Impact on Student Learning Project Reflection

Whitney J. Piatt

Manchester College

EDU410 Teacher in Today’s Schools

4/24/12
I decided to work with my 4th and 5th graders at Coesse Elementary for this project. I did a unit on Volleyball. I gave my students a pre-test the week before I started the unit and made sure that each question I addressed was something that I intended to cover. After one unit, three lessons of volley I administered another test. The post test was a little more embellished than the pre-test. I taught 14 classes the same unit, however I only decided to test two classes; a fifth and fourth grade class at Coesse Elementary. Each class had about 25 students in it. Not every student had the chance to test or be at every lesson on the unit due to absences. I worked with many students at different physical and talent levels, while the majority were Caucasian. I did however, have two students with physical disabilities, each still able to participate in the lessons without many adaptations. There were two autistic boys that took the tests as well, with help from an aid. I was pleased that they even agreed to take the tests, because for the most part participating in gym is hit or miss for them, but they both enjoyed volleyball.

My unit was set up with a progression pattern in mind. We learned basic skills the first two lessons, building up to mixing the two together forcing them to combine the two. The first day we learned bumping, while on the next day we learned how to set. In the end of the second day they played a game that used both skills to complete. The last day we played a volleyball game combining both skills once again, while using team skills and game rules.

As far as my expectations and objectives went for this lesson, I realized quickly that I was expecting maybe a little too much from my third through fifth graders. I let them know in each lesson what I anticipated them to learn. For instance, if we were just learning how to bump that is what I told them we were doing today. Once we learned how to set, I told them they were expected to use both bumping and setting skills, building off each other. As mentioned, my objectives for the unit concerned me because I wanted to teach them two forms of serving and rotation but I learned fast that that was just too ambitious for this group of students. I was forced to change my objectives and remove some
from my next lessons. I spent more time making sure that they grasped the more important objectives and could correctly perform those skills; as opposed to having learned many objectives that were never fully understood.

Although volleyball is a pretty “cut and dry” sport, I tried my best to help the students understand it at different levels. Bumping is a hard skill to perfect because of all the variables that go into it. For instance, if your arms are too high or too low the ball goes in different directions accordingly. The biggest way that I made them think critically was asking them questions about those different variables. Some questions included “What happens if you bump the ball up here by your head, or down here by your waist?” “If the ball is coming at your head should you bump it? Why not, what will happen? So, what skill should you use instead, and why?” Most students understood the different angles and what would happen if they didn’t do it properly. It was nice for them to essentially figure it out on their own and actually see what would happen with each different situation. This way, they learned from seeing the wrong way, in turn knowing what it was they were really supposed to do.

These particular students were very engaged in most of my lessons, although I did have many students who weren’t thrilled, most were excited to try something new that they had never done in the past. It was more difficult to keep those students who struggled on task and to participate to their full potential. I had one girl who had great ability but insisted on doing it improperly even after I told her many times how to do the skill correctly. In her eyes, volleyball was boring and she was never going to play, so why should she try her hardest for this class. With this I just incorporated the teamwork skills into the activities. I impressed upon her the importance of how much her teammates need her in order for the whole game to work. If one player isn’t doing anything, or doing things incorrectly it hurts the whole team. Along with those who didn’t care for the sport, I had many individuals who were obviously well acquainted with this sport. I would say that the majority were females. Some even tended to be
“show-offs” or bossy, making sure that it was apparent they knew what they were doing. Even if they were controlling the activities, it was still nice to have people with previous knowledge of the sport to be leaders.

Some things that I noticed went really well as well as surprised me was the amount of encouragement I saw from the students. It’s no secret that volleyball is a difficult sport to learn and to play. Many students were cheering on their classmates saying “Good try”, “That’s alright”, “Nice set!” I think this may have happened because of my modeling. I am a constantly positive person and I think that they understand what it can do for someone. Those students who may not have been too athletic really needed some support and other students recognized that. Another thing that I did not expect from the students was the pleading for more volleyball. Some students were a bit angry that the volleyball unit only lasted three days, or lessons. During the first two days of the unit they continually asked me when we were going to play a “real” game of volleyball. Knowing that it is a very difficult sport, I had a full game of volleyball planned on the last day. I was pleasantly surprised that the students wanted more time to play and wanted to continue the sport.

