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Creating A Flipped Elementary EI Classroom That Is Effective And Engaging For Students

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CREATING A FLIPPED ELEMENTARY EL CLASSROOM THAT IS EFFECTIVE AND
ENGAGING FOR STUDENTS

by

Laura M. (Screnock) Brueggeman

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master
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Facilitator: Dr. Jennifer Carlson
Content Reviewer: Dr. Heather Linville
Peer Reviewer: Laura Koll

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

Most teachers, by nature, are reflective people. I am constantly scrutinizing my own lessons and thinking about ways to improve a particular lesson or my practice in general. Teachers are creative people who want students to have the same love of learning that paved the way to our profession. We live for the days when the lightbulb turns on in our students and they get it; their excitement fuels our excitement even more. The journey to my research question began during my routine reflection of my teaching practice and how I could improve to better serve my students. While I would not know it at the time, some good would come out of the global Covid-19 pandemic that forced me to again reflect on my personal teaching practice and the future of education as a whole. My reflection manifested into my burning question and thus my research question: *How does an EL (English Learner) teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?*

Rationale

The spring of the 2019-20 school year was a rough one for many educators as well as myself. I found that reaching my EL students virtually was difficult and their engagement with the learning that was provided was not consistent or completed to the level they had shown while school was still in-building. Prior to the school closures, I had found myself bored with the way I was teaching (which also meant my students were bored). Meanwhile, my school district was directing us to explore blended learning. I had probably heard of the term but was not familiar with it until I had completed some professional development on the topic. At that point, I knew

that I wanted to incorporate more student choice in my classroom and take on the role of a facilitator rather than a lecturer when teaching my students. After a few Google Scholar searches, I came across the idea of a flipped classroom and liked the idea but was unable to find a lot of examples of educators who had flipped an elementary EL classroom. There were some research studies concerning higher education educators flipping their classrooms to engage and teach EFL (English as a Foreign Language), but not much on elementary. I decided that I wanted to explore how I, as an EL teacher, could create an elementary flipped classroom that would be effective and engaging for my students.

After I discovered the teaching strategy I wanted to explore, I assessed my current teaching environment and what I thought I would need. Most grade levels throughout my district had moved to 1-to-1 devices so technology was not a hurdle. I was still processing the idea when Covid-19 caused schools in my state to shut-down. After struggling through the last weeks of virtual school, I knew that flipping my classroom was what I would do to not only engage my students in a virtual world, but also to feel comfortable in doing so in order to keep my students moving forward with their academic progress. This project is the development of flipped classroom curriculum in an EL classroom.

Through my research, I first identified why a flipped classroom works so well with EL students and why it is a good instructional strategy. I believe that a flipped classroom model that is student-centered, will offer my students choice in their learning that will help them take ownership of their learning. It also offers an environment where they can feel safe in practicing their oral language skills when discussing academic topics with language that doesn't always make sense. As I learned more about the hows of flipping a classroom, the picture in my head of what my classroom could look like became clearer and clearer. I had to think creatively about

how I could tweak the environment when I only have my students in small groups for a fairly short amount of time, about 30 minutes, and what those minutes would look like. I knew that I couldn't be driving the discussion, but guiding the discussion when the students got stuck. For this capstone project I am creating a unit of instruction with four weeks of flipped lessons to engage my EL students in academic content and language.

The purpose of reflection is to critique your own work and make changes for the better. My reflection on my teaching practice brought me to my research question that, I hope, will ultimately lead to a better and more productive learning environment for my EL students through a sound instructional strategy. Chapter Two specifically looks at what the literature says about the benefits and the how of creating a flipped classroom. In Chapter Three, I discuss the specifics of the project including the methodology and a timeline for completion. Chapter Four is my reflection on the process of creating my unit of instruction.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

Research Question: How does an EL (English Learner) teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?

Introduction

The concept of a flipped classroom may not necessarily be something new to the education world, but with recent global health conditions, it has become a necessary tool in a teacher's toolbox. The applications of flipped classrooms have mostly been seen in mainstream classrooms as well as within many higher education settings. As teachers look at providing all instruction online, it is important to consider how special services, such as language for English Learners, will look and function to maintain high levels of engagement thus high levels of academic achievement. Specifically, this project looks to answer: *How does an EL teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?* My project will look at how an elementary classroom that provides special services (language to EL students) looks when the classroom is not the students' full time placement and small group time needs to be used efficiently.

In this chapter, I discuss the specific elements of a flipped classroom, three different online Learning Management Systems (LMS), what classroom/behavior management considerations are necessary, the most effective ways to engage and motivate EL students, and how language considerations are woven into each topic to create an effective and engaging digital learning environment for students. This information may help to guide EL teachers in creating an environment where the EL students are actively engaged with learning tools that

allow them to be comfortable learning the curriculum instead of being intimidated by technology and thus not performing to their full potential.

Elements of a Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom came out of work done by two Colorado teachers, Bergmann and Sams. In 2007, they began by creating content videos for students who were out of school due to illness and that turned into having the videos created for everyone which they called pre-broadcasting (Bergmann & Sams, 2015). In the process they discovered that what started as a way to ensure students were not falling behind, turned out to be a style of instruction that led to gains in student achievement. While Bergmann and Sams were using this idea in the middle/high school level and labeled it flipped learning, work was already being done in higher education with the work of Lage, Platt, and Treglia. Lage, Platt, and Treglia (2000) found that inverting, or flipping, a classroom implemented a teaching strategy that engaged learners from many different learning styles; thus, more students were engaged than would be in a traditional lecture format.

