Final Report for Teacher and Student Learning at Westside Academy at Blodgett with R Deborah Davis

Project SMART Topics in Education: Social Emotional Learning in High Needs Schools

<mark>**Teacher Participant Name: Stan McKay**</mark>

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

My Social Emotional Learning (SEL) plan remained intact to its action for two of the three tasks. I was trained in the "Where Everybody Belongs" (WEB) program in April 2017, and I worked with the school counselor, Ms. Burke. However, I did not create lessons for the program. At the training, I learned that the program has a set curriculum that is supported by research. Moreover, the program has a timeline that requires certain actions be taken during the school year. In May, the WEB coordinator must request for 7th Grade candidates to apply as WEB leaders for 2017-2018. The current WEB Coordinator, Ms. Burke, will not be returning. Principal Hopkins has agreed to allow me to be WEB Coordinator for 2017-2018. Therefore, I have been focusing on meeting with groups of 7th Grade students to screen who best will fulfill the responsibilities of leading teams of incoming 6th Grade students in school year 2017-2018. In addition, I must meet leaders twice in the summer to prepare for an orientation event on the first day of school. I have started a WEB committee of teachers to support the students and me. Nevertheless, I coordinated a successful meeting of current 8th Grade WEB leaders and 6th Grade students for activities on Wednesday, April 12, 2017.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:

After discussion with the WEB program creator at the professional development sessions in April 2017, he advised that it was too late in the school year to roll out the full program. I told him of the expectations of our principal to begin activities upon my return. He agreed with my suggestion to reteach two activities to some current 8th Grade WEB leader students so they could have a meaningful meeting with 6th Grade students. The 8th Grade WEB leader students had done some activities with 8th Grade WEB leader students from another middle school (Fraser) in February 2017. I used two of the activities that they were familiar with. On Wednesday, April 12, 2017, Ms. Burke and I met with our WEB leader students to review an icebreaker and a team building activity. The icebreaker consisted of asking about the things 6th grade students like to do best. The team building activity was the staging of groups of 8 students to hold straws together and to move around the room. After the review session, team leaders were divided into four to meet with Pods A,B,C,D,E, and F 6th grade students in the cafeteria. During lunch, I brought five web leaders into my classroom 218 to lead both activities for 6th Grade Pod A. I observed that the student web leaders rose to the occasion, and conducted a successful session. The 6th grade students were engaged, cooperative, and eager to continue.

Upon reflection, I learned that if a modification to a set program is planned purposefully, simply, and strategically, then students can make it work. I did not think 8th grade students could start meaningful relationships with 6th grade students so late in the school year, nor did I anticipate 6th graders would be receptive to mentoring in April. My observations were that meaningful relationships could be established late in the school year. I am encouraged that when I roll out this program with an established timeline, leaders and students will develop strong bonds that will change the culture for the school.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

I examined student learning and found:

- most WEB leaders were apprehensive to meet with 6th grade students for fear of not engaging them,
- 6th grade students were eager to meet with WEB leaders and to engage in activities,
- 6th grade students were respectful to the WEB leaders,
- when the 6th grade teacher came to collect Pod A, students wanted to continue with activities which we did for another 20 minutes,
- and bonds were built between leaders and students as one leader told me that she had thought the 6th grade students would be hard to control, but instead they were fun to work with. 6th grade students have been coming up to me asking when the next session will be. I have planned for one in May, and some in June.

Conclusion: When the WEB program is implemented in its entirety in school year 2017-2018, the program will be successful because I will have the WEB leaders ready to engage 6th grade students from the first day of school. The WEB leaders will be trained in the full WEB program so regularly weekly activities can occur. The culture of Westside Academy at Blodgett will change as 8th students will become leaders for 6th grade students. The rapport and support will reduce bullying and isolation of students.

Please update us on any changes you made to your team action plan:

Time line – I went over budget in terms of class time to work on this project with the students. For some of these students it is their first time doing research on their own and I did not anticipate the challenges they would have. For future projects, I would suggest copying pages from websites or encyclopedias and letting the kids highlight them instead of giving them multiple websites to use. We also spent more class time than anticipated actually creating the posters. I had the kids draft their posters twice before doing a final copy so that their final product would look organized.

