November 17, 2014

Katy Ogloff

EDUC 450

Credo

I believe in teaching my students to be self-aware and conscious of their own learning and, almost more importantly, their misunderstandings and confusions about subject matter. As a teacher, I understand that I will be responsible for teaching 20-30 individual children, not one class, however I am only one person and knowing what every child knows at any given point is impossible. I want my students to take responsibility for their own learning by knowing when and with what subject they need help and then coming to ask for clarifications.

As a young student, I often had trouble truly knowing if what I had understood was everything that I needed to know to fully meet the expectations of my courses. I would think that I had learned the objectives but when I had to take tests, I often found out that I did not know certain things. Sometimes, these things were small parts of the exam; other times, they were larger concepts that I had not quite grasped. I do not want my students to feel this when they take one of my tests.

In order to help them, I used the “montrez-moi les pouces” technique during my short practicum, where the children show me their thumbs up, for complete comprehension, sideways, to indicate mostly comprehended, and down, to show need for further explanation. This worked for most students, however I know there were some students who gave a thumbs-up but did not understand. In these cases, I need to know where they need more explanation but if they do not know, I often do not either and so I do not know to help them. In order to give my students to come to me themselves, I stay after class so they have extra time to ask me questions if they were too embarrassed to ask in front of the class, for example.

Also, I try to model my own learning along with theirs so they know that they do not need nor should they know everything they need to right away. This also keeps me humble and reminds me that I do not know everything, especially as a new teacher. For example, I openly make mistakes when I teach; sometimes on purpose, as another method of verifying their comprehension (I will ask what is wrong with a sentence, for example), sometimes by accident. Once, I misspoke and asked them “Qui a les yeux longs et raides?” instead of “Qui a les cheveux longs et raides?” It was a great learning opportunity for both the students and me, as they corrected me which demonstrated not only their comprehension of the vocabulary but also their willingness to accept making mistakes. I feel that I could only make ‘mistakes’ on purpose if I felt most really grasped what I taught them, as I do not want to teach them something wrong and have them think it is right. I think that was a good example for them that even teachers can make mistakes and that it is perfectly alright to do so.

All of this considered I believe that my inquiry question about students’ self-evaluation and self-awareness will help me in this area of my teaching. As well, I hope that they will feel comfortable making mistakes and learning from them, as I hope to do.

On the subject of self-awareness, I know that my students are bombarded with news and information at an incredible rate. However, I have much difficulty thinking of how I will teach my students about social issues and societal problems while also teaching them French. I am in a Grade 6 Late French Immersion class so their vocabulary is very limiting and the aim of the program is to get them ready to integrate with students of Early Immersion in secondary school. My school advisor tends to spend the first term of class teaching them basic grammar and sentences. I am passionate about social awareness as much as personal awareness and I want to teach my students how to be aware of the information they encounter but I am wary of how to go about it. I wonder if I should have a certain block and do it in English or try to do it in French. I think knowing how to filter information is a very important life skill and I want to teach them accurately but I fear that doing it in French will hinder their understanding. I want there to be space in my practice for teaching social justice because it involves self- and societal awareness but I still need to consider how to go about it.