

Charlotte Danielson's Framework The Four Domains

Reflection by Caroline Browne

Domain 1: Planning and Preparation.

Over the course of my teaching career, it has become clear to me that a teacher must master this domain in order to be successful in the other three domains. A teacher that takes careful time to plan with the outcome in mind, is far more successful than a teacher who simply plans around a topic or an activity. By planning with the outcome in mind, it has allowed for me to foresee potential pitfalls and hiccups in my lesson plan. For example, this year when I was teaching a group of students who loved to participate in discussions but were not strong writers, I decided to design a lesson that required them to work as a group, share their knowledge, and synthesize their understanding a small group first, prior to enforcing the writing piece. The lesson that I designed was called "Table Twitter". Table Twitter is basically a group discussion technique in which students are asked to examine primary and secondary documents about a historical topic that students have been studying. In groups students are asked to use their prior knowledge and the knowledge they gain from the documents and synthesize their understandings as a group. Then the group is asked to "tweet" a comment, question, or observation about the document. This way, students are engaged as a group and students who may not be confident with a short response have the opportunity to discuss their understandings of the topic with a group before responding. It was clear to me because I knew the student's strengths and weaknesses, I was able to have a much more effective lesson because of my careful planning and preparation.

Domain 2: Classroom Environment

To me the classroom environment is a teacher's secret weapon with students. The classroom should be a place where students feel safe, loved, valued, and motivated to learn. These characteristics can be a tall order, make a classroom cozy like home and students may begin to think they are at home. Conversely, make a classroom too

stimulating and what you thought was a cute knick-knack, poster, or review game has become a source of obsession for a highly distracted student. Over the course of my teacher career, in my previous school and currently at Woodlands, I have been both a classroom teacher and a traveling teacher, so I can speak first hand to the importance of establishing a clear culture of respect, expectations, and high standards. As a traveling teacher, I learned that my classroom environment traveled with me everywhere I went. Classroom environment was a state of mind, not necessarily a physical classroom. Last year I had two classes that I found really responded to competition, so in those classrooms that I taught in I created a basketball themed behavior chart. I divided the students into teams and each month they competed for a grand prize. This allowed me to manage two high energy classes that I taught in two different classrooms. I also found that by having a focus on the classroom environment allowed me to become more organized and therefore easier for me to manage my classroom environment because I was able to be more organized.

Domain 3: Instruction.

In this domain, this is the area where I believe that I have been able to demonstrate the most growth as a teacher. Since coming to Woodlands, I have received fantastic professional development from my mentor Ms. Katherine Tovar, my former department colleague Mr. Mandel Holland, and my principal Mrs. Robin Schamberg; all of whom gave me invaluable information and advice that changed my instructional practices for the better. Under the guidance of Ms. Tovar I was able to take literacy strategies that I was already using and combine them with district wide initiatives such as R.A.C.E.S and the 6 Traits of Writing. By observing my former counter-part, Mr. Holland I learned a lot about engaging students and the willingness to be flexible and responsive during the course of my instruction. I would say that this is the area in which I improved the most. Over the course of this year I have found myself able to see where a lesson was not working, stop, re-teach and redirect the lesson prior to the students reaching a frustration level that was not going to sustain learning. I would say that in this domain, flexibility and

responsiveness are the best where to know if one's instruction is effective. If you have no idea that the lesson was a flop until after you've given an assessment, you need to go back to the lesson. I would also state that this year Mrs. Schamberg gave me a tremendous opportunity to teach both the 7th and 8th grade honors sections this year in Social Studies in the middle school. I was very excited and eager for the opportunity to demonstrate my ability to engage students in learning by going further in depth on controversial topics such as debating whether or not Abraham Lincoln was a racist. It also gave me the opportunity to carefully craft and design upper level critical thinking questions and use new questioning techniques. After Mrs. Schamberg observed one of my honor classes, she had told me the lesson which was a discussion of the true story of Christopher Columbus, would have lent itself nicely to a Socratic seminar style. I was unfamiliar with this particular method of instruction but upon further review I found that this style to lend itself perfectly to an area in this domain that I have been working on to improve, which was my questioning technique.

Domain 4: Professional Responsibilities.

"Without reflection, we go blindly on our way, creating more unintended consequences and failing to achieve anything useful." This quote from Margaret J. Wheatley is the perfect sentiment when thinking about my professional responsibilities as a teacher. By reflecting on my own practice, I know myself exactly what my strengths and weaknesses are as a teacher. It is my belief that a teacher who is truly motivated is constantly reflecting on their practice, constantly looking for that way to improve. I believe it is through reflection that all of the other areas of this domain fall into place. Since I am reflective, I am forced to maintain accurate records of my students' grades through a grade book and portfolio. I use these tools to measure their growth but also to measure my own. Another case which directly connects to my ability to be reflective is my communication with families. I keep a log of every time I reach out to a parent via email or telephone call. I also use the Remind App to keep in touch with students and families about upcoming quizzes, tests, homework, or projects that may be pending. Yet another

connection to my ability to be reflective is my desire to learn more. This year after Mrs. Schamberg told me about what a Socratic seminar was I sought out a professional development opportunity to learn how to use that particular instructional method. It is important for students to see teachers demonstrating their professional responsibilities. By adhering to my professional responsibilities I am a role model for my students on how to be successful in any type of job. By seeing these responsibilities as the opportunity to be a role model, I continue to learn and grow as a professional.