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Writing Observation Reflection

 My practicum took place in a Kindergarten classroom this semester. In Kindergarten, the writing instruction is very basic. In my specific class, about half of them did not attend pre-school, so they had little to no idea of how to write. On my first day in the classroom, I was able to observe a lesson that was wrapping up their unit on writing letters. The students had a worksheet that covered about 10 letters from the alphabet. They had to trace each letters 3 times and then write it out themselves three times. While they did this, my CT was walking around checking to make sure the students were tracing and writing the letters properly. She told me that this had been their focus the last few weeks because their sentences had been very difficult to read since she could not tell what letters they were trying to form.

 For the rest of my practicum, the writing my students participated in was parts of assignments and in their journals. The journals were something my class wrote in every Monday morning and at least two other mornings each week. On Mondays, they would have to write 1-2 sentences about what they did that weekend and then draw a picture above their sentences. My CT, or me if I was there, would walk around and check their journals. If they had at least one clear, easy to read sentence, then they got a check for the day. If their entire journal was hard to read and unclear, then they had to go back and rewrite the parts that were illegible before receiving a check. If they completed other journals during the week, they were about different topics, usually relating to a subject they had learned about the day before.

 The other writing I observed my students doing in my practicum class was writing that was a part of their assignments. The majority of the assignments I observed them doing consisted of some sort of hands-on craft or activity, that involved having to write a few sentences as a part of it. For example, one morning my class was learning about bees. They had a discussion about their prior knowledge, read a book about bees, watched a short video about bees, and then had a discussion about what they learned from the lesson. During both parts of their discussion, my CT wrote out the student responses on a chart on the chalkboard. The students then had a small craft of creating a bee made out of construction paper. Once they finished making the bee, they had to write three sentences that stated facts they had learned about bees on the back of the bee they created. Many assignments that I observed my students doing were structured this way. They had a lesson, followed by a fun activity that incorporated writing a few sentences to reflect what they learned in their lesson.

 There is less room in Kindergarten to incorporate many effective teaching strategies for writing due to the fact that many of the students are still learning to write basic words and sentences. However, I thought my CT did a really good job with beginning to give her students choice in their writing. She did this mostly through her use of their journals. Multiple days per week the students were given the opportunity to write in their journal. They were not graded on the content of their sentences, but merely on whether it made sense. This is the beginning of exposure to choice because they were given an umbrella topic and could then write their sentences about anything they wanted within that larger topic. Her other assignments incorporate this beginning level of choice as well through the same concept. Looking back the bee assignment, the student were able to write any three sentences they wanted about bees on the back of their project. My CT easily could have told them which three sentences to write, so that all she had to check for was their writing ability. Instead, she let them choose their own sentences.

 In this class, we discussed how giving students choice in their writing helps to facilitate their interest and positive attitude towards writing. By beginning to give students choice in Kindergarten, my CT is helping to foster a positive attitude and an enjoyment of writing for her students.