**Module 7 - Final Project**

**Philosophy of Culture and Student Engagement**

**Engagement Strategy Lesson Plan**

**Classroom Design**

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**Table of Contents**

A Personal Philosophy on Culture and Student Engagement 3 Engagement Strategies Lesson: *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds 6

Classroom Design Plan and Rationale 9

Tim Tutt’s DESIRED Classroom Layout 11

Tim Tutt’s ACTUAL Fall 2020 Classroom Layout 12

**A Personal Philosophy on Culture and Student Engagement**

Learning subject content, presenting it to students, evaluating their performance, and reporting that information to students, administrators, and parents are the *essentials* of teaching. The first thirty years of my career as a teacher has been both meaningful and impactful, both for the students and for myself. How do I come to that conclusion? My opinion comes from those many years of experience as not only a teacher, but as learner. What I have learned in my teaching career is the foundation my philosophy of what it means to be a meaningful, impactful, *effective* teacher.   
 For that, teachers must be engaging. There are five considerations that I take into account for engagement to take place:

1. *Am I making positive, meaningful connections with students?* At the very beginning of the year, I set the ground for respect stating that people need to treat others in the way they would like to be treated. I am part of that mix. Positivity and sincerity have worked for me well over the years. Even when I address a student for making poor choices, I always start and end with something positive to say to them. When students know that my care and concern for them is genuine, they have ALWAYS been more likely to engage in the classroom with more frequency.
2. *How much does equity play into my planning and decision making?* In an engagement study done by the University of Indiana in 2007, of 81,000 students surveyed across the United States, “students not in Title 1 Programs reported higher levels of engagement than students who were eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch” (Jensen, para. 3). My school has great extremes on an economic scale, as I’ve the children of the mayor of Des Moines, and the son of a former Lieutenant Governor. (The governor and a past congressman also lives withing blocks of my school.) On the other hand, I have kids who have lived in a car, a van, and temporary housing hotels. I insist on having all of my students on the same playing field. When I differentiate instruction, especially when it involves more rigor, I offer it to anyone who wants to try, not those who have been staffed in a program for “gifted” children. In my equitable world, all of my students are gifted. It is one of my biggest challenges to help students who would think otherwise to see that in themselves.
3. *While I may learn how students learn, have I learned how students* ***think****?*  Understanding how the brain works can go a long way in improving student performance. Dr. Carol Dweck, professor of psychology at Stanford University, defines two opposing concepts that frame her work on the human mindset, “fixed mindsets” and “growth mindsets”. She gives examples of both in her answers. She defines a “fixed mindset” as mindset that people have, in which they “believe their basic abilities, intelligence, and talents are fixed traits, in limited amounts. Those who have a growth mindset have learned to understand that their abilities, intelligence, and talents are not finite amounts. The amount of those traits that a person changes and grows, “through effort, good teaching, and persistence” (Morehead, 2012, paragraph 10). It is important to consider both mindsets for ALL students in planning for instruction and in evaluating student performance.
4. *What kinds of practices do I use, or can I try, to keep students engaged?* The Marzano Institute in the book *The Highly Engaged Classroom,* recommends that we plan our instruction considering four questions that students ask themselves, “How do I feel?” “Am I interested?” “Is this important?” “Can I do this?” (Marzano, et al., 2011). I also utilize elements of Daniel Pink’s motivational strategies of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. In my classroom, I use a point system, in which students are extrinsically rewarded by getting points. Those points can be used like money to purchase items or in-class privileges. However, I strongly believe in developing intrinsic motivation in my students. Like Pink, I want students to have a desire to want to do better, and take learning to the next level. I want students to become more independent in accomplishing tasks. I also want students to feel like they are a part of a community (TedTalks, 2009).
5. *How have I intentionally designed my classroom to both develop a positive culture and enhance engagement?* When I first started teaching, my classroom was set up in rows with a teacher desk in the corner. Over the years, I have adopted elements of a flexible learning environment. My room is now set up in groups that allow for collaboration. I have an open space with a large carpet where the whole class, individuals, and small groups can meet. Instead of books stored on shelves, I have a classroom library that students can access throughout the day. I have two tables where groups or individual can meet. There are also two spaces outside that I can use for an outdoor classroom, if I so choose. In a 2015 study, students in flexible learning environments in Charlottesville, Virginia’s Albemarle County Public Schools were observed to be happier, more engaged, with higher rates of participation in discussions (Minero, 2015).

