

Lesson Reflection

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### **Lesson Reflection**

Learning and using *The 12 Touchstones of Good Teaching* by Goodwin and Hubbell definitely has made a positive impact on my instruction and on my interactions with students. As I created the lesson plan for this unit, I became more mindful and intentional about the “whys” and less about the “whats”. In other words, I was better able to prioritize the activities and texts I chose based on how those things would impact student learning instead of doing the same old things, reading the same old texts, just because that is what has been done before. Using the touchstones daily as a “do-confirm” list, has also helped me use the classroom time more efficiently, kept my students more motivated and engaged, and has led to growth in their literary and thinking skills.

At the beginning of this unit, I gave the students a quick pre-test as a formative assessment of their skills. I shared the results of that activity with the students, and they set class goals (as well as individual goals) based on the data. Their discussion was very thoughtful. They considered what would be challenging but still realistic. After they finished the reader’s theater project, we reevaluated the data together, and they realized they had already met one of their goals. The class had shown excellent growth in their annotation skills. They discussed how by interacting with the text through annotation and through turning the story into a play made it much easier to understand the themes of the narratives. By meeting one goal, they were more motivated to continue working toward the other two goals.

After they turned in their final essay projects, I collected the data and created a graph. The students compared the results with their formative assessment data and were excited to find

that they had not only met their class goals, but exceeded them. Item two in *The 12 Touchstones of Good Teaching* states, “I ensure students set personal learning objectives for each lesson.” (2013) I have not used this strategy often enough in the past. Observing the students during their goal setting discussions and then during their reflection discussions made me very aware of how significant this step is to student motivation and engagement. It helped them focus and take ownership of their own learning, which gave them intrinsic incentive to put out more effort and “dig deeper” into their learning.

Another way the touchstones have improved my teaching is by helping me understand that feedback is a tool to deepen learning and encourage effort, not to just praise or evaluate a student and his/her work. I was much more mindful of the way I was giving students feedback, and I noticed that created a change in the way students gave each other feedback as well. During their conferences, they were asking each other questions to improve or clarify meaning instead of just saying, “Yeah, it’s good.” That was exciting to observe!

Unfortunately it is easy for educators to get into a rut, and I feel that this course and the text have gotten me “unstuck”. I am excited to keep using the touchstones daily during my planning and my reflections to help me be a better teacher, the kind my students deserve.

#### References

Hubbell, E. R., & Goodwin, B. (2013). *The 12 touchstones of Good teaching: A checklist for staying focused every day*. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.