

1. Impact on P-12 Learning and Development: Case Study of a First Year Teacher

The state of Maryland does not provide teacher impact data to colleges and universities. Therefore, McDaniel College has chosen to provide a case study on a graduate one year out from graduation. This case study highlights a graduate in their first year of teaching and focuses on The Charlotte Danielson Framework for Teaching, specifically Domain Three, Instruction. Within this domain, data was collected on standards 3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, 3c Engaging Students in Learning and 3d Using Assessment in Instruction. The Danielson Framework is used for this study as it is a nationally recognized and validated tool. Of particular note is that the Danielson Framework is designed to promote teacher professional growth across a continuum founded on the concept that all teachers should be continuing to grow and develop. The study looks at the efficacy of the teachers by using the rubric scores for the teacher as well as the qualitative evidence from the comments by the observer. In order for the teacher to remain anonymous, the term, "The Teacher" has been substituted for the teacher's name in the feedback provided by the supervisors.

This first-year teacher was in the 2019-2020 completor cohort from McDaniel College and holds a B.A. in Spanish and an M.S. in Teaching. The teacher was hired by a large urban/suburban school district and is teaching in one of the largest high schools in the school system, one with a high ESOL population. This year, this teacher is teaching grades 9-12, specifically Spanish 1 and Spanish 3. The teacher's class sizes range from 12-32 students and the teacher notes that the teacher has approximately 20 students with IEPs. To date, this first-year teacher has been teaching virtually, however, students are due to return to in-person learning by the time this report is submitted.

For the purpose of this case study, the teacher provided four observation/evaluations. The first observation in October 2020 focused on 3a and 3c in Domain Three: Instruction, of the Danielson Framework. As the focus areas for this study are 3b, 3c and 3d, only the feedback related to 3c, Engaging Students in Learning is noted. This initial observation was not rated, as the purpose was to only provide feedback to this new teacher. However, the following comments are from the teacher's supervisor:

- "(The teacher) utilized strategies to engage students in learning with mixed results.
 - (The teacher) showed a Spanish lyric video to students at the beginning of class. However, she missed the opportunity for students to interact or connect with the music.
 - Students were tasked to read independently and annotate a text about climate change on Microsoft Word. However, it was unclear how many students were completing the task.
 - (The teacher) reviewed the text annotation activity by reading parts of the text and students were given a chance to participate/respond with key words/phrases.
 - Approximately 85% of the class meet was composed of teacher talk.
 - 7/19 students (37%) used their microphone or the chat box to participate at least once during whole class discussions.
- Consequently, some students were visibly engaged throughout the class period."

While this observation did not include a rating, the feedback provided both commendations and areas of growth typical for a first-year teacher in the first term of the school year.

The second, formal observation occurred in December of 2020. The following feedback was provided on Domain Three. The teacher was rated Developing in 3b, Effective in 3c and Developing in 3d. The supervisor also provided the following comments:

“The Teacher communicated expectations and instructions in a clear way. The Teacher broke down words into parts so that students could intuit their meaning... and used carefully chosen language to ensure students understood their meaning in Spanish. The Teacher utilized the words in order to ensure that students made the connection between the Spanish and the English. However, The Teacher primarily provided instruction and classroom materials in English with little time devoted to utilizing Spanish vocabulary. It is important to spend the majority of each lesson in Spanish so that students have time to practice with interpretive skills.

The Teacher’s activities that focused on the cultural products, practices, and perspectives were deeply engaging for students. Students watched two videos and worked to categorize the cultural phenomena, with the end goal of connecting the products and practices to central perspectives in Hispanic culture. The Teacher is to be commended for attempting such a deep cultural dive that, as discussed in the post-observation conference, students in upper-level classes tend to struggle with. Though the students did not quite make the connection, they were well on their way to that understanding, and The Teacher mentioned that the subsequent classes were designed to focus on doing so.

Throughout the lesson, it was evident that students struggled with the vocabulary necessary for a substantial discussion. It is important that The Teacher review essential prior knowledge before introducing new information. By doing so, The Teacher would be able to assess students’ understanding, note deficiencies and confusion, and make adjustments as necessary.”

Again, these comments note the developing nature of a first-year teacher, with two areas still developing while one was effective.

A third structured observation took place in mid-February 2021. The following feedback was provided. The teacher was rated Effective in 3b, 3c, and 3d:

“The Teacher communicated instructions and content clearly and stressed the importance of engaging with the lesson material. Throughout the lesson, she communicated encouragement and suggestions. As a result, participation in class was robust and meaningful. The Teacher questions focused on what students wanted to do during their vacations, and what they actually did during them. The structure of these questions focused on the imperfect and the preterit tenses. Though distinguishing between the two is often challenging for students, they engaged in the questioning because of the relevance to the COVID-19 pandemic. Students were then asked to move into breakout rooms for group conversation. The Teacher is to be commended for this, as fostering group conversation is challenging in person, and even more so during virtual instruction. In the breakout rooms, students struggled somewhat to engage in meaningful conversation, evidently due to difficulty with recalling the new information. It is important that a model be provided to students before breaking out into groups, especially with new activities and/or new structures that students may not easily recall. Assessments were interspersed throughout the lesson, starting at the very beginning and continuing to the end result, where The Teacher collected information to use in planning for the subsequent class. “

Growth made by the teacher in all three areas is clearly noted. The teacher is found to be Effective in 3b, 3c and 3d. The teacher, at mid-year, is effectively demonstrating a positive impact on student learning. Both the comments and the ratings indicate the impact of the teacher on the students.

Finally, another observation took place in late February 2021. As was the case with the October observation this one also focused on 3a and 3c in Domain Three: Instruction, of the Danielson Framework. As the focus areas for this study are 3a, 3c and 3d, only the feedback related to 3c, Engaging Students in Learning is noted. Again, this observation was not rated:

“The Teacher utilized strategies to engage students in learning with mixed results.

- The Teacher utilized a variety of tools to engage students. For example, she used Quizziz, Jam Board, and a Schoology discussion post.
- Approximately 95% of the class meet was composed of teacher talk.
- Students were not given materials or activities to engage with the new learning during the synchronous class session.

- 7/15 students (47%) used their microphone or the chat box to participate at least once during whole class discussions.
- The Teacher reviewed the Quizziz activity for 8 minutes and gave students 3 opportunities to interact during the review.

Consequently, some students were visibly engaged throughout the class period “

Overall, by the middle of the first year, this teacher was rated effective by the supervisor. Teacher efficacy is critical for student achievement. While this first-year teacher was marked as developing in earlier in the school year, this teacher demonstrated growth as is noted in her mid-year evaluation. By mid-year, this teacher received marks of Effective in Domains 3b, 3c and 3d. The teacher, at mid-year, is effectively demonstrating a positive impact on student learning. Both the comments and the ratings indicate the impact of the teacher on the students.

Considering the nature of virtual instruction and the challenges faced by first year teachers in an uncertain environment, The Teacher’s growth from a developing teacher to an effective teacher in a few short months demonstrates that The Teacher has the foundational teaching skills to be effective as well as the ability to receive feedback and make adjustments to instruction to positively impact student achievement, even in these most unusual times.