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| Validated Practices Project | October 23rd  2012 | |
|  | | Jeffrey Holle |

**Stage One: Class Profile**

Pine Grove Middle School is one of the top performing middle schools in Baltimore County. The Pine Grove community appears dedicated to providing the best education possible to the students. Hundreds of parents were in attendance on back-to-school night, and every timeslot was booked during our quarterly conferences. Pine Grove has a reputation for excellent scores, the middle school's MSA scores rank among the top in Baltimore County. Pine Grove is a very diverse school; 13% of students use special education services, and 35% of students receive free/reduced meals.[[1]](#footnote-1)

The classroom I implemented this project in was a seventh grade standard level Language Arts class. My classroom, like the rest of the school, was racially diverse, and quite even in terms of gender. Of the twenty-nine students in my classroom, only two of them were reading below the proficient level. One of these students required extensive modifications due to a detailed IEP. There was one other child in the classroom with an IEP, but it was in regards to speech; he did not require any modifications.

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| **Student** | **MSA Reading Score** | **Descriptor** |  | **Student** | **MSA Reading Score** | **Descriptor** |
| **1** | 396 | Proficient 2 |  | **9** | 443 | Advanced 3 |
| **2** | 443 | Advanced 3 |  | **10** | 460 | Advanced 3 |
| **3** | 426 | Advanced 3 |  | **11** | 402 | Proficient 2 |
| **4** | 406 | Proficient 2 |  | **12** | 409 | Proficient 2 |
| **5** | 416 | Proficient 2 |  | **13** | 424 | Advanced 3 |
| **6** | 421 | Advanced 3 |  | **14** | 445 | Advanced 3 |
| **7** | 370 | Basic 1 |  | **15** | 424 | Advanced 3 |
| **8** | 421 | Advanced 3 |  |  |  |  |

**Step Two: Curriculum Learning Goals and Objectives**

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| Objectives | State and National Objectives | Assessment | Lessons |
| Students will apply methods of characterization in order to evaluate courage within selected characters. | 3.3 – Analyze elements of narrative texts to facilitate understanding and interpretation.  - Analyze characterization  - Analyze relationships between and among characters, setting, and events. | Graphic organizer “Defining Courage” requires students to identify events and examples from *Gifted Hands* that show characters with courage. | Lesson 1 – Direct instruction to explain the different methods of characterization.  Students work in pairs or individually in order to locate and explain characterization in *Gifted Hands*. |
| Students will examine text clues in order to make inferences about a variety of people from *Gifted Hands.* | 1.E.4 – Use strategies to demonstrate understanding of texts,  c. Draw inferences and/or conclusions and make generalizations.  3.3 – | Students make inferences about Ben Carson’s “people skills” by using the text and his interactions with different people in the text. | Lesson 2 – Students make inferences based on pictures, and move in to making inferences based on their text (*Gifted Hands*). |
| Students will reflect on a character’s conflicts and motivation in order to explain their responses to carious conflicts in their own lives. | 3.6 – Analyze important ideas and messages in literary texts.  1.E.4 –  3.3 – | Students identify external and internal conflicts using their texts (*Gifted Hands*) as the basis. | Lesson 3 – Reviewing the term conflict with students as well as the different types of conflict found in literature. Students will complete a jigsaw activity in order to become experts on the conflicts in various chapters of *Gifted Hands*. Students complete a brief response relating conflict to their own lives. |

The lessons included in my validated practices project all required students to reflect on texts they have read in order to better understand characters. Students were exposed to similar lessons earlier in school year; they were to do close readings of texts in order to determine the tone of the author. The objective of my first lesson, "students will apply methods of characterization in order to evaluate courage within selected characters" closely aligns with the Maryland state curriculum. The curriculum requires that students analyze characterization, this lesson achieves that goal through the text *Gifted Hands*. All of the objectives in my lessons align with the Maryland state standards.

**Step Three: Assessment Plan**

The pre- and post-assessments I have created align with the lesson objectives that I have created. For example, in both the pre- and post-assessment, students are asked to identify character traits based on a given text. The ability to identify character traits aligns with standard 3.3 which requires students to analyze characterization. By identifying which character traits a text displays, students are able to identify methods of characterization. Students are also asked to make inferences on their pre- and post-assessments; the objective of lesson two requires students to be able to make inferences based on texts they have read.

The informal assessment at the end of my first lesson allowed me to determine if objectives were met through class discussion. After students completed a graphic organizer identifying moments when characters were courageous, I asked the class to share some of their examples. This simple activity ensured that students understood the assessment, and that students unable to identify examples of courage were introduced to them. The formal assessment at the end of my second lesson "*Q&I"* involved students making inferences based on what they have read in *Gifted Hands*. The successful completion of "*Q&I"* let me know that students were capable of making inferences.

Students performed better than I expected on their pre-assessments. Students did very well in the portions regarding characterization especially. Students had experience with characterization from earlier lessons in the year, but it was not as concentrated as the lessons in the validated practices project. The area students had the most trouble with on the test was identify direct and indirect characterization. The pre-assessment let me know that I needed to spend extra time on the methods of characterization.

