

Personal Reflection on Teaching Form

Your Name: John F. Kennedy
Course Name: CES 680 Teaching Praxis

Date of session: 10/25/2007
Term/Year: Fall 2007

As you observe this teaching session, what went well in your opinion?

I like to review quizzes/tests to reinforce concepts. I opened class with this activity to get students involved and get them to solidify some of the concepts in their mind. They seemed to be involved in the process as we reviewed the questions. I am always sensitive to doing what I can to reduce student test anxiety and trying to make them feel comfortable with the process of learning, especially in a class like Research Methods that may be intimidating to students who struggle with statistics and scientific methodology. I feel good about that part of my teaching goal for this session.

What parts of the teaching session do you think need improvement, if any?

I would like to improve on sticking more to my lesson plan by allotting time to cover individual activities. One of my biggest struggles has been finding a balance between covering all the material I would like to cover, and reinforcing and solidifying covered concepts. I have used several types of quizzes (group, individual, take home, in-class, and even verbal quizzes) as a way of teaching to different students' learning styles. I think I would like to try more ungraded quizzes the next time I teach the class. The David book recommendation on this seems very intriguing to me.

As I viewed the tape, it was so obvious to me (I hope not to students) that I was more anxious than usual. I could see how I was trying to "make small talk" sometimes to cover up my anxiousness. Not having all the time I would like to teach each topic is stressful. This class is supposed to cover research methodology, basic stats, and writing/research/APA style. This is way too much to cover, and I am trying to do the best I can to cover the big topics, but I recognized in this video that I tend to get bogged down with too much of the detail.

As you reflect on the teaching session, what feelings were elicited as you taught?

I felt myself focusing more on "teaching" than promoting learning in this class because of the presence of the camera. I think I can do better at not thinking about the camera the next time (this was my first experience with it while teaching). I love interacting with students, and I try to get them to participate. That means I do not lecture as much as I try to teach interactively.

I can tell how much I was feeling anxiety and trying to quell my feelings of inadequacy as I view the video. The next time I teach on camera, I will allow myself permission to just "be myself."

Why do you think the teaching session evolved as it did?

I went with the flow of the students' questions about the quiz they had taken, and I used this portion of the class to get some feedback from them on how this quiz was different from the previous quizzes. I had previously given the quiz at the beginning of the class period (after students had read the assigned readings for the week). This class period, I had previously given them a take-home quiz to take once they had read the readings. Then they were instructed to go back and look up the answer to each question in the book. I could tell that most of them had wrestled with the questions according to my instructions;

however, my hunch is that some of them just looked up the answers in the book while reading. The students who had the stronger desire to learn what they had not comprehended on their own had a chance to learn from the question/answer session on the tape.

The session took the path of those students. I have 15 in my class, and three of them have a good grasp of the material from just reading on their own; however, several more (about half the class) have been admitted to our program on probation, and they struggle with the material. I hoped this teaching style would allow them to get help and input from the other students and from me. One example of this is the first few minutes of the session. After several of the students wrestle with the question about correlation and directionality, one of the students with a grasp of the topic is able to clarify what the other students are trying to clarify. I like to try to let the class take the direction of making them feel more connected and more “in this together.”

Identify how you will approach the teaching session differently next time.

Overall, I think I will try to be more specific on my lesson plan at allocating blocks of time (20-minute blocks) to learning/teaching activities. I do not want to be a clock watcher, but I do want to stop taking so much responsibility for students, while at the same time keeping myself available. I tend to cover about half what I plan for my sessions.

The segment on the video went fairly well; however, when I viewed the rest of the session, I recognized that I need to plan at least a 20-minute lecture each session as part of covering the material. The students who do not learn by reading (I have several) need that time to learn by hearing and seeing. Although my efforts at interactive learning are well-intended, I see the need to honor the “see and hear” learning styles of the students that struggle.

Any comments, insights, or thoughts about the teaching session that have not been addressed?

I definitely noticed that I tended to talk faster and run my sentences together in the video. This is a normal response I have to anxiety. I can adjust for it when I can consciously recognize and honor those feelings. I think I can deal better with this next time. I had the same reaction in filming myself counseling. It is funny to run this video on fast-forward. I seem to move more only from my elbows down when I am nervous. When I feel comfortable, I am much more relaxed and free to move around.

I do tell my students every class period that I understand their work load and anxiety about keeping balance between life and school. I seem to be doing a good job at helping them keep their anxiety at a manageable level. They often give feedback that they feel like I really want them to succeed.