Samantha Riccio

10/14/12

Ethnography Essay 2

This trip to the Ark Community Charter School involved creating some sort of activity that would fully engage the students in an education way. Paige and I set forth to create an activity for the students to play and education game that involved spelling. We did research and looked to the teachers to ask where the student’s main weakness was. We were told reading comprehension. This is a hard focus, but we were able to learn more about the student’s reading habits from doing quick spelling exercises that involved the students in a group.

With our spelling blocks we wanted the students to use the art of teamwork and phonetics in order to spell the list of word we were giving to them. We thought that with the students working in teams and the idea of time being against them they would work quickly and strategically together to create the correct spelling of the words. Each section of words we found and comprised for the students to spell and work with had ending that were consistent. For example one section of words was -able words. These words mostly contained the able sound and ending to them in order for the students to use pattern to help figure out the words.

The first group of students we worked with began our spelling game with our section of –able words. We first asked the students if they liked to spell and they, in agreement, said no not really. So we were prepared to see a group of unmotivated spellers for the first round. We quickly found that that was far from the reality. We gave them their first word: plains. This was an easier word so it really got the students spirits up when we told them they had spelt it correctly. With group one there was an outgoing and spirited girl in the group so she mainly took the lead in asking for the letters to be passed to her and she would spell most of the words on her desk. The second word we had this group spell was adaptable. This word the group would repeat together in order to use phonetic devices to help figure out the spelling. It was a good example of the team in entirety working together. We continued through our list of –able words such as allowable and comfortable. The group continued to rely on each other to help sound on the word as they continued to get a little harder. Upon finishing our list and the game we wanted to re-ask the students once more what their thoughts on spelling were. They told us that they enjoyed spelling games just not spelling tests. Next we asked them what their reading habits were like. They all told us they read every day. Naturally we asked them what kinds of books they like to read. The girl who led the group for the most part told us she really liked to read Junie B. Jones and is currently reading a book called Sassy. The one boy in the group also chimed in told us he loved to read mystery novels.

Our second group had a very different dynamic to them compared to the first group we worked with. These students were a little more strategic and pooled all the blocks together and made sure they were all facing the correct way before we began the game. We gave them the same set of –able words because we thought that it would be a good experiment to compare the level of spelling each group had. This second group seemed to have a much harder time getting everyone to pay attention and work together to spell the words. We gave them the first word plains and they each started grabbing for letters and we had to remind them they were trying to work as a group and spell these words together. This seemed to slow them up at first. When they got to the word adaptable they were making comments to each other like “it doesn’t look right” etc. So they tried spelling the word aloud which they got correct but then they could not come together to translate that out using the blocks given. This group’s dynamic was much less cohesive than the first group. One group member was making it difficult for the others to see what the letters on the blocks were. This made them very frustrated when they were trying to spell out the word distinguishable which was the hardest word for them to spell overall and one of the girls snapped and told them to stop touching the blocks.

Group three was the most cohesive group that we worked with. They had all the students involved and really got the group as a whole excited to play the game. One of the students at the end of the table continued to encourage all the other students as they spelt the words. This group also really had pride and a sense of accomplishment when they finished spelling the larger words. We gave this group the –able words but then also gave them two bonus words. They spelt both of the bonus words correctly. They were given the word comprehensible which they students were so proud they spelt correctly they called over the teacher in order to show her the work they had completed together. With this group we asked them again what kind of books they liked to read and they responded with “Diary of a Wimpy Kid” and also graphic novels. One student even told us that he can’t watch television because he has no cable so he reads.

Our last and fourth group was a very rowdy bunch. It was a group of 5 boys who were very giddy and acting goofy. As soon as they sat down at our station in the class room the boys started spelling words like poop and poopy. Once we got the boys to focus the game went much quicker and the team figured out a pattern to pass the blocks to one another. One of the students when he thought he was stuck shouted “I’m only in 5th grade”. Shortly after the comment the boys were able to figure out the word.

In conclusion these students found excitement in spelling because it was made into a game. They loved that spelling became a hands on kind of game and they were easily able to use teamwork to grow as spellers and learners.

