4th Grade Math Lesson Pre-Conference

- Good morning. It's so good to see you this morning. It's cold weather we're having.

- I know.

- Well thank you so much for meeting with me this morning. I am so excited about the lesson that I'm going to be seeing in your room tomorrow. It's just refreshing to go into your classroom and see you and your fourth grade students. So as we think about that lesson that I'm gonna be observing tomorrow, I just wanted to kind of set the stage for that today and have you talk through it a little bit and help me to make sure I give you the best possible picture of your instruction that I can. And does that sound okay?

- Yeah.

- Okay, good. Also, I have to tell you, I'm old, you know that, and I might need to take a few notes. Is it okay if you see me jot down some notes, is that alright?

- Oh, absolutely.

- Because I forget. Okay, so I want you first just to, 'cause I am old, just refresh my memory a little bit, talk a little bit about your refinement area that you're working on right now from your last observation, just to kind of refresh us about what you're working on right now.

- Okay, that's gonna be peer to peer feedback regarding students as they work, self-assessing and assessing other students' work. And so the goal is to establish criteria earlier in the lesson so that as students work, they are able to refer back to that criteria and give explicit feedback to their partners based on criteria for mastery.

- Wow, wow. Yeah, I remember, yeah. And I know you've been working on that a lot. In my walkthroughs I've seen, you know, that you have those things that you've been pushing out with your kids to make sure that they understand those expectations. And it seems to be working pretty well. Have you seen an improvement in student achievement since you've really been honing in on that?

- Oh, absolutely. They, once they have the criteria for mastery laid right in front of them, they know exactly where their mistakes are and they can help others find their mistakes, if any.

- Wow, that does it. That's what I've noticed when I go through, it really seems to be making an impact, so. Wow, terrific. So I know I'm gonna see some good things when it comes to that and seeing your instruction and what's happening in the classroom. So as we think about the lesson that's coming tomorrow, just give me, like set the stage for me. Just tell me about the lesson and what's gonna happen in the lesson, walk me through it.

- Okay. I'm gonna be introducing number patterns. It'll be the first day that we do that. Specifically, they have to find a rule. There's actually two learning targets. So you have to find a rule for a given pattern. And then the other one would be to generate their own pattern based on a given rule. So they have to have obviously number sense, be able to determine if things are, if patterns are increasing or decreasing based on the numbers given. And the opposite of that is figure out what rule.

- Wow, yeah, whoa, you got some heavy thinking that's gonna be happening in that lesson. So, so the students basically are gonna be looking and generating those patterns and then wow, figuring out if it's increasing or decreasing, which is huge for fourth graders to be able to look at something in that, through that lens. And then also thinking about the rule. Wow. And what kind of things are you gonna be doing in the lesson to be able to move? Because that's a lot of thinking going on, girl.

- We'll first just explore some numbers and see just kind of what they notice right off, right off just to see if they can identify trends or features of a given set of numbers. I will model explicitly my thinking. They will help me come up with the steps that I use and some criteria for mastery. They will practice in small groups with partners and then ultimately be able to do it independently.

- Wow, wow. Okay, so you'll be kind of leading them in with a little review, you know, making sure that they, that they understand patterns, that they understand what they're gonna be doing, increasing, decreasing, and then they'll be working with you to establish that criteria. And, and then you'll be giving them a little practice at really trying to apply that after you give them a good model for that. Wow, that sounds like the perfect setup, you know, for what you want to happen in that lesson. Providing that model I think is gonna be important too. Excellent, excellent. So I know you talked about them kind of working through some of the patterns together. How are you gonna group them or how are they grouped in the classroom?

- Right now they're just sitting in their small groups, just their regular seat. And since it's a first, since it's the first day, there won't be a whole lot of grouping up. Once I get their formative assessment from this day and we move on to the next day, then I'll be able to better differentiate based on who got it, who didn't, who was on the right track but possibly made just a small calculation error or, or maybe my kids that are just completely, maybe they can't decide whether it's increasing or decreasing. I'll be able to better group them based on the formative assessment I do tomorrow.

- So you definitely have some, you put some thought around how they might work together, but since this is one of the first lessons in this, you'll be really trying to hone in on that formative assessment piece and seeing how kind of the students are doing and moving towards mastery. Okay, that makes sense. That makes a lot of good sense. So as you think about that, because I know one of the things that you do really well is your questions to kind of formatively assess.

And I know in other lessons that I've observed in your classroom. So have you thought about or planned your questions? Some of the questions you're gonna be asking?

- I've thought about them, but they kind of just come to me. I feed off my students and one thing that I have learned, instead of giving them the answer, telling them where their mistake is to question them and ask them and kind of guide them there. Because ultimately I want them to be able to self-assess. So by me questioning them, they learn to question themselves. I mean, the obvious question would be is the, are the numbers increasing or decreasing? And then by how much. So those are, those are some questions you're gonna see on the criteria, the main questions they need to be asking themselves.

- Excellent. Which is huge there. That they'll be asking themselves, that's where we wanna go. So they own the learning. So you, and that's something you really are so well versed in, is being able to ask those questions. I know. So you're thinking about scaffolding up, you know, and starting with, so are the numbers increasing or decreasing, which is the foundation for this piece.

- Right.

- Excellent, excellent. So, so talk a little bit about the way that, that you plan to engage the students in the thinking process. I mean, you talked about the think aloud. Are there any other ways that you're gonna ensure that students are using those questions that you want them to use?

- Yes. One thing that I do that has found is helpful is I print out the flip chart that I'm using. So they have it, they have the problems directly in front of them so they're able to actually write on them. And as I'm modeling my thinking, they're writing my thinking down also. So they have that as a model right there in their journals. We do a lot on the whiteboards as well. That way when they hold 'em all up at one time, it's easier for me to see all of them at the same time. And they will write the questions down that we come up with together or the criteria, basically. They'll have that in front of them to refer to.

- Excellent. So I'll get to see that piece you've been working on a lot to refine is really making sure that you set the stage for that student to student feedback that's gonna be happening in there with having that criteria. 'Cause that's, that's important. How can they know what to do if they don't have, you know, how can they give feedback if they don't know what that might look and sound like? So, excellent, excellent. Are there anything or anything that you want me to know or that you think I need to know before I come in there? Is there any, any special circumstances or something you want me to be aware of?

- I have a pretty active class, so there's a lot of students talking at one time. We do a lot of group work, a lot of work as a table, come up with it as a group, compare answers. I would just say it's pretty, pretty chatty, pretty active classroom.

- So very active classroom, okay, sounds good. And so I know usually you'll fix me a little spot where you want me to sit where I won't be too much in the way. So I think we're good to go. I look forward to seeing your lesson tomorrow. Thank you so much.

- Thanks, you too.