

RUNNING HEAD: Motivational Assessment

A Motivational Assessment of A Male Student in Seventh Grade Pre-Algebra

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My motivational assessment is of a seventh grade, male student in a pre-algebra class. The class participates in a block schedule and meets from 10:25 – 12:10 every other day. The class curriculum frequently includes cooperative learning groups for various hands on activities and a focus on technology and building relationships.

This student is repeating the seventh grade due to lack of participation and effort resulting in failing grades. When seen in the hallways or around school, this student is most often found by himself. His appearance and actions reflect that of a “loner”. He does not appear interested in anyone or anything around him. Neither does he appear to possess a desire to fit in with his peers. He wears his hair covering his face, wears very large clothing, keeps his head down and his voice low almost at all times. However, there are times during the class when the student is very social with his peers. This is most often observed with two other male students who are also lacking in intrinsic motivation to do well or participate in school.

On the first day on which observations were made, the teacher spent approximately fifteen minutes introducing a lesson on “translating” written words to numeric and algebraic expressions and from expressions to words. During this discussion and note taking session, the student sat quietly, intently drawing in his agenda. When randomly called upon to participate in the discussion, he was able to answer questions correctly with prompting.

After this portion of class, students were asked to divide into groups of four and given a matching game matching word phrases to expressions. A secret prize was offered for the group who had the most correct matches at the end of 20 minutes. During this game, the teacher gave several reminders and prompts to attempt to involve the student in the group. However, instead of focusing on the activity, the student (and the rest of the group) was continually off task. After several failed attempts to refocus the group, the teacher split the group into two teams of two

students. At this point, the student appeared to be completely off task, so, the teacher worked with the group to offer another explanation of the game, address questions, and assist by demonstrating an example of a match. At this point, the student was finally observed actively participating in the activity long enough to create two matches. He was then quickly distracted by his partner. The teacher revisited the group and set a specific amount of matches to be complete before they could leave the class for lunch. After this, there were no further problems with motivation. The student continued working on the given task cooperatively with his partner.

I will begin the assessment by considering each portion of the TARGET framework, thus beginning with a discussion of the tasks in the classroom. The tasks and activities presented in the class were varied to meet the needs of various learners. The block schedule allows for a variety of teaching methods to be utilized for a single topic. On this day, the teacher used a power point presentation for note taking purposes, an ELMO to prompt a class discussion about examples, a cooperative group activity involving matching, and individual work time dedicated to completing homework and clarifying questions. This variety of tasks offers students the opportunity to utilize their strengths in their individual “comfort zones”, as well as, reinforce their weaknesses during new and different activities.

The teacher incorporated student ideas and input into the topic of the lesson through a class wide discussion about translation. During this discussion, each student was given the opportunity to share an experience in which they translated from one “language” to another. In addition, students were given the opportunity to choose their own groups in which to complete the cooperative learning activity involving matching. This transfer of authority, along with the

opportunity for students to recall personal experiences related to the topic, serves as a motivator by giving ownership of the lesson.

By offering a prize only to the group who matched the most, the teacher was only recognizing those students at the top of the class during this particular lesson. Perhaps a better strategy is to ask students to record how many correct responses they achieved after ten minutes. Then offer the prize to the group that made the most progress during a second attempt completed with the help of a resource tool (i.e. a chart from the notes identifying key words and phrases for each mathematical operation). Offering a prize for this activity would be a more sound practice for motivating students because it is not recognizing only the top students, but the students who were able to make the most progress.

Cooperative learning activities are a part of the daily routine in this classroom. Students work in varying learning groups during each class period. The groups are created randomly by the teacher, according to student choice, heterogeneously, and homogeneously based upon the lesson topic and specific activity. The variance of these groups allows for greater student participation and a focus on community rather than competition.

The learning activities mentioned in the above paragraphs are a re-teaching effort on the part of the teacher. The discussion and game were utilized to readdress a topic that was previously covered, but not mastered by a majority of students. The practice of re-teaching and redoing to learn and master are common practice in the classroom and school. Students are encouraged and sometimes required to analyze assessment efforts in order to gain an understanding of what topics need more attention. In addition, group presentations, oral discussions, and projects are used in conjunction with traditional assessment methods such as homework, quizzes, and tests.

As stated earlier, the class functions on a block schedule that allows for 105 consecutive minutes of instruction every other day. This format allows for extended classroom activities and the opportunity for individual practice (homework) during off days. The extended class time also offers more time for students to complete tasks under the guidance of the teacher. In addition to the extended class time, students are encouraged to come in during lunch to work on assignments, form study groups, and get extra help. Extending the instructional time and offering time outside of class improves the chances that students will complete tasks with understanding.

After looking at the framework, it appears that much is being done with regards to lesson presentation and curriculum to motivate a variety of learners. However, there are areas that are not being utilized to their fullest capacities. For example, the use of rewards could cause an increase in motivation for a large number of students or a select number of students. By changing the requirements for rewards, the teacher can increase the number of students effected by the reward. In addition, I think there could be more individual attention devoted to the student. The needs of this particular student who is struggling with motivation should be considered when developing classroom activities, individual assignments, and especially, cooperative learning groups and assessment techniques. Recognizing the needs of this student can increase the student's motivation. In other words, grouping this student with those who will not distract him from the task and offering varied assessments will give the student a higher chance at success. In addition, getting to know the student outside of class will help in including the interests of the student. The student will be more likely to participate in an activity in which he is already interested or knowledgeable. However, it must be made clear that the need to recognize this student's needs and the need to recognize the needs of the 29 other students are

not mutually exclusive. The lessons and activities should be created with the interests of those who are struggling in mind, and, with a focus on leading all to mastery of the topic.