The idea of a flipped classroom is one of many strategies used and discussed under a larger umbrella of blended learning (Christensen Institute, 2020). Blended learning takes place when parts of instruction are online and parts of instruction happen face-to-face in a classroom (Christensen Institute, 2020). Within a blended learning environment, there are multiple strategies that can incorporate both the technology component and the face-to-face component. In a flipped classroom, the time used with in-person learning is structured differently. In a traditional approach, the teacher teaches the lesson and then the students complete an assignment. In the flipped classroom, the students access the content individually in a digital format and then class time is used for guided practice, projects, or small group work. In other words, students interact with new material as homework first and then class time is used to

discuss and practice the new material (Bergmann & Sams, 2015). This reversal and shift of time allows the teacher to use more hands-on learning that is differentiated and personalized as well as maximizes the often short amount of small group learning time available in the EL classroom (Roehle, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). In an EL classroom, this means that the teacher can create more learner-centered activities that meet the academic standards at the language level of each student (Roehle, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). The flipped classroom model allows the students to move at their own pace and enables them to apply their knowledge in hands-on ways to enhance their language learning. With this model, the attention is taken off of the teacher doing all of the talking and allows the students to take charge orally and practice their language. The classroom time would then be used for more questions and peer-to-peer interactions versus only teacher-student interactions (Roehle, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013).

While it may seem simple to flip a classroom, it would be beneficial for a teacher to have a model that helps to define what practices to put into place and guide the design of the flipped classroom. One such model was developed by Goodyear (2005) and proposes four layers in the pedagogical framework.

Table 1. A flipped learning design mapped to Goodyear's (2005) framework (Jenkins et al., 2017, p. 67)

Goodyear's Framework	Flipped Learning Approach
Pedagogical philosophy	An engaged community of learners
High-level pedagogy	Active, experiential learning, community of inquiring framework (Garrison, Anderson, & Archer, 2010)
Pedagogical strategy	Flipped learning design
Pedagogical tactics	Activities inside and outside the classroom

Goodyear's framework encompassed pedagogical philosophy, high-level pedagogy, pedagogical strategy, and pedagogical tactics. A similar framework that mirrors Goodyear, refers to the four pillars of F-L-I-P (Trach, 2020). *F-Flexible Learning Environment* is done when the teacher replaces the traditional rows of desks for flexible seating that could include mats on the floor, high-top tables, bean bag chairs, etc. The seating should be flexible as well as the mode for work that allows for students to work individually or within small groups. Timing is another factor that should be flexible. Students need the time to be able to explore any given topic to the extent that they need to understand that topic. *L-Learning Culture* for a flipped classroom takes the teacher out of the center of learning and puts the students in charge. The students are able to decide what pace and learning style works best for them, and the teacher is there for guidance.

I-Intentional Content requires the teacher to maximize classroom time for students to engage with the content by prioritizing lessons. The teacher also needs to constantly find multiple ways for the students to continue to work independently through the content.

P-Professional Educator in the flipped classroom is in constant "motion" as he/she monitors each student to know when any given student needs help and why the student needs help.

Although the teacher is not as visible, the teacher still plays a vital role in being responsive to student needs and encouraging the students through the exploration of the content. While these four pillars are not specific to ELs, they do cover strategies that help EL teachers plan lessons that aid EL students learn content across content areas.

One strategy that fits into the Learning Culture is to make lessons auditory, visual, and kinesthetic (Haynes, 2014). This can easily be achieved through graphic organizers to help organize thoughts, introductory videos that show how something is done, and try hands on activities through which students discover the content. The students may not be able to initially

explain their understanding in English, but they are able to process and make sense of the information in their native language. Another useful strategy is the use of cooperative learning to help to achieve flexibility in the students' mode for learning (Haynes, 2014). Cooperative learning strategies allow the EL students to use the academic vocabulary in a low-pressure environment amongst their peers. The small group learning allows each student to have a job to ensure their participation within the content that fits with the student's language level while still providing the comprehensible input (Krashen, 1981) to further develop their language skills.

After considering the why and some of the overarching hows, it is important to consider the technology tools that will drive the specific hows to turning the flipped classroom and learning into active engagement for the students. One of the first and most important group tools to consider is how the teacher will create multimedia content for the students to first engage with. This content can be created via screencasting, videos, and links for the students to explore elsewhere on the internet (Thakare, 2018). When an EL teacher is creating or referring EL students to multimedia content, it will be important that the students' native languages are used when possible to aid in the transfer of vocabulary knowledge from the student's native language to the target language (Proctor, August, Carlo, & Snow, 2006). Translations by native speakers should be used when possible to maintain the meaning of the information being presented and when not possible, subtitles could also be used; this is to help the learner transfer their knowledge from their native language to the target language (Khan, 2016). While the goal is for the students to use the academic language in English, the students need a starting point and often having some of the content in the native language is helpful. For example, maybe part of the video lesson is a reading of a story. Instead of just having the video/audio of the English version,

find a video or audio of the same story in their native language and then also have the English version.