Originally students were going to find musicians that shared both a cultural background and played the same instrument as them. That became difficult since some of those combinations don't always yield a lot of information. Some students stuck to either just their instrument or just their cultural background.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning: We examined our written reflections and found the following:

February 26 – Need to build chart of musicians for students this week. Ask Ryan or Ian if they know any famous black/Hispanic clarinet players. YouTube is not working right on my laptop, use JWPepper. Need to figure out over arching lessons to do after students pick out musicians. Swung 8ths. Practice w/ met. Planning for 3 days of time on iPads, should be more than enough to fill out organizer.

March 19 – Spent too much time on research. Need to figure out how to prevent distractions on iPads. Need to find a few Clora Bryant charts and have student choose from that, hard to find most charts. Future thought, put together timeline for students on one page to help them understand what needs to be accomplished and how long it should take.

March 28 – Students working on charts, I bounce between them to help work out problems. Not seeing much interest in taking instruments home, very little progress happening day to day. Working in class on swung 8ths and relating it to their music. One student is getting very negative about work put in, but is actually doing very well. Need to talk to father, he is good at encouraging.

April 16 – Almost everyone can play through their song even though there are some challenges still. Poster making mode when we return from break, then get recordings done.

All of these entries detail how long the project actually took when I originally thought this would take about 1 month. There were snow days, absences, testing, spring break, but I still think all of this could get accomplished in a lot less time. I need to use more paper resources with the students, make them a time line and give them limits on how long a step should take, and get them more motivated to practice at home. A goal of this project was to get the students to understand that they could transform dedicated work into success and it is only really showing off in school and not at home.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

Posters and Samples of music are on attached pages.

Students were asked to find important facts about the musician's life. There wasn't a number they needed to find, but I tried to push them to find at least 5 facts. Students were asked to come up with questions they would ask their musician if given a chance to sit down and talk with them. Students were asked to explain

why they chose that particular musician and why they chose that particular song. Students were asked to choose a song of the musician's and learn it.

One correlation I found was that students whose posters included more life facts tended to ask questions geared more towards the musician's choices in life. Poster 3 included a life fact about Sonny Rollins spending time in jail. One of the questions asked was "If you could go back in time, what bad thing would you fix in your life?" Poster 4 included a life fact about John Coltrane spending time in the Navy. One of the questions they asked was "Why did you choose to go into the military?" Poster 7 also included and asked about the Navy (questions are on student organizer). Poster 2 included life facts about Clora Bryant performing while pregnant and as a new mother. One of the questions asked was "Why did you choose to keep working while having kids?" (questions and facts are on student organizer). This information suggests that the time students spent learning about their musician made them think more about why the musician made the decisions they did.

One trend I found was that almost every student asked questions about how and/or when their musician started playing. Poster 2 "Did you always want to be in jazz and who inspired you the most?" Poster 3 "How old were you when you played your first concert?" Poster 4 "Who encouraged you to play?" Poster 6 "Why did he play guitar?" Poster 7 "When did you learn to play the timbales?" This information suggests that the students might be interested if their musician was like they are now. There was no prompting for students to ask about the musician's early life, but all of them were interested in where that journey began.

There was no strong trend with students about why they chose their musician or why they chose their song. Most students agree that their musician is "Great", but details given include things like: enjoying the way they play, inspired by their life, and long lists of accomplishments. Students showed no tendency towards fast or slow songs, songs with or without lyrics, or even perceived difficulty of songs. Reasons for choosing songs included: I liked the way it goes, I like that the solos don't sound rushed, I like the way he plays it, I like the words".

