

Joseph

I chose to focus on Joseph because he is one of my quieter students in Pre-Calculus class. Though he seems to do well, he never makes much of an effort to be outspoken about anything discussed and will usually sit back and listen to the conversation rather than offer an idea to the class. I routinely check in with Joseph during the group work time, and he seems to struggle with concepts and ideas that most other students struggle with. Because English is Joseph's second language—Spanish is the primary language spoken in the home—I want to make sure that he understands what is presented during class and that there are no language barriers keeping him from comprehending the content. Like Carl, Joseph completed all the math classes that he needs to graduate high school but likely decided to take Pre-Calculus in order to get college credit offered through Portland Community College.

Joseph has done fairly well in Pre-Calculus throughout this semester. Aside from getting a low grade on the first exam, he has managed to turn most of his homework in and average a B on all the quizzes. On the Pre-Assessment for my work sample unit, he did not get any of the eight questions correct. Though this wasn't something for me to be concerned about, this showed me that Joseph did not know any of the material we were about to cover¹. Following my first lesson, I gave students an exit ticket to show me if they needed more practice working with the properties of logarithms. Unfortunately, Joseph did not get any of the three questions correct. His work, however, revealed that he was trying to use methods the class had learned in previous lessons to find an answer. Though this might reveal that Joseph did not fully grasp the properties we learned during that class period, it might also reflect that I did not give students enough time to fill out the exit ticket. I did not want them to help one another, and I did not allow them to use

¹ Because students generally take Algebra 3-4 prior to taking Pre-Calculus, they may have already seen some of the concepts I was about to cover but simply forgot how to do them. The Pre-Assessment also gave students the opportunity to let me know whether or not they had seen those types of problems before.

the notes they had just filled out. Because this was a concept they had just learned, it was not realistic for me to assume that students had understood the concepts enough to memorize them. If anything, this let me know that Joseph, as well as many other students, needed more time with these ideas. During my December teaching experience, Joseph came into office hours a few times to get extra help or simply to work on his math homework. In these times, I would periodically check in with him to see if he had any questions. Because he is a quiet student, it is easy to assume that he will not ask questions when he encounters them. However, I quickly noticed that he reaches out to me or to his classmates whenever he has a question that needs answering. On Joseph's summative assessment for this unit, Joseph only made three mathematical errors. The last problem revealed a small error in calculating the cube root of the fraction. I was excited to see that Joseph had the right idea on all of these problems, and, if it were not for a few, small errors, he would have gotten several extra points. Because his errors were mainly calculations, I did not want to grade Joseph too harshly. The work he did on the quiz revealed to me that he understood the concepts, and that is much more important to me than several mistakes in calculation.

As I begin to look ahead toward the end of this semester, it is important that I continue to provide Joseph, as well as his classmates, with opportunities to work with other students on math. In any math classroom, students need to build their understanding of the content by working together; teachers do students a great disservice when classes are teacher centered and focused on filling the students' minds with facts and information. In addition, because English is not Joseph's first language, providing him opportunities for collaboration with other students allows him to work on developing his language skills. As with others in the class, I want Joseph

to be less dependent on me as the mathematical authority figure and begin to reach out to his classmates for help and support.