These five considerations have formed a philosophy that has worked for me. I would suggest these considerations and my philosophy to any who inquire, or to colleagues I may mentor. I believe in what I have shared in this document, and look forward in applying them in my final years of teaching.

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**Engagement Strategies Lesson: *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds**

**LEARNING TARGETS** (Common Core Standards, in parentheses)

* I can ask and answer questions about a text. (2.RL.1)
* I can take part in group discussions. (2.SL.1)
* I can retell or describe details from what was read aloud or presented. (2.SL.2)
* I can demonstrate the difference between a fixed and growth mindset.

**ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS**

* What is a fixed mindset? What is a growth mindset?

**MATERIALS**

* The Dot video (YouTube)
* The Dot books
* 2 pages chart paper and marker (for teacher)
* Clipboard with class roster (for teacher observations)
* Full sheet construction paper (approx. 5” x 7”) – 1 per student
* ½ sheet plain white copy paper – 4 per student
* pencil
* index cards (7 for teacher, one for each student)
* markers or crayons
* glue stick

**INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES USED**

* Growth mindset (Carol Dweck)
* Questioning strategies (Marzano, Pickering, Heflebower)
* Incorporating physical movement (Marzano, Pickering, Heflebower)

**TIPS FOR SUCCESS**

* Study the lesson in advance to get a feel for the different activities within the lesson.
* Display the learning targets
* To help with lesson pacing, prepare the materials for the lesson early… prepare the charts, have the YouTube video ready to go, and place the other materials in a spot that is easy to access.
* Also have the clipboard ready for keeping track of participation and to take any anecdotal notes.