Student's chose a song of their musician to learn and have recorded to add to their poster. The QR codes below were glued on students' posters. You can scan this code using a smartphone with a barcode scanning app such as Zapper or Bar-Code


Sample 1 – Tenor Madness, Sonny Rollins

Students used iPads to research their chosen musician and created a poster using that information.
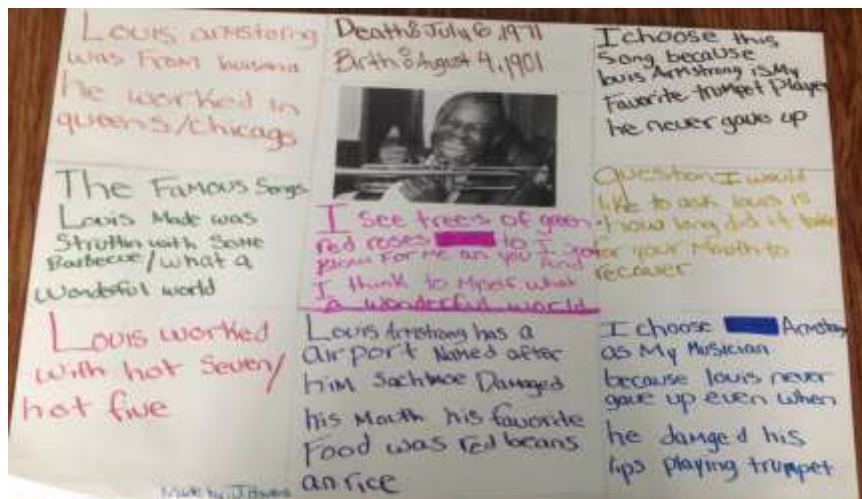
Students used the organizer on the following page when they were researching their musician. This helped the students keep track of what information they needed to find and got them to visualize what the poster would eventually look like.

Pic of Musician	# Musician's Name
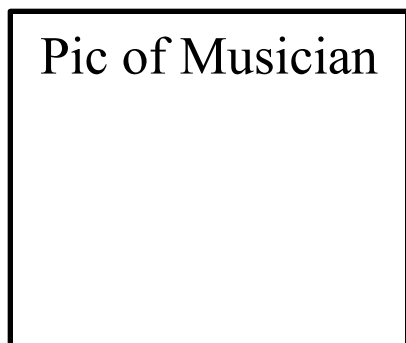
Musician's Name

Musician's Birth (and Death) dates
Where they are from, where they worked
Famous Albums (CDs), Famous Songs
Other musicians they worked with
Why did I choose this musician?
Important life facts
Questions I would like to ask this musician
Why did I choose this song to learn

==**Teacher Participant Names: Lameess Mehanna**==

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I changed the lunchtime gathering to be a more relaxed atmosphere where I allow the students to run the conversations and I do not put any limits or ideas on them except to remind them of no swearing and no cellphones, so that they can stay connected to each other. This created a safe space, where students feel free to talk and move as they needed.

I also put more emphasis on the intervention projects and gallery walk that came out of Black History month, this became a stronger point of reflection than it was previously intended to be because students were saw their work amongst their peers of all grade levels, while learning about influential figures and topics.

Also, the student showcase became more and more student-led and student-centered, adults took almost no part in the actual execution of the event, which showed great leadership on the part of the students and put them in charge of their work.

Analysis of Data on Teacher Learning:

I realized throughout the various planning and executing of this plan, that in trying to prepare so much for the students to take part in and do, I projected a lot of my own desires and learning onto the students and teachers instead of giving them some space to choose and decide on their own what projects and topics are most important to them. I realized this in the way, students took influential figures and made a unique product all their own. I noticed this when I realized that the type of information provided on each project was different depending on what was important to the student or the figure they studied. I realized that when trying so hard to make things run smoothly for the showcase, I missed a lot of things that students wanted and in letting them run the show themselves, they impressed one another and were much more relaxed and confident than if they were trying to follow someone else's lead.

I realized that I also needed to take more teacher input into account and not think that I had to plan every step of the way for them. Talking to other teachers gave me many more ideas moving forward.

Analysis of Data on Student Learning:

The reflections and student talks interviews showed that students were more interested in researching figures and topics that related to them in some way, and moreover finding the way the students relate themselves instead of being told.

Although it pushed a lot of students out of their comfort zone, students were able to try new things at the showcase like poetry and music and became more interested in poems by black authors afterwards. Many students came up and asked me for poem suggestions before and after.

The girls at the lunchtime gathering once said, "Ms, I am glad you are not one of those teachers that favors the boys." This proved to be influential on the girls, for no other reason than that they had a space and a time that was just their own. I think it left them thinking of ways to carve out their own spaces as they please, in order to feel safe.