

INSTRUCTOR'S NOTE: This student submission from the Spring 2008 presentation of ENC 4260 shows the prose component of an Assignment 4 workshop presentation. Please note that this is meant only for guidance to content and format. The submission is not flawless but does provide useful tips on how to organize and present this type of information for workshop participants.

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Workshop in Classroom Management According to Robert J. Marzano

The following workshop has been designed as training for teachers to use in their daily classroom management, especially those teachers managing classes within block scheduling of 90-minute periods. It is based off of the research completed and published by Robert J. Marzano. It will primarily cover topics such as homework and practice, nonlinguistic representation, cooperative learning, along with questions and cues.

Robert J. Marzano is responsible for translating research and theory into classroom practice. He is a senior fellow at Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning (MCREL) Institute in Aurora, Colorado. He received his B.A. in English from Iona College in New York; a M.Ed. in reading/language arts from Seattle University; and a PhD. in curriculum and instruction from the University of Washington. Prior his work with MCREL, Marzano was a tenured associate professor at the University of Colorado at Denver, and a high school English teacher and development chair. He is an internationally known trainer and speaker. He has authored 18 books and more than 150 articles and chapters in books on such topics as reading and writing instruction, thinking skills, school effectiveness, restructuring, assessment, cognition, and standards implementation (Marzano 177).

Homework and Practice

Homework and practice should be assigned on a daily basis. It is no exaggeration to say that homework is a staple of U.S. education. By the time students reach the middle grades, homework has become a part of their lives. There are two common purposes for homework. The first is practice and the second is preparation or elaboration. Teachers should strive to achieve these two purposes every time homework is assigned. With this in mind there are four guidelines that can point teachers in the direction when it comes to homework assignments (60).

First, the amount of homework assigned to students should be different from elementary to middle school to high school. According to Marzano's research students should have at least 30 minutes of homework in their primary grades; 45-50 minutes in upper elementary levels; 90-120 minutes at the middle school levels; and 120-180 minutes at the high school grades. If students received this amount of homework each night they would receive the proper amount of practice associated with the school lessons (61).

The second guideline is that parent involvement in homework should be kept at a minimal. Overall the amount of parent involvement varies according to the student body being taught. However, in most cases some parent involvement should be expected. Marzano points out that the student should be completing the majority of the work. Parent involvement should stay at a level where they can know when the homework has been assigned along with the assignment's due dates. They should not help their children with the homework (63).

When it comes to assigning homework teachers should have an established homework policy –one that both students and their parents understand. This includes the average amount of homework students will receive, the penalties for not completing the assignments, and a description of the types of parent involvement that are acceptable. By implementing an

understood homework policy tensions between teachers and students, teachers and parents, and parents and children can decrease.

The third guideline is that the purpose of homework should be identified and articulated. It is common knowledge that not all homework is the same. More specifically this means that homework is assigned for different purposes, and depending on the purpose, the form of homework and the feedback provided to students will differ. With this in mind, when teachers assign homework they should clearly inform the students as to what they will be practicing by completing the homework along with what is expected of them within the assignment (63).

Finally, homework should always be commented on. Marzano's research found that the effects of homework varied greatly, depending on the feedback that the teacher provided. Whenever teachers provided responses to their students' homework the effect size increased. If students can see what they are doing correctly or incorrectly, they can learn and grow from the assigned practice (64).

Nonlinguistic Representations

Many psychologists adhere to what has been called the "dual-coding" theory of information storage. This theory suggests that knowledge is stored in two forms—a linguistic form and an imagery form. As a metaphor one might think of the linguistic mode as containing actual statements in long-term memory. The imagery mode, in contrast, is expressed as mental pictures or even physical sensations, such as smell, taste, touch, kinesthetic association, and sound (72).

This workshop is going to be focusing on the imagery mode, or in other words nonlinguistic representations. Primarily material is taught linguistically in the classroom. Teachers either talk to their students about new material or they have them read about it. This

means that children are left to their own devices to generate nonlinguistic representations. However, when teachers help students in this kind of work the effects on achievement are strong. Marzano states that it has been shown that engaging students in the creation of linguistic representations stimulates and increases activity in the brain (72).

There are many different types of nonlinguistic representations that teachers can use as apart of their curriculum. One type is a graphic organizer. Graphic organizers are quite useful because they combine the linguistic mode in that they use words and phrases, and the nonlinguistic mode in that they use symbols and arrows. There are six graphic organizers that have great utility in the classroom because they correspond to six common patterns to which most information can be categorized.

