

Lesson 1 Reflection

At the start of class, the students were gathered on the carpet in the front of the room for introductions to the class, each other, and the lesson for the day. This activity started out really calmly, with students paying attention and listening. They were respectful to one another as we went around the circle and everyone said their names, their favorite color, and one fun fact about themselves. Over time, though, the students began to lose focus and started to get distracted while on the rug. This was in part due to the fact that I had put out a few stuffed animals; some students were not using these appropriately, and so I had to take them and put them away.

Going outside, the students seemed to view this time as free-play, and quickly began treating the outside of the building as a playground. Once I got their attention, I tried circulating around and asking what objects everyone had found and why they chose that specific object. I also encouraged students to look and see what other students had collected as inspiration, and hopefully to motivate them to pick their own leaves, sticks, and rocks from outside. They lined up fairly quickly and were well-behaved in the hallway on our way back to the classroom.

When I began my demo, I asked the students some questions regarding primary and secondary colors, and how to mix colors to get other hues and tints. They were all very interested in participating in this discussion, and eager to give their answers. Their interest continued into the demo; they were extremely focused in the paint-mixing and painting process itself, complimenting my work as I went. I think that this is the part of the lesson introduction that really got them excited to start; I had previously assumed that going outside would be their favorite part and in turn, what would motivate them to participate in the project itself. I think that these students' attention is really captured by the process of making art, and once they got their materials, they were focused and ready to go.

The lesson itself went really well. Students diligently worked on mixing their colors, and they painted both on their paper and on their objects that they had brought in from outside. There was one student that even made his leaf into a stamp, and he used that in his art-making process. During this time, a handful of students repeatedly called myself and the other teachers over to ask questions about color-mixing specifically. I reminded them to think about what we had reviewed before the demo, and to continue to experiment to see what would happen with their paint when they mixed different colors. I also encouraged some students to ask someone sitting near them if they could help them get the color they wanted.

The struggles came at the end of the lesson as students finished up. I hadn't discussed cleanup previously, and so many students didn't know what I expected of them once they had finished working. This caused some chaos, as students began physically playing on the rug and moving chairs around the room. During this time, I didn't feel like I had control of my classroom. It was difficult to get their attention, both because they were so distracted by other activities, but also because of the volume.

I know for my future lessons that I need more side activities planned, and other options for students who finish early. I also need to remind students of the cleanup process, and that in order to follow the classroom rule of "being respectful", they need to clean up after themselves.

Lesson 2 Reflection

The most successful parts of my second class was the opening activity and the lesson itself. Starting out the class with watercolors and pastels, the students got to explore these materials freely. Some students chose to draw and paint on the paper wrapped around the tables rather than the paper I had previously laid out for them which I thought was interesting. In the lesson itself, the students were really excited to combine the different materials and mix their own paints and colors. The exploration of different tools to paint with was also of interest to them; feathers, pipe cleaners, and popsicle sticks were available to them for use when painting. They really enjoyed the variety of materials that were out for them, and they took advantage of them.

What didn't work well for this class in particular was the simplicity of the assignment. Once the students had mixed their paint, the painting process itself went extremely quick for some students. Being done so early, some other students began to notice and become distracted, and there were many students wandering around the room looking for things to do. There was an hour left for the class, and they had completed what I had expected them to work on for the whole day.

Lauren, my mentor, thought of hanging butcher paper on the walls as a side activity. Unfortunately, not many of the students were interested in drawing on the paper with chalk. Instead, the students were very eager to work in their sketchbooks, or with the materials they had used to paint during the day.

Even though my lesson finished early, I learned a lot about my students through this occurrence. I hadn't known before that they are all very interested in working with materials that can be used to build and craft. I also didn't realize how much they enjoyed working in their sketchbooks, especially as a group. I'm trying to view this time as not as much of a waste, filled with "busy work", but rather a time that the students got to explore things they enjoyed. I circulated around the room during this time; there were students building things with popsicle sticks and glue, there was a group of students on the rug all talking and discussing drawing together, and there were students building crafts with the pipe cleaners and feathers. I was happy that the students were still working on art-related projects, and I hope that they enjoyed the free time to explore.

For next week, I know that I need to plan specific activities for a few students in the class that have finished early two weeks in a row now. This small group of students tends to distract others once they finish, and so keeping them busy with something to work on will be beneficial to the rest of the class.