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Student2(3)

What I learned

I learned from Ximena how to identify different species of trees by learning about different leaf structures/patterns of growth. The first thing that struck me about this learning experience was how passionate Ximena was about the subject matter. You could tell that it was a subject that she was very interested in and it came across as she was talking about it. I think that this really helps in the learning process. If a teacher is not excited about what he/she is teaching, how can you ever expect the students to really care about what they are learning? A teacher's excitement can easily be transferred to the class and when I think back about learning experiences that have stuck with me, there is always a teacher whose enthusiasm transmitted to me and made me care more about learning the subject.

Also, Ximena was very open to me asking questions at any point, even if they were slightly off topic. This was great for me because it allowed me to get background information on the subject even if it did not directly pertain to identifying trees, which in turn helped me with the identification. Also, there were several questions that Ximena did not know the answer to, but instead of faking her way through an answer, she was very open to admitting to what she did not know/remember. This was important because it established my trust in her. I knew that I could take what she was telling me as fact because she admitted when it wasn't. I think that establishing a level of trust is very important in teaching and learning especially when it is peer to peer.

However, what stood out the most to me and was as the most effective part of the learning experience was that Ximena was attempting to empower me to identify trees on my own. I was expecting to simply be told what different trees were, but that is not what happened. She did not simply point to trees and say "This is an Oak because..." or "This is a Maple because...". Instead, she gave me the knowledge I needed to identify any tree on my own. She allowed me to discover the relevant parts and then I could go to any Tree identification book and look it up. This made the learning experience very relevant because now I can identify for myself any tree.

What I taught

I taught Brian how to juggle. I do not know if our learning styles differed, but I realized quite quickly that it is difficult to put a physical discipline into words. I taught juggling the same way that I had originally learned it, by breaking it down into steps. First we learned arm position and what the throw should look like by just using one ball, then we added the second and finally the third.

Whether this method worked for Brian, I am not sure. He seemed very open to it, and I think he did very well. I am aware that not everyone learns the same way, unfortunately I had a lot of trouble trying to come up with another way to teach juggling. Having never taught juggling before I did not have personal experience to draw on, so I just had to go with how I learned and what worked for me. In an ideal learning environment, I would have had at least one other method for Brian to try. If I were to do it again, perhaps I would try using handkerchiefs because they fall slower allowing one to focus less on the catching part of juggling. However, because they fall slower, you don't really feel the timing that you need for juggling. But I realize that it may work for others even though I don't think handkerchiefs would have worked for me.

Another challenge was that juggle cannot really be taught in an hour or two. It requires practice until your body starts to remember the physical movements (kind of like riding a bike). What I did was give Brian practice with each step of juggling, but to be honest for him to actually learn juggling, it would take practice outside of our session together. So I was forced to move onto the next step before the previous was mastered and I am unsure how that affected the learning experience for Brian.

Overall both experiences were very positive, and in both cases I felt that I worked very well with the other person. What I found is that when the teaching/learning experience is one on one, it is much easier to adjust to one another's style. Unfortunately this is not what it is like in a classroom where

teacher and students must contend with many people and many various learning styles. It requires a very different way of interacting.

[Alisa: I also noticed that in working with someone one-on-one, as a teacher, you are more conscious of changing a teaching technique to utilize the best learning style for the individual. I was constantly thinking, "Is she getting it?" "Is she ready to learn the next step?", and as a student, it is almost natural to give feedback to the teacher on what feels most comfortable.]