to monitor, and then I added in a quick way to monitor, so lastly I needed a more long term way to monitor my students' levels of understanding. The last thing I decided to implement was a Common Formative Assessment. I tried this out once before but believed that in this instance I could make it work. To change things up a little I decided to make the assessment six or seven questions long. Each time I'd administer the assessment, I'd give the kids fifteen minutes to complete it. The first time I gave it out was the day before we started the unit. This gave me a good understanding of the student's prior knowledge. I was able to see if there were any topics I did not need to cover in much detail due to the students already having a solid understanding. In my geometry class I quickly learned that my class knew how to convert from a fraction to a decimal so there was no need to spend a day on that topic. Instead of a full day lesson I made this into a Do Now mini review and then moved onto a new topic. The second time I gave out the assessment I gave it half way through the unit when we had covered half the material on the assessment. This helped me see what they had mastered and what they could apply their current knowledge to. This helped because I was able to keep the troubling topics fresh by making them into Do Now's or adding them to homework for some extra practice. Lastly I gave the assessment the day before the unit exam. I explained to the class to take it as if it was a practice exam. Like usual I gave it in fifteen minutes, but this time we went over it as a whole class. Now not only I knew where the students may be weak but they also had followed their own progress throughout the unit and knew where they had to focus their studying on to make sure they succeeded on the upcoming exam. This also helped to encourage students to seek extra help on these topics. Altogether I think these assessments were a success in not only opening up my eyes to the classes understanding but helping to let them know where they stand.

Looking back on module three, I think I did a good job of trying to help my students through my own learning. I wanted to make sure that they were getting the best education that I could give them. I think that by assessing them on a small and long term scale I was better able to focus my lessons and work to suit their needs. Overall looking at their exam scores the classes seemed to have done slightly better, but there were still some kids that kind of fell through the cracks to get some failing grade. In general the poor grades also had the issue of poor attendance to deal with but as the teacher I still make it a point that I want everyone to succeed. Moving forward I'd like to be able to better meet the personal needs of each student. I'm hoping that in the future I can try to add more differentiation into my work so that every student, no matter what level, can get an education that will motivate and challenge them. I also still want to reach my goal of no failing grades, hopefully I'll find a way to achieve that.