Online Learning Management System

Choosing the right Learning Management System (LMS) could make or break the success of the flipped classroom. There are multiple factors to take into account when choosing an LMS and what works best will depend on the teacher's goals and the age group of the students. The most appropriate LMS will be one that is organized, supportive, creative/rigorous, connected/collaborative, and engaging (Modern Teacher, n.d.). While the number of LMS's available to districts is numerous, I will focus on three common platforms for the purpose of this chapter.

Schoology. This platform is designed by Powerschool for K-12 students to be engaged with learning. The platform has been in existence for 10 years and proclaims that it has more than 20 million users, according to their official website (Schoology, n.d.). The website defines Schoology as "a learning management system, (LMS) that has all the tools your institution needs to create engaging content, design lessons, and assess student understanding." The features of the platform are broken down into six categories: instructional tools, communication and collaboration, mobile app, data, analytics, and personalized learning; interoperability, and assessment management. The instructional tools include embedding content from other web tools (such as Google Drive, Youtube, etc.) as well as the ability to differentiate instruction for individual students or groups, grade student work and provide either written or video feedback, and track student engagement and performance. Schoology makes it easy for students to connect with other students and their teachers as well as connecting teachers and families through chats, messages, and mobile notifications. The mobile app makes it possible for the students and

teachers to take their work with them anywhere on multiple supported devices. The data that is mined from the grading tools tracks the students' progress in a visually easy to read format.

	AP 1.7	AP 2.1	AP 1.3.4	AP 2.3	AP 3.1
Student Averages	2.98	3.25	3.25		2.82
Bien, Katie	3.5	3	3.5		1
Bien, Ken	3	4.5	3.5		3
Crow, Glen	3.5	3.5	3.5		3
Dayal, Arnav	4	4	4	3	3
Frazier, Donald	2	3.5	2.5	4	3
Gonzalez, Danny	3.3	2.8	3.3	2	4
Hernandez, George	2	3	3	3	3
King, Teresa	3.5	2.5	3.5	3	2
Reeler, Claud	3.5	3.5	4	3	2
Walker, Clark	1.5	2	2	2	3
Winters, Yvon	3	3.5	3	3	4

<https://www.seesaw.com/k-12/data-analytics-personalized-learning>

Seesaw. “Our mission is to create an environment where students are inspired to be their best.” (Seesaw, n.d.). The official website also goes on to say that the students’ engagement increases when the students are offered a choice, the work feels meaningful to the students, and when students are able to see their own progress. Seesaw surveyed all of the administrators that use Seesaw for Schools and found that 93% of administrators reported that Seesaw increased parental engagement, demonstrated student growth and progress, and effectively used technology and 92% of teachers reported that the students were more engaged in their learning and took more ownership of their individual work (Seesaw, n.d.).”

Seesaw is a unique LMS in that it creates a portfolio of all of the students' work created and completed along the way from Kindergarten to a student’s senior year in high school. It also

works as a tool to connect families to their students' work and what is happening in their learning environment. Seesaw has the ability to translate any text written in Seesaw into 55 languages to keep communication between home and school going despite a language barrier (Seesaw, n.d.) Student's work is easily organized into folders and can then be shared with students, teachers, and families. It has bits of social media relevance in that, with teacher approval, student work can be published for all of the class to see and comment on. Students have the ability to critique each other's work under the eye of the teacher. When creating work, students have various tools at their disposal. They have the ability to create using videos, audio recordings, photos, drawings, text, and links.

As a teacher who has used only Seesaw personally, creating and assigning using Seesaw is easy and effective. Written directions can be created along with audio directions along with feedback. I was able to use this platform during the COVID-19 school closures and found it extremely useful for my EL students, not only to practice reading my feedback, but also to hear it. They were also able to comment back using the same feature and felt it was easier for them to convey their ideas and much less time consuming than typing everything out. The lessons can be linked to a Common Core Standard that can then be used to track student progress toward a standard. The platform also makes differentiation easier. A teacher has the ability to assign certain tasks to certain students who may need more practice or a different activity altogether that meets their language needs to successfully make progress towards a standard. With the different media options that Seesaw has to offer, EL students have a non-threatening, safe space to practice their speaking and listening skills with appropriate teacher feedback and the option to try again if they did not get it the first time. They also have the ability to listen for their own

mistakes before submitting work, giving them time to reflect on their own work and make corrections if needed.

Google Classroom. “A free and easy tool helping educators efficiently manage and assess progress, while enhancing connections with learners from school, from home, or on the go.” (Google, n.d.). While technically not an LMS by itself, Google classroom has a range of features that allow it to function like an LMS (McGinnis, 2020). Google Classroom is another feature in the G Suite for Education that is free and integrates the other Google services (Gmail, Google Docs, Google Calendar, etc.) into an online learning environment. Like Schoology, Google Classroom is strong in its ability to organize, streamline, and track student work without having separate systems for grading, student progress, attendance, etc. Teachers can easily create different classes for different groups or sections that they teach. Students can either be added by the teacher or add themselves using a class code that is created by Google Classroom. In each class, the teacher decides if the students are allowed to comment on the various things posted (i.e. announcements, assignments,) or if they are only allowed to post. With its integration of other services, for example, an assignment with a due date will automatically show up on the class Google Calendar for students to see (McGinnis, 2020). Assignments can be created, assigned, and then commented on by the teacher individually to the student. Google Forms can be used to create quizzes that are automatically graded as the students submit them giving them immediate feedback. With the ability to create everything digitally, nothing gets lost or “eaten by the dog”. The work done by the students is saved in Google Drive and easy to submit for grading; students no longer have to keep track of various notebooks/folders that contain their work for their different classes. This allows the teachers to share materials back and forth in the digital world versus paper copies.

