**An assessment reflection: what assessments did you use and why and what did they indicate about how well students learned what you intended for them to learn?**

For my first lesson, our formal assessment was having each pair of students submit a completed T-chart graphic organizer that compared qualities about the two different animals they researched. According to Harada, this is a strong example of using a matrix to systematically organize information into columns to be able to compare the information (Harada, 72). More than half of the students were able to fill out their graphic organizer completely in the time allotted. There were some pairs who filled out the first half of the graphic organizer, but not the bottom half or they didn’t really give the best answers for the second half. The first half of the graphic organizer was more factual (where does the animal live, what climate does it prefer, what does it eat and how does it kill its prey). The second part required a little more inference as you had to distinguish between physical defense features you could see like spikes or camouflage versus special physical defenses you can’t see like having a strong sense of smell or being a good runner. Sometimes this was explicitly stated early in the database text and sometimes it wasn’t, so it required the kids to read all the way through the text and sometimes make inferences based on what they read. So I think the fact that the questions asked become more difficult as the graphic organizer progressed was probably why some pairs struggled to complete all of the organizer completely, not because they didn’t have enough time.

The librarian, the teacher, and myself were all walking around trying to talk kids through where they could find answer to parts of the graphic organizer they left blank, so I think there were a lot of kids that might have realized possible answers, but couldn’t articulate how to write the answers down. There were a couple pairs of students who seemed to be easily distracted by the pictures and did a lot more scrolling through the text than actually writing anything down. We three adults tried to spend more time working one-on-one with those kids, but ultimately, I don’t know what else we could have done to make these kids put pencil to paper. The teacher and I tried to pair the students so that less motivated kids were working with more motivated kids, and for the most part I think this was effective. In other cases, we had one pair where one of the students completed the entire graphic organizer about both animals himself while the other student just scrolled through the text, which the teacher says is how every assignment goes. So I’m honestly not sure what to do next time around to help those students more.  The other challenge was the information that some of the kids wrote down about their two animals sounded almost identical, so when it came time to create the visual poster the next week, they didn’t have a lot of differences written down to help them form an opinion about which animal would win in a fight. If we had had more time, I could have presented the class with a graphic organizer that was already filled out about two animals no one was researching and read through the graphic organizer to show the class the types of things they should be writing in their graphic organizer.

On the other hand, more than half of the kids filled their graphic organizer out so thoroughly that they were already drawing conclusions about the information they’d gathered and forming their opinion about which animal would win in a fight. Some pairs noticed that one animal they researched ate their partner’s animal or that one animal had a venom that often killed their partner’s animal. If they finished early, I let some of these students look through copies of the *Who Would Win?* books to get a sense of how the author of this series used facts to draw their conclusion about which animal would win at the end of the book. We had time for some pairs to share one interesting thing from their poster, which was a nice conclusion. So I would say the majority of the students grasped the concept of how to do research and compare animals using a graphic organizer.

For my second lesson, the assessment piece was the visual popplet poster and a checklist each pair completed to make sure they had the required elements in their poster. We used the checklist because the teacher said she has used this type of rubric with her students before; the checklist had the categories “I did it,” “almost there,” and “didn’t get it yet.” The popplet poster was a suggestion from the media specialist who had used this tool a long time ago in one of her media classes and she thought third graders could handle it. Every pair had really strong posters, even those pairs whose graphic organizers were only halfway completed. For some reason, I think the teacher, librarian and myself were better able to sit down and talk with each pair when they were discussing which animal would win in a fight and help them brainstorm their three reasons why. I think this really helped the pairs with slim amounts of information to tease out three reasons from the graphic organizers to make an argument in their popplet poster. Some of the reasons those pairs gave weren’t the most logical, but it was the best we could do given their half-way completed graphic organizers. Every pair completed all parts of their popplet poster according to their checklist, except for two pairs who were just missing their conclusion and I think that was primarily because they ran out of time. I definitely feel like all students grasped the opinion writing concept and how to use a digital tool to express this. Nearly all students really needed to work on their spelling and grammar however!  We had hoped a few pairs could have shared their posters, but we didn’t have time for that.

Overall, I think both lessons and their assessment pieces were really effective at giving the students more practice with opinion writing, researching and using digital tools.