I was pleased with the results of my post test. I knew before going into the unit that volleyball was going to be difficult, and that they most likely didn’t have much previous knowledge of the sport. This was definitely demonstrated in the pre-test results. Between both the fourth and fifth grade classes, I had 26 students out 48 fail the pre-test. That is about 54%, more than half fail, with only 45% passing. However, I was satisfied with the outcome of having only 11% fail, while 77% pass the post-test at the end of the unit. The most improvement occurred with the fifth grade class. They went from a 51% passing rate to 88%. The difference was 37%, whereas the 4th grade only improved by 27%. Overall, my students were able to participate and learn the skills necessary to take the test at the end. As mentioned before, I wasn’t able to get to some skills, but I took that off of the quiz accordingly.
My methods for teaching this unit were appropriate and I used different practices to maximize learning. Many people think that effective teachers in physical activity are just keeping their students “busy”, and making sure they’re “having fun”. Although goals of physical educators are to keep their student moving and active and having them enjoy class, there is so much more to physical education. These students are learning new skills, just as they would in the classroom. Some of the skills that make up a great physical education teacher include sufficient planning, anticipation of situations, awareness of individual skill difference, explanation and demonstration, and adequate practice time. (Hickson, Clive & Fishburne, Graham J) Within my lesson I think my best strengths were my planning, understanding my students and their skill level, and my explanation and demonstration. This is demonstrated in the results of my post test. My explanation included many teaching cues that continued to show up in every lesson. By the time the students read these particular cues on the test they were very prepared to answer the questions. I provided the students with an opportunity to learn in the affective domain as well. I set up the games for competition within themselves and against other teams. I gave the students a chance “to work with others to achieve common goals” (Best Practices in Physical Education Elementary). I also felt great about my classroom management throughout this particular unit plan. Even though there were many students around the entire gymnasium trying to work on their individual skills I executed many strategies that minimized off task behavior. One big thing these kids needed was proximity control; I walked around the entire playing area making sure they were all staying on task. As I did this I gave a lot of feedback, both positive and corrective. Although slightly different, I tried my hardest to use the “back-to-the-wall” approach as well. It was much easier to see that the behavior was off task or not. When the students were a little more organized during the lead up games it was much easier to keep all my students in front of me and in my line of sight. (Graham)

The past four years have changed and shifted too many times to count. In looking back at my teaching philosophy from the first year of pursuing this career I’ve noticed many things that have
remained unchanged, while some points have varied slightly. I still feel very strongly about being a mentor to my students, and I feel like I have great leadership skills to lead them by example. I plan epitomizing what I believe to be great values; hard work, self motivation, and self respect. In my early philosophy I said that successful teaching is “to get through to the students by giving them the chance to learn about what they are drawn to”. I’ve given my students a wide variety of games and physical skills to learn, it’s their job to pursue those that they’re interested in. The only small adjustment I’ve made to my view point is that not only do they need to apply what they’re learning to their own life; they also do need to see how this applies to how they fit in with society. Physical education is crucial to one’s own well being, so there is no doubt that they need to relate this to their own interests, however the things they learn in physical education are also critical to being a functioning member of society. For instance, things like hard work, responsibility, and the importance of health and physical fitness will help them succeed, and be valuable part of the general public.
Impact on Student Learning Project Reflection

Whitney Piatt

Percentage of Students Who Passed

Based on Standard Grading Scale

[Bar chart showing percentage of students who passed based on standard grading scale for pre-test and post-test, with data points for 4th grade, 5th grade, and totaled average.]
Works Cited


Hickson, Clive & Fishburne, Graham J. What is physical education and can it be promoted with generalist trained elementary school teachers? Retrieved From https://angel.manchester.edu/section/content/default.asp?WCI=pgDisplay&WCU=CRSCNT&ENTRY_ID=0CD2A36922E04C59A715AE55409E2759