Classroom/Behavior Management Considerations

If the classroom is not managed to be an environment where learning is the focus, the content that is being taught will not reach all students (Marzano, Marzano, & Pickering, 2003). With the exception of independent learning via technology as the focal point in a flipped classroom, it is important for the teacher to be prepared with the types of classroom behavior that will likely come up. Some considerations could include anything and everything from the lack of internet or a device to keeping students motivated and on-task.

When we think of a traditional elementary classroom, we imagine a bright room with neat rows of desks with a teacher up in front teaching and no other noise. In a flipped classroom, not only will you not see rows of desks or a teacher up in front teaching, but you will hear noise and lots of noise. If you listen close enough, you will hear that the noise is that of the students collaborating and talking about the content. Noise level is one area of classroom/behavior management that is eliminated (Bergmann, 2014). In a traditional classroom, teachers are often trying to manage the noise level to whispers or nothing at all and sometimes struggle with this in regards to certain students. In the flipped classroom, discussion and collaboration is desired and along with that comes an increase in noise level (Bergmann, 2014). The increase in noise level is an outward manifestation of students taking charge of their learning and also being actively engaged and involved. On the other hand, it is also important to note that for some students, noise level can be an issue. It may be necessary to create a separate learning space with headphones for students to have the choice to work independently and to have a chance to think and process before participating in collaborative work (Bergmann, 2016). For EL students, this quiet time and space for processing is important not only to their application of the content, but also has an impact on their affective filters (Krashen, 1982). Now that the teacher is not

delivering direct instruction, the teacher needs to reconstruct how their time is spent. The teachers' time is now spent interacting with students as they ask questions or explain/show their understanding (Roehle, Reddy, & Shannon, 2013). The teacher can now differentiate amongst the different collaborative groups; challenging one group while clarifying with another.

Before the wonderful noise of learning can take place, the students have to do their part watching and/or interacting with the videos the teacher has created. For this part, some of the responsibility falls onto the teacher to create something that enhances the viewer's experience and forces them to be active participants versus passive viewers (Bergmann & Sams, 2013). The teacher sets up a way for the students to interact with the video by pausing to reflect, predict, jot down "I wonder..." (Bergmann, 2014). There are programs that allow teachers to imbed this such as Nearpod, Edpuzzle, eduCanon, and Zaption. Quizzes and/or exit tickets could be created using Google Form or the quizzing feature in your LMS. Keeping the content videos short is another way to help students stay on task. A good rule of thumb is that the video created or shared should be one to one and half minutes per grade level (Bergmann, 2014); short, concise, and direct. A common question or problem that may present itself and need to be addressed is the procedure for students when they do not come to class prepared. This problem exists for classroom management whether the classroom is traditional or flipped. Each teacher will have their own plan, for example, having the natural consequence that instead of engaging in their collaborative groups right away, they may have to use some classroom time to view the content before they join their peers (Bergmann, 2014).

Access to the technology can be a huge hurdle for some students. For many students and families, the only device they have available is a mobile device and there may not be enough data at home (Lo & Hew, 2017). Overcoming this barrier can be a challenge for the teacher if the

district is not set-up for online learning. Providing students with individual devices, such as iPads or Chromebooks, would ensure that all students have quality devices that are capable of viewing and interacting with the LMS and other media sources such as videos. Another issue can be a reliable internet connection. That barrier could be overcome by allowing students and families to check-out hotspots from the district and/or creating more wifi accessible options such as in school parking lots or common spaces.

Effective Motivation and Engagement Strategies

Motivation is an essential component of learning. This is especially true for ELs as they need to have the language skills to be able to be successful in their English learning environment. Within the classroom, the teacher plays an important role in that motivation (Tanaka, 2005). In a flipped classroom, the teacher is tasked to create the digital lesson, but then to also motivate the students to engage with that material as well as with the discussion and hands-on learning that takes place in the classroom. The first way to ensure that the material is engaging and the students are motivated is to ensure that the level of work is matched to the students' language abilities (Kottler & Kottler, 2002). The rule of comprehensible input of $i + 1$ in language acquisition should be followed to avoid frustration while still presenting a challenge that is within reach (Krashen, 1981). A student should be challenged academically in their zone of proximal development (Vigotsky, 1978, 1986) and the role of the teacher is to provide scaffolding and support to push the student into that zone for optimal learning and eventually into mastery of a skill with independence (Tomlinson, et. al., 2003). The students' interests should also be taken into account when the teacher is planning out a lesson. Student interest has been found in multiple studies to have a positive impact on learning (Hébert, 1993; Renninger, 1990, 1998; Tobias, 1994), to enhance students' motivation, productivity, and achievement

(Amabile, 1996; Torrance, 1995); and to add to the students' sense of competence and self-determination (Csikszentmihalyi et al., 1993; Fulk & Montgomery-Grymes, 1994; Vallerand, Gagné, Senecal, & Pelletier, 1994; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990).

