Try, Fail, Revise, Repeat

Inside Teaching Lounge
February 2015
Recognizing Mistakes & Failures

Think about an instance in your teaching experience in which you did or tried something that failed or you consider a mistake.

If you haven’t yet had teaching experiences, consider the scariest potential teaching mistake or failure for you.
Common Mistakes or Failures

- Rushing
- Aiming to be friends with students
- Poor organization
- Working too hard and burning out
- Not asking for help
- Overly optimistic
- You do not have a clear set of expectations/goals
- Posing vague questions
- Over preparing
- Fail to establish relevance
Assessing Mistakes & Failures

What about how things went made you consider it a failure or a mistake?

How do you think you would assess whether something was successful or was a mistake/failed?

Can you pinpoint 3 clues or indicators that suggest this is a failure? If so, write those down.
Assessing Mistakes & Failures

Do you think people have similar ways of assessing their failures? Completely different?

Are these ways situation specific? Discipline specific?
Where do/did your indicators of failure come from?

Did you get feedback from someone? Students? OR Did you just feel like things did not go well?

Who defines ‘failure’ and ‘success’?
Assessing Mistakes & Failures

What are some reasons why you told yourself that you had failed?

OR

How would you know or think that you’d failed?

Do we feel stronger pressures NOT to fail from ourselves or from outside sources? Why?

Are we afraid of making mistakes in our teaching? Why or why not?
When you realized that you had made a mistake, how did it make you feel about yourself as a teacher?

OR

How do you think you would feel as teacher if your fear about failure/mistake was realized?
Responding to Mistakes & Failures

- Inadequate
- Apathetic
- Hopeless
- Discouraged
- Embarrassed
- Guilt
- Shame
Do/should we endeavor to invite mistakes or failures as a mechanism to generate growth?

Have you ever tried something while teaching that you expected might fail? How did you prepare yourself for that?
Think about your ‘failure’ example:

After the instance occurred, did you reflect on that failure from a teaching perspective?

What did this reflection entail?

If not, why not?
Failure can be difficult...

FAILURE
The harder you try, the more it hurts when you fail.

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Revising & Repeating

After you ‘failed’, did you take steps to revise your approach? What were these steps?

OR

What steps would/could you take?

Did things go differently/better? How did you decided that things went better?
“The power of believing that you can improve”

- Dr. Carol Dweck – TED Talk, December 2014
  - Dweck is a professor at Stanford and the author of *Mindset*, a classic work on motivation and "growth mindset."
  - The power of believing that you can improve
The Role of Failure

* For ourselves as teachers

"Ah, Miss Brimsley, I ask you: Which one of us has truly failed?"
For our students

The Role of Failure

IF I DIDN'T FLUNK SOMETHING EVERY ONCE IN A WHILE, HOW WOULD I EVER LEARN ANYTHING?
Learning from our teaching mistakes