

Excerpts from my personal teaching journal... Brag and Bomb Log

Friday, September 19th, 2003-

The first lesson in my creation mythology unit was a huge success! Students loved this lesson, and things first period couldn't have gone better. Since this was to be the hook into the unit it was great to see the students so engaged and interested. I only hope I can ride the wave of excitement through the end of the unit. Sixth period didn't go nearly as well as first. I had a very hard time keeping the students on task. This wasn't because the students weren't interested, it was the opposite. Students were so interested that they wanted to talk and discuss after each segment of the lesson. It was, I imagine now, much like trying to settle a wild horse with a thin and frayed rope. I tried to use wait time throughout the lesson but it only worked a few times. The students, in many cases, were so excited that they didn't realize I was even waiting. I was at a loss for what to do. My thin and frayed rope had broken and I was losing control of the horse. Now I noticed that I had several advocates in the class who were shushing and asking their fellow students for silence, which made me feel a bit better about the fiasco. At one point I again resorted to "hey look, I'm tired of trying to get your attention, if we can't stay on task then we will have to stay after class." This seemed to work, but I didn't like the way it sounded. I would have much preferred not to make threats or resort to punishment. I needed more strategies for containing excitement. My CT came to the rescue. Not only did she give me strategies but we also had a meeting with two other teachers who gave me some of their strategies as well. The meeting was not called it was spontaneous, but Michele brought up the topic and asked the teachers what they do. I was able to put a few more "rope um" tricks into my bag for next time.

Tuesday, September 23, 2003-

6th Period is still presenting a challenge as far as management but now I have a few more tricks in my bag to try. I think part of the problem is that I feel the need to keep things rolling no matter what and instead I need to keep them going on my terms. If I do not have everyone with me, I am not being as effective a teacher as I need to be. I will continue to remind myself of this. I need to make more positive connections with individual students. I have many of them trying to help me out, asking other to be quiet, etc. I will keep working at it and trying new things. My CT is very supportive in this

endeavor and continues to give me new things to try and much encouragement.

Wednesday, September 24, 2003- Today I think I made a connection with sixth period but only time will tell. I tried very hard to smile and stay positive to laugh at students jokes etc. I still had some problems near the end of class, but I think it's because (and my CT agrees) that I have way too many transitions between activities. I will try to combine some of the instructions I give to help cut down on transitions. As the class was nearing its end I told students I had three things they needed to know before they left. 1 and 2 were homework directions, but three was this... I told them that I wanted to thank them for being such a fun group of people to work with, I told them that I really enjoyed the strong mix of personalities in the class and that I was very happy to be their teacher. This made several of the students get tears in their eyes and caused me to realize that I have made a strong connection with many of the students. I'm not sure if this will help me with keeping the class on task, but it certainly reminded me that I do like these students and I do want to make the class work and be successful, I only hope I am able to do so sooner than later. It isn't as if the class is refusing learning or not doing the work that I ask of them, but it isn't yet the kind of class I know it can be if I keep working at it.

Thursday, October 9th, 2003- Today in English class my teaching went well. I came to the decision that I needed to be much more proactive in soliciting the behavior I want from the class. Simply making this decision appeared to help make it happen. In sixth period I felt a huge difference in the general demeanor in the class and had fewer management issues. The problems I did have were due to poor transition choices. These are tough. My CT noticed a difference too and really was pleased with my reaffirmed proactive stance.

Friday, October 24th, 2003- Today something wonderful happened in 6th period. In the lesson for today students were engaged in a graded class discussion in which students were asked to moderate the discussion (for the most part). During my prep period 6th period I was inspired by the simple idea that life truly begins not when one is faced with a decision to make but rather when one actually makes a choice. This beginning can take place at anytime, and life is reaffirmed each time a choice is made. So before the discussion started, I shared with students my discovery and my inspiration. I asked the students to make a choice today of what they wanted this discussion to do for them. I asked them to make a choice to affect each others learning

and thinking in positive ways, to become the teachers of one another. Although some found my message cheesy, it really changed the tone of the class and the students stepped up to the challenge and exceeded my expectations. One student, who had given me trouble in the past as far as his engagement and buy-in to the class, became an outstanding moderator: he made sure everyone got a chance to speak, valued each person's contribution, and kept the discussion flowing along. There was laughter, light heartedness, and above all valuable and insightful conversation and contributions by all involved. I wish I had video taped this! It was one of the best classes I have had so far.