Conclusion

A flipped classroom as an alternative teaching method to traditional lectures has become a viable option for teachers since learning in a digital environment has been a forced reality facing many educators across the country. Keeping students engaged and progressing through the curriculum is at the forefront of every teacher's thoughts. EL students also have to overcome the challenge of demonstrating their language abilities through a computer screen. This chapter has pointed out the specific elements of a flipped classroom with considerations for behavior management, LMS, the impact of engagement and motivation on learning, and what considerations need to be made when working with students acquiring a second language.

In Chapter Three, I will describe the methods and strategies I will use to develop a curriculum that utilizes a flipped classroom approach to teaching and learning in an elementary EL classroom. This curriculum will use the benefits of a flipped classroom to engage EL students actively in their learning and to allow those students to demonstrate their language abilities to their full potential.

CHAPTER THREE

Project Description

Overview

The global Covid-19 pandemic has brought educators to a new frontier beyond most of their experience. Teachers across the globe are faced with having to teach their students and have them master skills through a virtual world. For some, they will start the school year in-building with the looming reality that they could have to teach virtually with little to no warning, while others will start teaching virtually. This reality has many teachers figuring out how to accomplish this monumental task, myself included. In reflecting about virtual learning in the previous school year and planning for this school year, I was faced with a question: *How does an EL (English learner) teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?* My rationale for selecting this project was the result of my EL students struggling with virtual learning. These students were struggling to demonstrate their knowledge of the content in the virtual environment and often remained silent during Zoom instruction with their classroom teachers. This led to many classroom teachers contacting me with concerns about the progress of their EL students when the students were not producing language or artifacts to demonstrate their learning. I wanted to find a way to create more opportunities for the EL students to practice their oral language with academic content to boost their self-confidence in the knowledge of a skill or topic.

In order to create more opportunities for the EL students to practice their oral academic language, I needed a different approach to how I was teaching. My EL classroom was very teacher-centered and it needed to be student-centered where the discussions were between the

students and not with the teacher. In Chapter 2, I explored and synthesized the information that is available on this topic and I felt like I was equipped with the knowledge to create and work in a flipped learning environment. By creating a flipped classroom model of teaching and learning, the EL teacher can ensure that the students are learning and utilizing academic language to the student's potential while also creating opportunities for students to challenge themselves and move beyond the language they are comfortable with.

This model is for third grade EL students that are provided language support from an EL teacher in a small pull-out group setting of thirty minutes per session. This model can be used to replace the traditional, lecture style of teaching and is intended to encourage and enhance student discussion. The curriculum will focus on student discussion of the academic content as well as the students' understanding of the content. Students will utilize the discussions to practice their oral language as well as talk through misconceptions of the content.

The purpose of creating the unit of instruction is to offer other EL teachers examples of what a flipped classroom can look like. In speaking with other EL teachers, they also had trouble keeping their EL students engaged and progressing during the pandemic when all virtual learning was required. This unit would allow the teachers and students to become more comfortable with a digital learning environment and, should instruction have to again move to all digital, both teachers and students would be prepared to continue the high levels of learning that occurred during face-to-face learning.

In the sections to follow, I describe the research that supports the instructional strategies I have chosen for this unit of instruction, the participants and setting for this curriculum, and a model that I used to develop a flipped curriculum.

Curriculum Framework

The two frameworks that help teachers define what practices to put into place in a flipped classroom were the flipped learning approach mapped to Goodyear's pedagogical framework (Jenkins et al., 2017) and the four pillars of F-L-I-P (Trach, 2020). After learning about these two frameworks, I determined that I would write my unit of instruction following the flipped learning approach mapped to Goodyear's pedagogical framework (Goodyear, 2005) that included: an engaged group of learners, active learning, flipped learning design with activities inside and outside of the classroom. My unit of instruction followed the Taba Model of curriculum (Taba, 1962). Through this model of curriculum I identified a need that my students had, specified objectives to meet that need, matched the content to the objectives, sequenced the lessons appropriately, and chose to use the flipped classroom model to engage my students with the content.

Flipped learning offers students the opportunity to learn that takes advantage of the information and technology that is prevalent in today's society (Arnold-Garza, 2014). In the flipped classroom model, students interact with new material ahead of class time as a homework activity and then class time is used to discuss and practice the new material (Bergmann & Sams, 2015). The use of class time for discussion allows EL students to practice using their oral language. Often in their mainstream classroom, the EL students do not feel confident in answering questions or offering explanations for content. In the EL classroom, I witness the same students willing to discuss and ask questions, but my instruction does not always encourage discussion between students. In order for the classroom teacher to use formative assessment to gauge student learning, the students have to demonstrate their understanding through discussions and explanations. Instead of following a traditional model of teaching where the teacher lectures,

following Goodyear's pedagogical framework through the flipped classroom allows the students to be actively engaged with each other and the content.

There are various EL instructional models, programs, and strategies an EL teacher can utilize when planning instruction. The decision about what content to teach within a curriculum is dependent on the instructional program, the teacher, and the content and language standards used by the state. In the state of Wisconsin, EL teachers have the WIDA ELD (English Language Development) Standards Framework as a foundation for curriculum and Can Do Descriptors that describe the skills that language learners can do throughout the stages of language development. EL teachers use these tools to direct and drive language instruction as well as assess the students' language development. These tools are also easily used and aligned to the Common Core Standards that Wisconsin has adopted. Having the ELD Standards Framework and Can Do Descriptors allows for EL teachers the flexibility to explore resources that best meet the needs of their students. The purpose of the unit I designed was to focus on the WIDA ELD Standards and Common Core Standards (third grade) that addressed the student's ability to ask and answer questions in academic conversations and to assess their comprehension of a literature or informational text.