**LESSON/PROCEDURE (60 minutes):**

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| INTRODUCTION (5 min.): Presenting the Learning Targets   * Begin the lesson by stating the learning targets of the lesson -I can ask and answer questions about a text. (2.RL.1)   -I can take part in group discussions. (2.SL.1)  -I can demonstrate the difference between a fixed and growth mindset.   * Share the essential questions: *What is a fixed mindset? What is a growth mindset?* |
| DISCUSSION (15 min.): Fixed and Growth Mindset   * Write the word “Mindset” on the top of a chart page. Ask the class what they think it might mean. * Make a “t-chart” underneath the title, “Mindset”. Label the left column “Fixed or Closed” and label the right column “Growth or Open”. * Explain and record the two different types of mindset: fixed and growth. (May use open and closed with younger students.)   Fixed Mindset: The belief that we’re born with limits to what we can do or learn.  Growth Mindset: The belief that with practice, and effort and not giving up, we have limitless potential to learn and grow.   * Look at the chart below. Have each statement written on an index card (or post it note-NOT on the chart), with an adhesive backing. Read the statements randomly. Ask students if the statement of the card is a fixed or growth mindset statement. Then have a student attach that statement on the chart.  |  |  | | --- | --- | | Fixed or Closed Mindset | Growth or Open Mindset | | “I can’t do this.” | “I can do this!” | | “This math is too hard.” | “This math is hard, but I’m going to keep trying!” | | “I can’t make any friends.” | “I don’t have any friends…***yet***!” | | “No one here helps me.” | --- | |
| LITERATURE VIDEO (5-10 min.): *The Dot* by Peter H. Reynolds   * Hold up a copy of *The Dot*. Ask the class, “What you think this story is going to be about? * In a new page in their Reading Spiral, label the top of the page with the title, The Dot. * Tell the class “We will be watching a reading of this book on YouTube. I want you all to pay attention to the main character, Vashti. 1) Where is Vashti? 2) Who does she talk to in the story? 3) Does Vashti change from the beginning of the story to the end?” |
| LITERATURE PARTNER READ - Fluency Practice (5 minutes):   * Place students in two equally sized rows, facing each other. Give each student, or each partner, a copy of *The Dot*. * The student who wants to read first will read the book to the partner for 1-2 minutes. (Use a clock or timer.) Repeat with the partner. If there’s an odd number, then partner up with someone. Otherwise walk around and observe their fluency as they read. |
| TEACHER READ ALOUD - Questioning Strategies (20 minutes):   * Write the “5-W’s” question words on the board: *Who? What? Where? When? Why? How?* * Have student return their seats. Read the book in 4 sections 4-10, 11-17, 18-24, 26-30 * Create groups of 3 (or 2). (The groups may need to make a “6-foot triangle” or “line segment” for distancing.) Pass out the index cards, and have them put their name on one side. Assign one of these sections for a group to read. Pass out one index card to each student. Each group needs to come up with a question for the section of the book they are assigned to re-read. Write the question on the other side of the card. * After 3-5 minutes (observe groups) have a representative read the question to the class, then pick another group to come with an answer. The group will decide if the answer is correct. If not, the group can answer it for the class. Make that every group answers one question. * Use a clipboard and class spreadsheet to note individual participation in this activity with a + or -. Label this recordkeeping “Ask/Answer Questions”. |
| LESSON ASSESSMENT – Essential Question (15 minutes):   * Students return to desks for instructions * Pass out one sheet of construction paper, and two sheets of white paper. * Review the growth mindset chart from the beginning of this lesson. Then ask the first two essential questions of the lesson asking, *“What is a closed mindset? What is an open mindset?”* * On the first sheet of white paper, have each student make a simple mark with a pencil. Ask, “*If this were a piece of art, would that show an open or a closed mindset? Why?”* * On the second sheet of white paper, have students copy that mark from the first sheet (they can decide if it’s in pencil or marker). Challenge them to create a piece of art showing their own way take that fixed mark and make a piece of art that show and open or growth mindset. Ask the final essential question*, “If Vashti told you to sign it, then what would you do on this sheet to show growth?”* * On the large construction paper, students are to glue the “fixed” art on the left, and the “growth/open” art on the right side. Make sure each of the two sheets are signed. Find a space where everyone’s work can be displayed. * **ASSESSMENT RUBRIC**:   0 = no writing on either sheet  1 = one matching mark on each sheet, nothing else  2 = the “growth” and “fixed” art are on the correct side of the construction paper, with the “growth art being more elaborate.  3 = the “growth art is on the correct side and considerably more elaborate 4\* (accelerated score) = the student with a level 2-3 paper can explain their art in words, sharing what they were thinking as they made the “fixed” art, then the “growth/open” art. |

**Lesson References**:

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**Classroom Design Plan and Rationale**

**DESKS AND WHITEBOARD:** When designing the layout of my room for social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the first thing I considered is how I would arrange the desks. Half of the desks in my room are being removed, as my class will be split into two cohorts, “A” and “B”. Cohort A will meet with me on Monday and Tuesdays, Cohort B will meet on Thursdays and Fridays. Two students – one from each cohort – will share a desk. Desks will be cleaned by the custodial staff on Wednesdays and Sundays, on days between the cohort sessions when students are not present. The desks are required to be socially distanced, so there will be no groups of desks clustered together. (Normally I like to cluster desks into groups of four to allow for partner and group work.) Desks during this time are also required to face a white board, which is to be the central focal point.

**CENTRAL MEETING SPACE:** With the exception of this year, this one corner of the classroom was covered with a large rug (approx. 10’ x 18’) that could seat the entire classroom for whole-class meetings away from their desks. This has been removed due to COVID-19 concerns.

