

Overall Instructional Narrative by Roxanne Klassen

Janet Morgan, Mentor Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) team.

This is a reflection based on the observations of my Dean, my Chair, my Mentor and my students. All of these groups were able to observe me and provided me with feedback regarding my teaching. This is a terrific opportunity for me to explore the differences and similarities of the various observers' take aways of my strengths, weaknesses and how to improve as a professional.

There were several strengths that emerged as themes in all four of the observers comments. One common thread was student engagement. Carol Achs, my dean stated "Students were engaged from the minute class began." Daphne Rossiter, my department chair, noted, "Roxanne is energetic and positive when she teaches. This helps to keep her students engaged!" The theme continued in my mentor's observations "The elevator problem did seem to capture the students' interest. The entire class was involved in figuring out whether the elevator was going to blow up or not!" The students responding to the survey 100% stated that they Strongly Agree or Agree with the statement that "The instructor did well in engaging the class in learning." Several students commented on enjoying being in the class. One student said, "I enjoyed coming to class. The instructor knew how to explain the material in a effective manner and made the class fun for everyone."

Another theme that came out of all four groups was building a community of learners. Each group mentioned the interaction between students during the classes. My chair mentioned, "They were all engaged and working with each other and sometimes, they would help other groups." The Dean noted, "The class used a lot of group learning. Roxanne was able to interact with students in each of the groups." My mentor said "Many students did volunteer to share their solutions on the board for the class to see, so it seemed they felt they were in an environment where they felt comfortable with one another." As well as a student mentioned "The professor was very good at explaining, and had us sit in groups which forced you to become friends with the people at your group."

A third theme that came out of three of the four groups that observed was an emphasis on communication in the classroom. My mentor noted "The new vocabulary was handled well...I liked when you told them to read the inequality out loud in order to get used to using the correct inequality symbol." Carol Achs commented, "Roxanne expects the students to summarize what they learned at the previous class meeting. They write what they have learned in their words. If the mathematical terminology is not correct Roxanne corrects them." Daphne Rossiter stated "The students were taught the definitions and then asked to put them in their own words." The only group that did not mention the communication emphasis was the students.

Weaknesses were not noted in my department chair's observation or in my Dean's observation. My mentor's observation included some strategies on group work. Janet gave some suggestions on how to get groups to work together more. She noted that some of the groups in my classroom were working together and that other groups had individuals working on their own. She recommended that I answer fewer questions and instead encourage the students to compare answers with their groups and try to agree on an answer before coming to the instructor.

The students' observations were overall positive with the exception of one comment from a student "The instructor would become annoyed much too easily and at times didn't like to take the time to explain something if you don't understand. Instructor did not create a positive environment in class." The other comments from students that were a mixture of positive and negative all related to the online homework and quiz tool that was used for the course. Twenty-five percent of students made very positive comments on the online system, fifty percent said something negative about the online system, the other twenty-five did not mention it.

It is amazing to have feedback from all of these different sources and is an interesting task to analyze the feedback. I definitely agree with the student engagement as a positive in my teaching style. I had written a goal at the start of the year to maximize instruction time and increase student engagement. It is great to see that all four groups noted this as a positive in their observations. I will continue to use the warm up and the folder system in the classroom to use time effectively and will write more activities and problems for students that are interesting and engaging.

The theme of building a community of learners is very important to me as well. In my FEP, I wrote "My goal for the next evaluation is to focus on building a community of learners in my classroom by making a connection with each student. I hope that this will aid in retention and persistence throughout all developmental courses and create an engaging environment for my developmental and teacher education students. " It is great to see that all four groups note that I have been successful at creating a community of learners that is evident in their participation in activities, their willingness to help each other, and their willingness to share their work with the entire class. This is an ongoing task that needs to be worked on each semester with each new group of learners. The group activities will help keep the community building going in the future.

Communication is a relatively new priority for me in the classroom. Much research has shown that effectively communicating helps students gain a deeper understanding of the concept they are learning. I was thrilled to see that three out of the four groups noted the emphasis on communication in my classroom. I think the only reason that students did not comment on communication is because there was not a specific question on the course evaluation that addressed this topic. In the future, I will write a question that specifically addresses the idea of communication on the student evaluation. I will continue to require my students to communicate their solutions in words and summarize the new concepts that we are learning. I want to be sure that I remain consistent on my requests for accurate and effective communication in my classroom.

Group work has always been important in my classroom and it helps all three of the strengths discussed above. This is an area for constant improvement. I am taking my mentor's suggestions and putting them into practice right away. Being sure to have group members rely on each other and come to a consensus prior to asking me for help will increase the group effectiveness. I am also hoping there will be a workshop on how to group students differently depending on your desired outcome. There is also some software that I am hoping to investigate to help me group my students heterogeneously and homogeneously more quickly and accurately. Having some professional development on group dynamics and grouping techniques in the classroom would be terrific.

In regards to the one negative comment I received, I do take it to heart. I know that I received so many positive comments and that there are many reasons this one student could have been negative about my class; however, I do think it is important to reach all students. I will make sure I work on creating a positive environment and fully explaining my answers to questions. I will also work on making a personal connection with each student.

In regards to the online homework and quizzing system comments, going forward I am working with the modules materials committee to ensure we get a good combination of in class activities, an online system that is easy for students to navigate and effective in reinforcing the concepts being taught in the classroom. I know that we cannot please everyone all of the time, but we definitely want something that we know will increase student success while being easy to use.

The plan to move forward is to continue doing many of the things that are my strengths, including maximizing instruction time, student engagement, maintaining a positive atmosphere and continually working on communication. The other part of my plan is to seek out professional development for group work and group dynamics. I think this would enhance my classroom environment without taking away from any of my strengths. Another area that I would like to work on did not come from any comments, but really from my reflection on the various responses is questioning techniques. I feel like improving questioning techniques would help deepen my students' understanding of the concepts being presented. Professional development regarding questioning would be a great addition to my professional growth. My goals for the future are to focus each activity and class period on students' thinking and working together and make sure my questioning guides them to deeper thinking. Also, I would like to improve my homework to be more specifically designed to enhance or deepen their understanding of a concept. I plan on going to workshops and spending more time writing homework assignments and projects with well-designed rubrics. I know that the continued Gold Star training will help me with these tasks.

Another area of growth for me would be to increase my classroom assessment techniques. I am planning on creating more pointed exit tickets, one minute papers, etc. that will really help students and me as an instructor. I appreciate the opportunity to reflect on my performance as a professional and I know it will help me to improve as a professional in the future.