Participants and Setting

The flipped classroom unit of instruction is designed for third grade EL students who are part of the educational system in the state of Wisconsin. Specifically, this unit is planned for future implementation for third grade EL students in a large rural elementary school of around six hundred students that receive EL support through small group pull-out instruction for twice a week for 30 minutes. The EL population of this first through fourth grade elementary school represents 8% of the total student population. Within the school population, over 50% of the

students qualify for free or reduced lunch. When it comes to the staffing of the EL department, there are two certified EL teachers and two bilingual Spanish/English paraprofessionals within the building. The district has met their technology goal of providing 1-to-1 student devices PreK-12; all students at the elementary school have access to their own school-issued iPads. The district has also adopted two different LMS based on grade level. PreK through fourth grade students utilize Seesaw while fifth through twelfth grade students utilize Schoology. Internet access for some district families has been a barrier which led to the district's purchase of numerous Wi-Fi hotspots that families can check-out to ensure their students have internet access at home. Incorporating a flipped classroom model means that access to technology is essential for my participants.

Project Description

The unit I have developed is framed for 20 school days and has 10 unique lessons addressing the language skill of asking and answering questions; a final project is included. Each small group session is planned to be 30 minutes in length including transition time to and from EL classroom, however, the duration of each lesson is flexible depending on the needs of the students and time constraints. Eight of the lessons are flipped and require the students to watch a flipped instructional video at home and complete a short activity. The instructional videos last no longer than 8 minutes to help the students focus and break the concepts up into smaller chunks of information.

After viewing the lesson the previous day during a work time or break in classroom instruction at school or the previous evening at home, students come to class with a basic understanding of the concepts. They use their class time to participate in discussions about the concepts. These discussions include teaching each other about what they learned, talking out

misconceptions, and reviewing material from the day before. The teacher’s role in the discussions is to keep the discussion going if there is a lull in conversation, probe students to explain their thinking, and clarify understanding if the students themselves are not able to clarify. Their class time is also used to complete partner activities that include creating anchor charts for reference as they learn more about the concepts.

The unit ends with a final project that requires the students to apply their knowledge of asking and answering questions by creating a check for understanding activity for a peer. The final project is an assessment to help the teacher determine if students are ready to continue on to the next concept or if they need more opportunities to practice.

This unit addresses the following Common Core Standards (Common Core, 2021) and WIDA ELD Standards (WIDA, 2020) for third grade:

English Language Arts Standards, Speaking & Listening Grade 3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.C Ask questions to check understanding of information presented, stay on topic, and link their comments to the remarks of others.
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.3.1.D Explain their own ideas and understanding in light of the discussion.

English Language Arts Standards, Reading: Literature Grade 3
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.3.1 Literature Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

English Language Arts Standards, Reading: Informational Text Grade 3
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CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.3.1 Informational Text

Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for the answers.

WIDA ELD Standards, Social and Instructional Language Grades 2-3
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ELD-SI.K-3.Narrate

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about what others have shared |
|---|

ELD-SI.K-3.Argue

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask questions about others' opinions |
|--|

In following the Taba Model of curriculum, I have identified an academic need for my students, set specific objectives, matched content to the objective and sequenced the lessons appropriately. The last component of the Taba Model is to engage students with the content through instructional strategies. For the instructional strategy of a flipped classroom, I created a flipped instructional video (using Loom and Seesaw as digital recording tools) for students to watch at home or at school before EL small group class time. The videos are shared with students through their classroom Seesaw accounts with links to the videos. During class time, students discuss the questioning topics covered in the videos with their peers and practice using the asking and answering question skills in small or whole groups.

The instructional strategies incorporated into the flipped video lessons and activities help students increase their comfort with having discussions about academic content and provide classroom teachers with more evidence of a student's mastery of a given skill or topic.

Assessment

In an attempt to measure the effectiveness of a flipped classroom model, I will analyze the information of the summative assessment as well as formative assessments throughout the unit in regards to the students' participation in class discussions and interaction with the flipped-learning videos and activities. The cumulative project allows the students to demonstrate their ability to ask and answer questions that are both supported directly by the text (text-dependent questions) and indirectly by the text (inferential questions). The assessment is summative to determine if students have met the standards or if more time needs to be spent practicing asking and answering questions. A high level of engagement in discussions, measured by how often the students contribute to discussion, and interactions with the flipped-learning videos and activities indicate the effectiveness of this flipped classroom unit.

Summary

In Chapter Three, I discussed the rationale for the project, participants, curriculum model, and format of the curriculum developed to answer the research question, *How does an EL (English Learner) teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?* After analyzing the research from Chapter Two, I concluded that the curriculum proposed was based on a flipped classroom model to focus on student-to-student learning through discussions and collaboration. This unit addressed Common Core State Standards adopted by Wisconsin, WIDA ELD standards, and will span about 20 days of instruction. The unit was designed using the Taba Model of curriculum design. The unit design considered need, objectives, organization, and finally, the flipped learning videos and activities to engage the students with the content (Taba, 1962).