- The first graphic organizer is for descriptive patterns. They can be used to represent facts about specific persons, place, things, and events. The information organized into a descriptive pattern does not need to be in any particular order (74).
- The second graphic organizer is the time sequence pattern organizer. They organize events in specific chronological order (74).
- The next, process/cause-effect patterns, organizes information into a casual network leading to a specific outcome or into a sequence of steps leading to a specific product.
- Episode patterns organize information about specific events including setting, specific people, a specific duration, a specific sequence of events and a particular cause and effect (75).
- Generalization/principle patterns organize information into general statements with supporting examples (75).

- Lastly, concept patterns, the most general of all patterns, organize information around a word or phrase that represents entire classes or categories of persons, places, things, and events (75).

Another type of nonlinguistic representation that teachers can use is making physical models. Basically, these allow for students to see and work with concrete representations of what is being learned. The very act of generating a concrete representation establishes and “image” of the knowledge in students’ minds. These are especially useful in science and mathematic classes in order to show, for example, shapes or crystal formations. Another nonlinguistic representation that can be helpful for students can be found in simply drawing pictures that have symbolic meaning. These symbolic pictures, or pictographs, can be very useful in helping students retain information on the subject they are representing (77).

Cooperative Learning

This part of the workshop will focus on cooperative learning strategies, or grouping. There are five defining elements of cooperative learning. The first is positive interdependence where the students experience a sense of sink or swim together. The second is face-to-face promotive interaction; this allows students to help each other learn by applauding successes and efforts. The third is individual and group accountability where each of the students has to contribute to the group in order to achieve goals. The fourth is interpersonal and small group skills. This exposes students to communication, trust, leadership, decision, making, and conflict resolution. The final element is grouped processing where students reflect on how well the team is functioning (85).

Organizing students in cooperative learning groups has a powerful effect on learning.

Three generalizations can be used to guide the use of cooperative learning:

1. Organizing groups based on ability levels should be done sparingly. One of the more controversial aspects of organizing students in groups is whether the groups should be homogeneous –organized by ability levels. In general, homogeneous grouping seems to have a positive effect on student achievement when compared with no grouping.
2. Cooperative groups should be kept rather small in size. This generalization might appear obvious, but it is certainly worth mentioning.
3. Cooperative learning should be applied consistently and systematically, but not overused. Cooperative learning can be both misused and overused. It can be misused when the tasks given to cooperative groups are not well structured. It is overused when it is implemented to such an extent that students have an insufficient amount of time to practice independently the skills and processes that they must master (87-89).

Teachers who teach within block scheduling should consistently use cooperative learning within their classes. When each class period is 90 minutes, students can benefit greatly from group learning because it breaks up their time. By allowing the students to work in cooperative groups they can communicate and practice lessons with each other. Also within the block scheduling they have enough time to practice individually, therefore providing them with a more complete understanding of material.

Questions and Cues

Once students have experienced several different methods of introducing new material, such as cooperative learning and nonlinguistic representations, they need to begin retaining the knowledge. Cues and questions are ways that a classroom teacher helps students use what they

already know about a topic. Cues involve “hints” about what students are about to experience. For example, a teacher is showing a video in class. The teacher should tell the students what the movie is going to be about, therefore allowing the students to activate any prior knowledge on the topic. Questions perform about the same function. For example, before watching the movie the teacher might ask students questions that elicit what they already know about the topic (111).

In general, teachers already use this in the everyday classroom more than they realize. In 1974 Nash and Shiman that found that teachers who thought they were asking 12 to 20 questions every half hour were actually asking 45 to 150 questions did a study (Marzano 113). In order to help teachers use cues and questions there are a few guidelines that they can follow:

1. Cues and questions should focus on what is important as opposed to what is unusual. According to Marzano many studies have shown that teachers tend to focus questions around information that is unusual or that they perceive as interesting as opposed to information that is critical to the topic being studied. Many teachers do this because they believe that it will increase student interest in the topic. However, questions are designed to deepen their understanding of content (113).
2. “Higher level” questions produce deeper learning than “lower level” questions. Higher-level questions are questions that require students to analyze information. Lower-level questions simply require students to recall or recognize information.
3. Waiting briefly before accepting responses from students has the effect of increasing the depth of students’ answers (113-114).
4. Questions are effective learning tools even when asked before a learning experience. Teachers can use questions before a learning experience to set up a mental picture of what students are about to learn (114).

Wrap Up

This workshop can be useful in everyday classroom management, especially with teachers who work with 90 minutes blocks. By using all of these tools classroom time management will not be a hassle and students will be able to be engaged from bell to bell.

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