

Developmentally-Appropriate Instruction

Abigail May

Regent University

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Introduction

Included in this competency is a selection of poems by Langston Hughes and a lesson plan for lower-level readers. The poems by Langston Hughes represent cultural awareness because they were used in a lesson to emphasize the importance of African-American poets while also teaching similes and metaphors. The latter lesson plan was included to show the developmental level of certain students who are performing below grade level.

Rationale for Selection of Artifacts

The poems by Langston Hughes were used in a lesson plan on similes and metaphors. Each poem has one or both elements of writing. The poems illustrate diversity in literature, especially the poem “I, Too.” “I, Too” is a poem about the African-American community in the 1920’s. Hughes says in this poem that in spite of his skin color, in spite of the way he is treated as a result of his skin color, he is a part of the fabric of America. Hughes describes a girl he knew in high school in the other poem included, “When Sue Wears Red.” Hughes knew a girl named Susanna Jones when he was a teenager and every time she wore a certain red dress he thought she looked like a classic beauty. His description of her emphasizes the beauty of the African-American race during a time when it was looked down upon to be of that race. These poems together emphasize the cultural diversity of my fourth grade classroom and expound upon the fact that America is a salad bowl of diversity.

The second artifact illustrating developmentally-appropriate instruction shows the fact that not all fourth grade students perform at the same grade level. The students for whom this lesson plan was written are reading at a DRA level of 30 and 34. My

cooperating teacher and I decided to pull the lower performing students up to a level 34. Though these students are performing below grade level, the book they are reading is developmentally appropriate for them. Each student reads a page of the book each day that we work together. The students practice fluency and decoding of the text. The storyline of the book is easy to understand yet the word choice is challenging for their vocabulary. This lesson plan was chosen to represent this competency because it represents the fact that not all students perform at the level that is appropriate to their age.

Reflection on Theory and Practice

Throughout my education at Regent I have learned that every student should be reached. Oftentimes students get lost in the shuffle when teachers are trying to meet standards. The few students who are at a low performing level in my class are important to me. They need to be worked with and helped to improve.

The competency, as defined in the student teaching handbook, involves “evidence of hands-on, developmentally appropriate teaching techniques. Will also demonstrate cultural awareness. (Kreassig, p. 31, 2015).” The first artifact demonstrates cultural awareness in that it uses the poetry of an African-American. The poems themselves illustrate the cultural diversity of America, especially the poem “I, Too.” The second demonstrates the hands-on, developmentally appropriate instruction for my low performing students. These students get to work together to improve. Each has to read a portion of the text and each day they have to summarize a portion of the previous days reading.

“Today we know children and adolescents learn best when they work constructively with others...” (Bigler, Doyle, and Drosinos, 2014, p. 38). For the students

who work with me in small group, my low performing readers, the cooperative learning helps them immensely. I am witnessing them remember more together, build off of each other, and help each other with hard words. They take turns reading and gently prompt the other if a word is hard. This constructive learning process is developmentally appropriate and hands-on.

References

Bigler, P., Doyle, S., & Drosinos, K. (2014). *Teaching is Tough: A Practical Guide to Classroom Success*. Quicksburg, VA: Apple Ridge.