Chapter Four discussed my reflection on the process of creating the curriculum. My reflection includes what I learned from being a researcher, how the process of creating this curriculum changed how I plan instruction, and to refocus my instruction to become a more effective educator.

CHAPTER FOUR

Conclusion

Introduction

In the initial stages of my capstone project journey, I was struggling with how to help my EL students excel in a virtual learning environment. I selected my project to practice and enhance learning through a digital, virtual learning environment. At first I felt that my project was selfish as I was also looking to change the way I was teaching because it had become very stagnant and dull. I was teaching with a traditional mindset that I was to stand at the front of the room and deliver instruction to my students sitting at their desks. I do not believe I was being effective or that my students were really engaged with the skills and topics I was teaching. With that being my initial motivation for change, I began researching different models of teaching that incorporated blended learning and how that could look in my EL classroom. Under that umbrella I focused specifically on flipped learning and the elements of a flipped classroom to execute in my classroom. This process has allowed me to take time to explore a new way of teaching that will modernize my instruction to enhance my student's language learning and academic use. Over time, I realized that what I thought was selfish, was an opportunity to improve the learning experience for my students.

Recap of the Literature

In order to execute this project, it was important to look at flipping a classroom from four important topics: the specific elements of a flipped classroom, the classroom and behavior management considerations, effective ways to engage and motivate my EL students, and how to incorporate the language needs of an EL student. When first deciding to flip a classroom, the teacher needs to consider their pedagogical goals and how flipping the classroom will help in

achieving those goals. Flipping the classroom requires a shift in teaching from instruction being delivered by the teacher to the students exploring the instruction on their own. This shift allows the students to be in charge of learning and with that, brings certain behavior and classroom management considerations that need a plan. The teacher must have a plan for when a student comes to class without completing the assigned activity, how flexible seating will have an impact on the noise level in the room, and how to keep the students motivated and engaged in the contact, to name a few. Keeping students motivated and engaged is extremely important to the success of students in a flipped classroom. The length of the teacher-created videos must be appropriate for the grade level of the students to keep students engaged and within their proximal zone of development in regards to comprehension. The language needs of an EL student must be taken into consideration at every step in the process of flipping a classroom. EL students need time and space to practice their language skills, they may need a quiet place to work and think, and the use of visuals can be crucial in their ability to make connections with what they already know to the new learning and how they will express those connections in a new language either orally or in writing. Using technology in a flipped classroom can also make using the student's native language easier for the teacher and extremely beneficial for the student. Finally, it is important for the teacher to create work that aligns with the language abilities of the students. If the work requires too high of a language demand, the student will not be engaged with the material and not be motivated to interact with the content.

What I Learned and Reflection

The process of researching my topic and creating my curriculum was at times extremely frustrating and never-ending, but the outcome was well worth the effort. The biggest takeaways

that will stick with me are the lack of current and relevant research, intentional use of technology, and maintaining a student-centered focus while planning.

Finding information related to a flipped classroom was relatively easy. The issue I struggled with was finding research and peer-reviewed articles that focused specifically on elementary level flipped classrooms. Information on flipping an elementary classroom for ELs was even more of a challenge. A lot of the information I did find came from educational websites and blogs of educators who had found success with flipping their classroom. The most helpful information I found about flipping a classroom was from Jonathan Bergmann and Aaron Sams (Bergmann & Sams, 2015). Their research was from creating flipped classrooms at the high school level, but the basic steps to implementation were generic enough for me to connect to my elementary EL classroom. When it came to focusing on teaching EL students through a flipped classroom model, the research I found was all based in higher education settings with adult EL learners. While much of the information was applicable in regards to the principles of second language acquisition, the expectations of an adult learner are much different than that of an elementary school student; for example, the adult learner would most likely have some literacy skills in their native language to draw from while many of my elementary EL students do not. So while I did not have a lot of specific relevant information, I did have plenty of information that was more generic in nature to elementary aged students and EL students separately.

My second take away from my capstone project process was how much work it takes to plan for intentional technology use. The simplicity of just adding technology is not that simple. In order for the technology to be a useful tool for learning versus entertainment, it is important for the educator to have their pedagogical goals in mind to ensure that the technology is helping the students to learn; it needs to be intentional and well thought out. As I was planning out each

lesson, I was constantly asking myself, “What is the purpose of using this video? What do I want the students to do with it? Are the students being passive learners or will this video help the student to be engaged with the content?” I found these questions to be extremely helpful in determining if I was planning for intentional, purposeful use of technology or was just adding the content to say it was there. I also had to find a balance between activities that were technology based and those that were not. While I could create or add video to replace my information on a topic, it could not and should not always replace the face-to-face discussions and cooperative learning that are also involved in a flipped classroom. While there are certainly ways to do those activities, for an EL student, I felt it was more beneficial to do that in person. Body language, inflection, and enunciation are not communicated through written language and so need to be practiced and observed through live interactions.

