

READING WRITING IN THE DISCIPLINES

Analyzing Anecdotal Evidence Video Transcript

Dan Guerrero:

All right, who thinks they did well? Raise your hands. All right, how many of you know which ones you didn't know?

A lot of what happens at schools has a lot to do with the environment that is intangible at times. Because so much focus is placed on content that we forget about some of the intangibles that affect a student's disposition. Attitude, perception, willingness to engage, happiness. A great deal of rhetorical analysis on the AP exam is rooted in anecdotal evidence.

Did I ever tell you about my experience in Lucky's Grocery Store at Southland Mall, when something went really bad in the frozen food section?

Students:

No.

Guerrero:

So I spend a lot of the beginning of my longer classes starting with anecdotal evidence that I'm trying to use as a way of pulling out the concepts, so that when the students get on the exam, they can do the same thing.

I was, like, really young, man. It was, like, two years ago. So I was with my mom at the grocery store. I remember walking up and down the aisle. And I remember at one point I had to stop. Because I was walking in the grocery store, I realized that some of the tiles were different colors. And all of a sudden it occurred to me, "Hot lava." You guys know what I'm talking about? So I'm walking on tiles, and I'm getting towards the hot lava, and I'm like, "There's no more tiles. What am I going to do?" So what did I do?

Student:

Climbed the shelf?

Guerrero:

I got on the shelves. So what I did was I got on the side of the glass doors, and I basically went... (laughter) And I was going like this. And all of a sudden...

(imitates buzzer) a door comes out. And pow! The glass breaks. And I was like, "Oh, crap." So what did I do? I gently got down, put my hands in my pocket, and I walked on the hot lava. (laughter) I walked outside, I helped my mom get the groceries in the car, I sat in the car, put my seatbelt on. I'm like, "Okay, let's go." And she looks at me and she says, "I don't know what you did, but I know you did something." So here's what I want you to do. On the back of your papers, I want you to really quickly write out, "Mr. Guerrero is right or wrong because..." and then explain it in terms of categoricalism or consequentialism.

Student:

But then he was wrong after him knowing what he did, and it was basically consequentialist, because he knew that he was going to get in trouble, so he didn't even tell his mom.

Student:

Do you think it's consequentialist or categorical?

Student:

It is consequentialist.

Student:

Why?

Student:

Because he wasn't worrying about whether it was right or wrong at the moment. He was focusing on if he was... like, on the consequences, if he was going to get into trouble. So...

Student:

Yeah, basically just wanted to, like, not get in trouble, but he didn't really care what he did, you know? So I think it is consequentialist. What do you think?

Guerrero:

It also lets the kids know that there's a way for them to use their personal experiences that has academic value.

The consequence determines the right and wrongness of an action. So I would say...

And then effectively what I want them to do is I'm modeling, how do you use these terms to analyze a situation? So the first thing they're going to do is they're going to analyze my action. And that's low risk. Because they know that we're joking together, we're having a good time together.

This is the key, what we're going to do today. Because I'm going to give you a bunch of hypotheticals. And there is no situation that is absolutely wrong or right in of itself.

Using this kind of analysis, trying to understand argumentation, manifests itself in every aspect of their lives, whether it's in the classroom, or with their friends, or in their interpersonal relationships, or their parents, or the homeboys on the street when they leave Tennyson. These kids are using argumentative skills in all kinds of ways. And I think by revealing some of the strategies, some of the formulas behind argumentation, can benefit them in their real lives, you know, every single day.

Can you tell me the difference between the reason and the evidence?

The majority of my students have been reclassified fluent English proficient within the last few years. So you've got the claim, the evidence, and what else?

Student:

The warrant.

Guerrero:

The warrant. We want them to build the sense of confidence to negate the attitudes of inferiority that have been built up over the years-- the adverse sense of academic self that the students have internalized by being a part of classrooms that disenfranchise and frustrate.

So it's one thing to have done well on the quiz, to know the terms, know the definitions. Today we're going to use them. Who feels comfortable they can come up right now and make this claim? Give it up for Paola and Montez coming to the stage. My job is to build confidence on their part.

Student:

I'm not really sure if I did this one right.

Guerrero:

Go for it, we'll figure it out.

Student:

So the backing was it is proven that watching...

Guerrero:

We're building confidence using super sophisticated academic language. Language that our students in urban high schools are not exposed to. Because either, one, it's not considered core curriculum in the English classroom...

Student:

Our conditions of rebuttal is that...

Guerrero:

And two, they need to know that there are ways of getting into this task and being successful by using, you know, ideas behind ethics and morality.

Very well done. Give them a hand. Very nice, excellent. Have any of you been in a situation like that, where, like, you were caught between telling the truth to your parents, and you were worried about what the consequences were going to be? I mean, be honest.

We're doing a lot more than just trying to teach a kid how to pass an AP exam. We're trying to teach these kids how to operate in the world, and how to develop a solid worldview. And all of this boils down to, do you have a relationship with the kid? Because if you don't have a relationship, the best lesson plans, the best textbooks, it's not going to help. Good job.