

Record of professional discussion

2nd practicum

During my second practicum my mentor teacher had recommended I read the work by Peter Liljedahl on the thinking mathematics classroom to align to the professional development recently carried out at the school.

At the time of the discussion below, I had listened (audio book) to the first few chapters. The below discussion was in the staffroom and other teachers, including the teacher who had implemented some of the practices in the book, were involved in the conversation also.

We first talked about random groupings. We discussed the findings of Liljedahl, that random groupings led to improved engagement and collaboration. We discussed this within the school context where engagement was low and resistance to change was difficult to overcome. The teacher who had implemented the random groupings was persisting but not without continued resistance. He made random groupings using playing cards. He advised collecting the cards immediately or they would be destroyed by students.

We then discussed the most popular of Liljedahl's strategies, vertical whiteboards. The teacher who had implemented the whiteboards was very enthusiastic about them. We compared his experience initially using the class windows instead of the whiteboards. He said the glass windows had some success, but the cleaners had requested they stop and it was more challenging for students to see their work. This teacher had supplied whiteboards from his own money. The principal of the school had observed the class and had committed to acquiring additional whiteboard facilities for the school in the future based on the success of student participation using the whiteboard. Of the strategies, it was my mentor's advice and the teacher who had used them that this would be the most effective strategy, even if we had to use the desks rather than the vertical whiteboards.

Finally, we discussed strategies to get the students "on the bus" and what this meant. As my mentor put it, getting them on the bus meant starting with activities every student could understand and do before you even think about driving in a new direction. My mentor and I discussed various options before settling on a menu of workpapers for the year 9 class I was teaching. The menu would facilitate some choice: students who were not confident could start with revision workpapers before working onto the compulsory workpapers, whereas students who were confident, could begin with the compulsory workpapers before progressing to the more extended activity workpapers.

I was very lucky to observe change in action driven by the initiative of the teachers in the Mathematics faculty through their PD. It was inspiring to see the collaboration and passion of these teachers to trial strategies to improve student outcomes. APST 6.2, 6.3 and 6.4)