

Taking a deep dive into our Spring 2021 Lesson Study

The data collected in the observations of student-led discussions during the lesson and the exit ticket students completed at the end of the lesson shows that most students felt they had met the learning goal of understanding what slope is and how it represents information in a linear equation. Most students did not feel they had met the learning goal of understanding what the y-intercept or initial value represents. Therefore, only part of our content understanding goal was met. This compels us to go back and offer more opportunities to explore linear equations in order to ensure that all students understand the concept of the y-intercept and how it can be represented in real-life scenarios.

It was very difficult to meet our equity goal of students recognizing the importance of being a part of the learning process (their own and others) as more important than the right answer or their grade. This was due to the fact that we had some students working in-person at school and some students working at home. Being able to give equal voice and attention to both groups of students has been incredibly difficult. We did notice that while in the larger whole classroom setting, many students zooming into the lesson did not engage fully and while in the smaller breakout room setting, many students zooming into the lesson were more engaged. However, I have seen the opposite happening in the other lessons I have taught. I'm not sure if this is due to the unique relationships students have in each classroom or the structures different teachers have put in place.

Our Theory of Action was IF we employ collaborative and reflective assessments while students are making sense of linear equations THEN students will improve the development of their metacognitive and self-reflective capacities AS EVIDENCED BY students feeling more open to sharing their thinking and listening to others. We did use collaborative and reflective assessments both during the lesson and at the end of the lesson. The responses we received from the students did show that they recognized what parts of the lessons they had a strong grasp on and what parts of the lesson they did not quite grasp yet. Students were willing to share their thoughts and were actively listening to their classmates' ideas. This demonstrates to me further proof that students can improve their metacognitive and self-reflective capacities when lessons incorporate collaboration and reflective assessments.

Overall Reflections

Now that I have completed three Lesson Study cycles, I can reflect back on how each cycle brought me new information and helped hone my teaching skills. I also see that each cycle had a similar goal, even though we were working under different themes and in different classrooms. In all three of the Lesson Studies, the main focus was to encourage students to share their ideas and build on the ideas of their classmates in order to dismantle status, create a collaborative learning environment, and highlight that

all students have knowledge that is vital to our community. In the Fall cycle we explored this through a lesson on Mesoamerican art in a Humanities class. In the Winter cycle we explored this through a lesson on understanding the relationship that π has to determining parts and space in a circle. In the Spring cycle we explored this through a lesson on linear equations. In each cycle, we did not see the participation we were hoping for, mainly due to the challenges of distance learning.

Participating in a masters program was both rewarding and challenging. I am grateful to have had a space in which I could connect with other teachers who are new to the profession and teachers who have been in this profession for many years. It was helpful to hear perspectives and ideas from teachers through working together in class and through reading articles, books, and web pages created by other educators in the field. Having a group of professionals to help think through issues I came up against in the classroom and knowing I wasn't alone in my struggles helped me keep persevering during this challenging year.

Since we were experiencing a pandemic in which the majority of our instruction had to come through distance learning, it was difficult to use the culturally responsive and collaborative practices I prefer to use in classes. It was also very difficult to find resources that could help with building curriculum, strategies to increase engagement, and offer recommendations for creating inclusive online learning. This was a huge stumbling block for myself and other educators. It also provided our group with an opportunity to be a more active creator of teacher research since this experience of distance learning is new to most of us. While I was in the thick of it, I did not see it as an opportunity, but more of a challenge. Now that this program and the school year is almost over, I feel we might have helped create data about what does or does not work well in what might be the future of schooling; online learning.

Looking Into the Future

One area of inquiry related to my teaching practice that I would be excited to explore in the future is using more group work tasks. I want to incorporate more Complex Instruction techniques and practices like the Jigsaw Method of teaching. By building in more group work and discussion time and decreasing direct instruction from the teacher, I believe we can dismantle the status of the teacher being the sole holder of knowledge and allow students to build on the brilliance they hold and their classmates hold. This has been so difficult to do through distance learning. I am looking forward to being in person next year so I can provide more opportunities for students to authentically engage with each other.