**SHELVING AND OTHER FURNITURE:**  All of my shelving and storage is around the perimeter of the room. The student library will be covered and off limits, as a shared library would allow for too many additional points of contact for possible transmission of any virus.   
  
**ALTERNATE SPACES:** Outside the door there is a 6-foot long table. It could seat 1-2 people with COVID restrictions and 1-4 students without I usually use this table for myself and another student when I need to test someone individually. Also outside the classroom door is the original entrance to the building, which is no longer used. It has a lengthy staircase that could easily seat 10-12 students with spacing. There is also a paved area in the playground that contains for sturdy plastic picnic benches. Those were acquired last year for the purpose of outdoor classroom use. It remains to be seen if I will be allowed to take my class to those areas, as the students are supposed to stay in their classrooms all day, and not come in contact with other students.  
  
**FINAL THOUGHTS ON FLEXIBLE LEARNING ENVIRONNMENTS (FLE):**  In this day of the COVID-19 pandemic and social distancing, setting up flexible learning environment can be a challenge. How can an FLE be created in a classroom, when furniture choices are limited and spacing is required?

* *Is there room to create a nook or two in a room with existing bookshelves*, as the shelves could provide a barrier for which a student could work alone.
* *Is there room for a six-foot table?* Work areas could be at both ends of the table.
* *Can outside, alternate, spaces be used,* as Ihave already mentioned in this plan?

NOTE: It also needs to be remembered that FLEs are about creating *engaging spaces*. A floor layout is only part of an effective flexible learning environment. Classroom culture can be enhanced by using engagement strategies (as can be found in *The Highly Engaged Classroom* by Bob Marzano, Debra Pickering, and Tammy Heflebower). Implementing aspects of brain research (e.g. Carol Dweck, Mindset) and motivational strategies (e.g. Daniel Pink, *Drive*) should also be considered in the creation of flexible learning environments.

**Tim Tutt’s DESIRED Classroom Layout**

Before the COVID-19 Pandemic

Second Grade – Room 123

Hanawalt Elementary School; Des Moines, IA

Class Library

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**Class Carpet: Seats 24-30**

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Cupboards

Teacher’s Desk

Class Library

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| Bench |  |  |  |

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Rocking

Chair

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Laptops

Sci. Kits

Television/Storage

Study Table

Mailboxes

Study

Table

Teacher Library

Door

Document

Camera

Interactive White Board

Indoor Recess/Math Kits

Bookshelf /Teacher Storage

APPROXIMATE ROOM DIMENSIONS - 36’ x 24’

● Student seating areas are GREEN. Teacher work areas are BLUE.

● Shelving and storage is ORANGE.

● There is also a bench outside the door in the hallway that seats 1-2, AND a table that seats 1-3.

**Tim Tutt’s ACTUAL Fall 2020 Classroom Layout**

(during the COVID-19 Pandemic)

Second Grade – Room 123

Hanawalt Elementary School; Des Moines, IA

Teacher Desk

Cupboards

Student Library (off limits to students)

Student Library (off limits)

Study

Table

Computers

Sci. Kits

Student Desks (11)

Study Table

T.V./Storage

APPROXIMATE ROOM DIMENSIONS

36’ x 24’

Student Storage

Document

Camera

Rocking

Chair

Teacher Library

Door

‘’

Indoor Recess/Math Kits

White Board/Smart Board

Shelf Storage

● Student seating areas are GREEN. Teacher work areas are BLUE.

● Shelving and storage is ORANGE. (Students cannot access items on the shelves during this time.)

● There is also a table outside the door in the hallway that seats 1-2 (2 at opposite ends of the table).

● The student seating is distanced.

● The class will consist of two “cohorts”, Cohort A (Mon.- Tue.) and Cohort B (Thu.-Fri.), both with 10-11 students. The students will share desks between the two cohorts. Desk items will be stored in their mailboxes, marked “Student Storage”.