

Running Head: CURRICULUM, STRATEGIES, ASSESSMENT

Daniel Bell

Curriculum, Strategies, Assessment

2/19/09

EDTE 689: Advanced Seminar in Teaching

Dr. Roberta Dorr

Johnson, et al. (2005) explains that, in the past, teachers had much more leeway in terms of the selection and implementation of curriculum than they do now due to published and mandated standards and benchmarks. The same often goes for assessments and sometimes even classroom strategies. Of course, federally and state mandated standards are important to meet and are put in place for specific purposes, and it is equally important to use research-based strategies and effective assessments to meet and assess those standards. I believe, however, that a strong, effective teacher doesn't always simply stick to the textbook or the given plan. They must be flexible, reflective, and must always have an ace up their sleeve if they truly mean to teach and help their students grow. It is with this spirit in mind that I believe that I, as a special education teacher, must use a mixture of mandated curriculum, research-based strategies, and proper assessments along with my own judgment to effectively reach my students.

First, I believe that I must use a mixture of mandated curriculum and my own judgment to effectively reach my students. No effective teacher I ever had taught directly and solely from their curriculum day-to-day. They would use their curriculum as a jumping off point to form their lessons and create activities to teach my classes the expected content and standards. This idea has stuck with me and has helped me grow and evolve as an educator myself. I always make sure I consult my curriculum for the content that I am expected to teach my students along with the standards that I am expected to have my classes meet. Often times, my curriculum has great ideas for lesson plans, activities, worksheets, notes, and handouts that are invaluable in my classroom. At the same time, though, I believe that I have to reach beyond what is on the pages of my curriculum and use my own judgment of how exactly to go about presenting and teaching

the given content day-to-day. I feel that I would be shortchanging my students, in a way, by only sticking to the curriculum, by never putting my own touches, my own passions to the material. I have to find real ways to connect my content with my students while always having the curriculum standards in mind. Otherwise, I believe my students would feel that I had no personal stake in what I'm teaching them, and, in turn, that I have no personal stake in them and their education. And there are many ways to make this possible. As Johnson, et al. (2005) discusses, co-curriculum and extra-curricular activities and programs can still meet standards while encouraging more student participation and excitement. For example, to further my classroom lessons in my music classes, I have created an after-school music group that still hits many of my classroom standards, but carries them further while giving me more freedom to find creative ways to reach my students.

Next, I believe that I must use a mixture of research-based strategies along with my own judgment to effectively reach my students. Polloway (2008) discusses in his book about teaching strategies for learners with special needs that a teacher's effectiveness can be measured in two ways that include how much the student has actually learned and the teaching behaviors that accompany that learning. Polloway goes on to discuss how the teacher's behaviors and techniques should be research-based and documented. And I agree with this completely. However, I also believe that just because a teaching strategy has not yet been documented does not mean that it does not have the potential to be effective. I believe that I must use both my skills of personal reflection of what worked and what didn't work, and my documentation skills to pinpoint, write about, and publish pieces on strategies that I have tried and tested. I also believe that I

must have a plethora of tested strategies at my fingertips. I need to discover and incorporate strategies that appeal to learners of all different and diverse levels, backgrounds, capabilities, languages, and disabilities across the board. And I have to be creative, bold, and reflective so that when I try something new and it doesn't work, I have to find another way to be effective.

Lastly, I believe that I must use a variety of assessments to effectively reach my students. Cooper (2008) discusses in an article that there is no one best way to assess students and that effective means of assessing can also improve the teacher's teaching strategies. This is at the core of what I believe about assessments. Whether formative or summative assessments, whether written, oral, or project-based, whether formal or informal, assessments are many and thus the type of assessment I chose to use should depend on what it is I am attempting to assess. If I mean to assess my students' memorization and comprehension of unit vocabulary, I may either wish to give a formal, paper-based test, or an individual project with a rubric that must include the vocabulary and reflect the comprehension of that vocabulary. Either way could be equally effective, and I believe that this goes back to earlier points regarding a teacher's own personal judgment. I know my content and hopefully I know my students and I must make the best decisions I can in terms of assessing them. But, again, I must also always be flexible and reflective about my assessments. If an assessment does not go well, I should never immediately blame the assessment or the students or myself. I need to reflect on whether or not I did indeed give the proper assessment and if my teaching strategies were effective and creative enough to reach the students in the first place. Assessments never

have to be the end of the story; they can and should be a constantly and completely integrated strategy in my day-to-day teaching.

Curriculum, strategies, and assessments are all areas of teaching that are related and intertwined. As an educator, I must teach my curriculum, use effective strategies to teach that curriculum, and use proper assessments to check both the students' and my own knowledge and progress in the classroom. There is a great deal of research and legislation that accompanies each of these areas, which is all obviously useful and important, but I believe what is of equal importance in a teacher's own self-awareness, intuition, and creativity of how they should go about incorporating and effectively utilizing each of these areas to the best of their ability. I must use my best judgment about these aspects while being creative and reflective to truly be an effective educator.

References

Cooper, G. (2008). *Effective assessment*. Retrieved February 14, 2008 from  
<http://www.uoregon.edu/~tep/resources/assessment/index.html>

Johnson, J. A., et al. (2005). *Introduction to the foundations of american education*.  
Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.

Polloway, E. A., Patton, J. R., & Serna, L. (2008). *Strategies for teaching learners with  
special needs*. New Jersey: Pearson Education, Ltd.