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The challenges that I found when teaching science was breaking it down into a way that was age-appropriate but also advanced enough to hold the students’ interest. It’s hard to remember what it was like to be a third grader (or elementary schooler in general), so simplifying things enough but also remembering how smart eight-year-olds are was a challenge. Teaching science for me was challenging personally because I felt like there were so many things to cover for just one simple subject, and I didn’t know how much the students had known previously when lesson planning, so we had to gauge their knowledge when we started working with them and from there, we had to manipulate the lesson plan accordingly – we had to be extremely flexible and spontaneous in thought to keep them engaged and keep the ball rolling. I also find science difficult to teach because I don’t see myself as a proficient science student – I’ve always struggled the most with science in school. Finding the confidence in the subject for myself as well as stepping up to teach this content area was a challenge for me personally.

I thoroughly appreciated that this assignment was so hands-on and interactive. It granted us, as future teachers, the opportunity to teach content to real students – which really makes this course distinct from other introductory biology classes. Instead of simply presenting in front of other college students, we were able to interact with the age group that the SOL was intended for. We made our lesson plan as hands-on, interactive, and inquiry-based as possible, giving the students opportunities to be creative as well as do more than sit and listen or complete basic worksheets. We began with inquiry to introduce the topic and gauge what the students already knew. Further into the lesson, we provided the students an opportunity to create their own ecosystems with paper and crayons – challenging them to think about what they had learned and create it, as well as allowing them to have creative freedom to express their interest in the lesson. We went on to do a Kahoot quiz, which allowed them to interact with technology in a productive way.

After teaching this lesson, I think that I would’ve included different or more videos to captivate the interest of the students and show them more examples of the content (such as a video of polar bears in the tundra, or birds in the rainforest). I think that I would’ve also allowed the students to have more voice and opportunity to express their thoughts during the lesson, pausing more throughout the PowerPoint presentation to prompt them with different questions about the content, what they already know, or what their preconceptions were.

The most significant thing I learned throughout this process was how to manipulate a lesson plan according to time constraints or excess, as well as according to the students in a given group. One of our students was very quiet, and although he completed the activities given, he wasn’t as enthusiastic as his partner. The other student was very outspoken and seemed knowledgeable on the content in focus. With these two seemingly opposite pupils, we had to think on the spot and be flexible in order to engage and maintain the interest of both. This was also my first time teaching a science lesson plan, so that was something new I learned in myself – that I could do it!