The final takeaway that has made a huge impact on my planning and teaching is how important it is to focus on student-centered learning and how easy it can be to revert back to my old way of planning. In a flipped classroom model, the teacher becomes a supporter and coach while the students take on an active role in their learning. This means that the teacher is not up front relaying the content to the students. Instead, this is done through a short video and the students complete their homework first. The students then come to class to talk with their classmates about what they have learned and discovered. The student-to-student discussions are important to allow for oral academic language practice in an environment that is less intimidating than the mainstream classroom can be. In previous years, I have struggled with how to advise mainstream teachers when they tell me a student never talks in class. I believe that this happens because they are not always sure of themselves, the teacher does not give them enough time to think, and they fear they will be ridiculed if they say it wrong. The flipped classroom model in

my EL room would mean they would get that opportunity to practice their language skills and get feedback from their peers and myself in a safe place. My role as a teacher looks a lot different in this model and the process of planning a lesson requires a different approach and mindset. While planning, I would catch myself reverting back to what I am used to and being the deliverer of information. It took more time and focus to ensure that what I was planning was student-centered and not teacher-centered. For some lessons, it was hard at first to find a way to not be in the traditional, lecture teacher position. I had to ask myself, “How can the students learn this information without me? How can I set up an activity where they learn this on their own?”. While the planning of this curriculum took longer, I think the process will become easier and quicker the more I do it and with the change in my thinking as an educator.

Implications and Limitations of Project

The biggest limitation that presented itself was the accessibility of technology at home for students. For many districts that have a low socioeconomic status, Wi-Fi for many families is a challenge due to financial struggles and/or limited availability in rural areas. Many families have a cell phone that they are able to access the internet with, but the use of that device for academic purposes is difficult. In the district I am teaching in, families are able to access Wi-Fi with hotspots that the district has provided to overcome this hurdle. With having learned so much from teaching virtually with little to no warning, districts will hopefully continue to expand their technology resources and provide tools, such as devices and Wi-Fi hotspots, to help families overcome the lack of access to technology. On the other end of the spectrum with districts and families that have easy access to technology, executing this style of teaching would be easier and the issue of students not being prepared due to technology access, would be almost non-existent. The other limitation that is extremely relevant to this style of teaching is how it could be adapted

for newcomer EL students. I designed this curriculum for students that were at English Language Proficiency Levels of 2 or higher, (specifically by the standards set by the WIDA Consortium). Students who are new to the country and the English language need specific language supports that I did not include in this curriculum. To include newcomers with this curriculum, videos would need to be made or found that are in the native language of the students. While resources are abundant in Spanish, other languages would be harder to include and/or finding a native speaker of that language that could provide voice-overs would be a challenge. The level of language contained in the written activities would require more close-type activities where the amount of language required to complete would be appropriate to the students' abilities. The content and rigor of the information would not need to change, but the demand of language would need to be modified and scaffolded.

There are two main implications that I see for this project. First, students will become more confident in their language abilities to participate in whole class academic conversations. Often, I feel like EL students are not given enough opportunities to practice their academic language. I believe this is in part from the individual student not feeling comfortable as well as the limited amount of wait time from the teacher. Using this style of teaching in a pull-out EL environment opens up class time for peer-to-peer discussions and learning from each other's misconceptions and mistakes versus the teacher lecturing the information. The students would then be able to carry over those discussion skills, and the academic language needed to participate in them, back into the mainstream classroom. Not only does this benefit the students' confidence, it allows the student to demonstrate their knowledge to the classroom teacher who in turn is able to have more evidence in determining the student's level of understanding to plan lessons and small groups accordingly. A secondary, but also important, implication of this

curriculum is increasing the level of comfort students have with technology. During virtual learning, the EL students I worked with had a difficult time completing activities through our district's chosen LMS (Learning Management System). It wasn't always that the student was not understanding the academic content, rather, they were having difficulty using the technology they had (iPad, internet, and tools within the LMS) to demonstrate their understanding. The more interactions the students have with technology as a learning tool, the more comfortable they become and the students' general knowledge of how technology works can transfer between specific learning tools to maximize their ability to use and navigate them.

Future Research Projects

This project has many potential future research projects that one could follow up with. Specifically for me, I would like to evaluate the use of this teaching model and how it impacts the individual scale score on the Speaking portion of the ACCESS for ELLs. I think the scale scores for this would increase as students are more comfortable having academic discussion and will have significantly more practice than they have in the past. Formatively, I would also be curious to track how much more students are participating in mainstream classroom academic discussions. While this is a goal and reason for writing this curriculum, it would be beneficial to have the data to support my continued use of the flipped classroom teaching model for my EL students.

Conclusion

The journey of this project came from a reflection on my teaching practice and with the question "*How does an EL (English Learner) teacher create a flipped elementary EL classroom that is effective and engaging for students?*" This question was the motivator for reflecting on the outcome of having students, and specifically my EL students, learn outside of the classroom

in a virtual environment. This question led to extensive research and time to develop a curriculum model of teaching that I feel has answered my question and will lead to positive outcomes for my EL students. The essential components of a flipped EL classroom are: short, intentional content videos, activities that enhance collaboration between students, and time and space for students to practice using academic language in conversation.

As part of this flipped curriculum, I worked to develop short and straightforward videos and activities that targeted the specific skill that I wanted students to master and demonstrate. Having the homework come first will allow class time to be used to foster student-to-student discussions and provide oral language practice that can be lacking in the mainstream classroom. Last, the skills are aligned with state academic and language standards to ensure that high expectations and high levels of learning are implemented within instruction. I believe that the developed curriculum will support the language needs of my EL students within my district as they acquire the language necessary to excel in their academics.

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