

Van Lac
Reflection

For my discussion strategy assignment for Curriculum and Instruction, I decided to teach my students how to generate questions. A few days prior to the actual discussion, I introduced "The Question Tree" to my students. I decided to use this type of questioning, because it posed a clear and visual idea of the different levels of questioning: On the surface, Under the Surface and Life Application. We had a poster-size graphic organizer of "The Question Tree," which facilitated in my students' understanding of the different levels of questioning. After reading the excerpt of Caramelo by Sandra Cisneros, each student was expected to generate two questions for each level of questioning. For many of my students, this task was painstakingly difficult. I spent over half an hour assisting students on generating questions, because they just were not motivated that day. By the end of the block period, every student handed in a set of six questions.

During the observation on Thursday, I started the class with an "Agree or Disagree" handout based on critical issues from Caramelo. For the first few minutes, my students settled into their seats and answered these questions quietly on their own. We transitioned into the "Question Answer Around" activity, which consisted, of each student answering an "On the Surface" question and then asking their own question. This activity went well because every student in my class was able to ask a question and answer a question. In a few instances, students had the same questions, and so other students volunteered one of their questions.

We then moved into the fish bowl activity. I decided to split my twelve person class in half, so half of the class would discuss in the fish bowl and the other half would have assigned roles as observers. I consciously placed all my reticent girls in the first fish bowl, so they could all have a chance to speak without the loud students dominating the class. On an overhead, I prepared six "Under the Surface" questions for my students to discuss. I had one student choose the question and have the group respond. Initially, I was met with dead silence. But instead of panicking, I had to place myself in the discussion and lead students to the passage where they could find the answer. Towards the end of this fish bowl, I noticed that one student had not said a word. In an attempt to include her in the discussion, I had her read a part of the

excerpt.

In this portion of the fish bowl, every student was given an opportunity to speak. I noticed that one of my generally reticent student stepped up to the plate and answered a lot of the questions, because she was sick of the dead silence amongst the group. I am pleased that given a safe space, my student was able to vocalize her thoughts and ideas without the intrusion of the loud students.

For the "Life Applications" fish bowl, I had two of my domineering boys, two of my quiet girls and a quiet boy in the discussion. I was pretty confident that my students would be engaged in the discussion, because the rich questions they generated the day before would facilitate in this process. The following are a few questions generated by my students: What does it mean to be Mexican? Do you have to speak Spanish to be Mexican? Are you judged by your history?

My two verbose boys shined in the spotlight and with fluidity spoke of their own personal experiences. I knew ahead of time it might take some prodding to get my reticent girls to speak, so at certain points in the discussion, I stated to my verbose boys, "Thank you for your participation, but let's hear from our girls" or when a new question was introduced, I said, "Let's have Yesenia and Maricella talk first." For the most part, my talkative students complied with my wishes to have the quiet kids speak.

Halfway through the final fish bowl, it occurred to me how often I was speaking. I noticed that my students were responding and looking at me, instead of addressing their classmates. As I reflect on my next step in the discussion process, I would like my students facilitate their own discussion, perhaps by the spring quarter they will arrive at this point.

I had to guide my students far too often through the text, perhaps this is an indication that my students are not familiar with the act of referencing text enough to commit this act independent of me. I plan to introduce the idea of "Marking up a text," so that my students can begin to be more interactive readers and refer to text as if it were second nature to them.

All in all, I am proud of my students because they produced an intellectual discussion on issues that are pertinent to their lives.