**Step Four: Instruction**

The lesson plans that I have created all involve students working with texts. In the first lesson I implemented, students were to use *Gifted Hands* to identify times when Ben Carson or Miranda Francisco exhibited courage. Students also needed to identify if the characterization was done directly or indirectly. Students were broken into heterogeneous groups with a strong reader placed in each. I modified the organizer that students used in order to give them a small resource sheet on characterization. Although I did not require students to quote examples from the novel, students that needed additional help were given page ranges on their graphic organizers that would put them in the right direction. Students were still responsible for identifying instances of courage themselves, but were given an area to look for it. Many students finished this activity within the allotted time, but others struggled to complete the entire organizer. In order to ensure all students found examples of courage, responses were shared with the class.

The second lesson I implemented in my validated practices project focused on inferences. Students were introduced to the topic through a picture of a room. The room had a window with a circle hole in it, glass on the floor, and a baseball in the center. Students were to guess, or infer, what happened based on the clues they were given. After being shown the picture, students were informed that we do the same thing when we examine texts. In order to demonstrate that, we examined a very short passage and made inferences about it. Students enjoyed both activities, and found themselves able to make inferences from both images and texts. Students were then asked to infer why Ben Carson said different things in his book. For instance, students were asked to identify why he included the story of Mr. Rogers visiting children in the hospital. Students inferred that it was included to show Ben Carson thought Ben Rogers was a nice man. Students took longer than expected to complete the lesson, but were able to finish it at home without issue. The written response portion required students to make inferences about Carson's people skills. Students requiring modifications were given sentence starters for the assessment.

In the third lesson of my validated practices project, students completed a jig saw in order to locate examples of conflict in the novel. Students were group heterogeneously and given a chapter to locate a conflict from. Students were not required to use direct quotations to identify conflict, but needed to find examples from within specific chapters; they were also to determine whether the conflict was internal or external. Students were not given modifications for the assignment as the groups made them unnecessary. After students had located their examples, we came together as a class to share the conflicts. As an independent assessment students completed a short writing assignment title "*Quoteables".* This assignment required students to identify how they responded to conflicts in their own lives. The assessment allowed students to write creatively, and again exposed them to conflicts found throughout the text.

**Step Five: Reflection, and Self Evaluation**

The post-assessment data showed that students improved very slightly overall. Informal assessments given throughout the course of the project showed students doing very well. One of the biggest issues students had on their post-assessments was identifying which portions of a passage created characterization. Students were not asked to do this throughout the course of the validated practices project.

Of the students that did not show improvement, or even did worse on the post-assessment, I believe many of them have issues with test taking. Students did well on their informal and formal assessments over the course of the project, so the drop in the assessment grades only worried me in regards to their test taking ability. The most effective strategies involved students working together. Through class interaction, students were able to learn from each other and gain experience as a group. For future instruction, it may be beneficial to make the assessment informal. For instance, students could complete similar writing activities in order to show growth. If students did not know the assignments were assessments they may perform more naturally.

The validated practices project has shown that I need to gain experience in a areas. I would like to gain skill in motivating students. For some assignments the motivation is quite obvious, but for others the instructor needs to make connections between the motivation and the activities. Finding ways to incorporate motivation for students during all lessons is very important, and I need to develop that skill to keep students interested. I would also like to improve my ability to model assignments. I often assume students are capable of completing assignments I give them with little help. The validated practices project let me know that students need thorough instruction before any activity if I want them to achieve specific objectives.

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|  | **PRE-** | **PRE-** |  | **POST-** | **POST-** |  | **PRE - POST** |
|  | **ASSESSMENT** | **ASSESSMENT** |  | **ASSESSMENT** | **ASSESSMENT** |  |  |
| 1 | 10 | 6 | 0.60 | 10 | 9.5 | 0.95 | 0.35 |
| 2 | 10 | 10 | 1.00 | 10 | 7 | 0.70 | -0.30 |
| 3 | 10 | 10 | 1.00 | 10 | 8 | 0.80 | -0.20 |
| 4 | 10 | 7 | 0.70 | 10 | 6.5 | 0.65 | -0.05 |
| 5 | 10 | 7 | 0.70 | 10 | 7.5 | 0.75 | 0.05 |
| 6 | 10 | 7 | 0.70 | 10 | 7.5 | 0.75 | 0.05 |
| 7 | 10 | 6.5 | 0.65 | 10 | 9 | 0.90 | 0.25 |
| 8 | 10 | 7.5 | 0.75 | 10 | 8 | 0.80 | 0.05 |
| 9 | 10 | 8.5 | 0.85 | 10 | 10 | 1.00 | 0.15 |
| 10 | 10 | 8.5 | 0.85 | 10 | 8 | 0.80 | -0.05 |
| 11 | 10 | 5.5 | 0.55 | 10 | 6 | 0.60 | 0.05 |
| 12 | 10 | 9 | 0.90 | 10 | 8 | 0.80 | -0.10 |
| 13 | 10 | 7.5 | 0.75 | 10 | 8.5 | 0.85 | 0.10 |
| 14 | 10 | 10 | 1.00 | 10 | 10 | 1.00 | 0.00 |
| 15 | 10 | 9 | 0.90 | 10 | 7 | 0.70 | -0.20 |
| Class Average | 10 | 7.933333333 | 0.793333333 | 10 | 8.033333333 | 0.803333333 | 0.01 |
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**Assessment Data**

1. http://www.bcps.org/schools/profiles/pinegrovems.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-1)