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PFL

June 9, 2017

Reflection on Instruction

Planning for four separate days on the trail was challenging. I found myself unable to focus on the small details simply because of the volume of work I had to complete; however, most of the plans changed once we were actually in the woods. Because of the nature of this course, I think being flexible is crucial with planning and implementation. I believe it would be more beneficial to plan for change rather than have the details of every hour mapped out beforehand, which was my aim at the beginning of the class. In the future, I will plan by looking at all surrounding trails just in case the route needs to change, and I will have additional activities prepared if there is extra time or if there is inclement weather.

For the basic instructional strategies, I felt as though I put safety first in most situations, almost in an overbearing manner at times. This also made balancing directive and experiential teaching difficult. Being directive gave me a sense of control over the situation, but contributed to making my participants feel smothered. For example, on the Twin Arches hike, I wanted to keep firm boundaries when we were at the arches but I had no explanation for why students could not explore around the tunnel at the base of the arch. Gathering information will help me with setting boundaries and allowing students to have their own experience. I struggled to create a need for my days and explain why things were important to know as an outdoor leader because I couldn't explain it myself. In the

future, I can prepare myself more by doing my readings and research. I think empowering my participants was something that came naturally to me, though. I genuinely care about my peers and wanted them to feel comfortable and secure. I will continue to work on age appropriate risk management strategies through gathering information and developing judgment by following through with decisions that I believe are safe.

Teaching on the days that I was leading was almost non-existent. Discussions and group activities were my default to get information across to my peers. I do not believe that this presented a challenge to the students. For instance, on the Environmental Integration day, there was no teaching and the scavenger hunt was not challenging for the students. It was collaborative since they had to work in pairs, but not necessarily experiential since there was no reflection on the experience. My biggest struggle with the SPEC model is how to incorporate each of the components, but it is an excellent guideline that I will continue to follow.

For the instructor cycle, I believe I do well with designing and coaching. I need to work on being flexible with my designs, but I enjoy planning and helping my participants. I struggle with maintaining a challenging learning environment, though. Working to challenge my peers proved to be very difficult for me. I also struggled to confirm the learning and facilitate connections. This ties in with how little I taught on my days and how I did not create a need.

I believe my judgment is still developing. I find myself afraid to make mistakes, which can help me develop good judgment. I believe that gathering information and staying intentional about my decisions will help with my judgment and decision making in the backcountry. I feel confident in assessing risk, I am just terrified of something bad

happening which contributes to my mother-hen nature. With my outdoor living skills, I allow myself to get lazy but I feel confident with the skills. I do not feel as confident with my planning and logistics skills, specifically planning for multiple days in the backcountry. I think I tend to over or underestimate the capabilities of groups with which I work. With leadership skills, I definitely allow my emotions to cloud my head and my demeanor completely changes. This can affect the group and I need to remember that leading in the backcountry is not about me; shifting my focus on the participants helps me overcome my emotions. My environmental integration and educational skills are lacking with theories and concepts. I need to work on developing environmental literacy and educational foundations.

Moving forward, I need to be sure to gather all the information before I make a decision. This will help in the planning and designing stage as well as implementation. I need to be flexible with the plans and be mentally and physically prepared for the itinerary to change. When things do change, I need to follow through with the decisions after gathering all of the information and not default to group opinion. I will continue to gauge group capabilities to create appropriate challenges and boundaries. With time, my fence will move to encompass a larger area for my participants to roam.