WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE WATCH TEACHING?

Thank you to Charles E. Wilkes II for selecting this new videoclip and for discussing it with me.
WHY DO WE WATCH TEACHING?
SOME REASONS . . .

- As part of being a teacher!
  and because learning in classrooms is fascinating and complex
- To understand learning and how it is co-produced through interactions
- To learn more about the practice of teaching—develop language for talking about it and working on developing it to help students learn
- To understand the resources and supports entailed by the work, done at enormous and overwhelming scale

. . . And, as the title of this workshop indicates—to evaluate and improve it.
WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE WATCH TEACHING?

- Who are you?*
- Why are you here?*
- What are you fascinated with, interested in, concerned about with respect to mathematics classrooms?

*Thanks to Maisha Winn for these first two provocative questions.
A LITTLE BIT ABOUT THE SETTING…

- “Elementary Math Lab” (or “EML”): summer program for 29 fifth-grade students
- Demographic: majority African American, several Latin@; many multi-dialectical or multi-lingual; mostly low-income families; from a school district in a traditionally working-class urban community
- Program focuses on fractions, mathematical explanation and reasoning, and developing students’ mathematical and academic identities
- Observers: teachers, interns, researchers, and others who are learning about students, teaching practice, and developing their own skills
EXPLORATION: A FIRST VIEWING

- We’ll watch a few minutes of a mathematics lesson.
- Afterwards: Quiet writing time (QWT)
QUESTION

Which rod is three times as long as light green?
FIRST VIEWING
QUIET WRITING TIME (QWT)

- Choose a blank row in the Google doc
- Jot a few notes:
  - What did you see?
  - What did you hear?
  - What did you feel?
PARTNER READING TIME

Read what people wrote; discuss with the person next to you:

- What did people see, hear, and feel?
- What differences do you notice?
- Are there patterns of commonality?
THINK . . .

- How does who we are—our social identities (racial, ethnic, linguistic, gendered, class-based, national origin, professional) and what we have experienced, and studied—as well as why we are here shape what we see when we watch teaching?
EXPLORATION #2:
EXPERIMENTING WITH THREE DIFFERENT FRAMES

First, some additional structure:
A little more context: It is the first day of class. In total, these students and teacher have worked together for just 80 minutes.

1. Some students know one another, but many students also do not.

2. “Three times as long as” is a complex linguistic construction, interpreted differently by different language speakers; its mapping to a specific mathematical relationship is not singular.
FRAME #1: STUDENTS’ STRENGTHS

1. Select two of these five students: Langston, Madison, Lauren, Michio, Larayne, Jerone
   - What does each one know and know how to do?
   - What is your evidence?
FRAME #2: PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT: SPACE, ACTION, AND POSITION

2. Watch the setting (without sound).
   - What do you see about the “space”? What are its key features?
   - How are these being used and by whom at different points?
   - How are the teacher and each of the students acting in and using the space? (physical movement, expression, gesture, position)
FRAME #3: MATHEMATICS AND MATHEMATICAL PRACTICE

- What mathematics do you see in this segment?
- Who is doing mathematics, and what math are they doing?
- Identify specific examples and why you would label that “mathematics.”
SECOND VIEWING
DISCUSSION

- Turn to people next to and behind or in front of you to form a small group (no more than 4) who used the same frame.
- Talk about what you saw and heard with this frame.
- How did the frame interact with who you are and what you care about and know? Did it shape what you saw and heard?
WHAT DO WE SEE WHEN WE WATCH THE WORK OF TEACHING?

Viewing focus:

What is the work of teaching in this segment? i.e.,

- What is the teacher doing? What is your evidence?
- What is the teacher not doing? What is your evidence?
QUIET WRITING TIME (QWT)

- Return to your row in the Google doc
- Add a few notes, in a different color:
  - What do you see or hear on this last viewing that you did not see or hear at first?
DISCUSSION

What is the work of teaching in this segment? i.e.,

- What is the teacher doing? What is your evidence?
- What is the teacher not doing? What is your evidence?
SEEING TEACHING: WHY IS IT DIFFICULT—AND DOES IT MATTER?

1. Much of teaching is invisible work (Lewis, 2007; Star, 1999).
2. Disconnect between those who comment on teaching and those who do it and experience it, as a function of racial, ethnic, linguistic, gendered, class-based, and professional identities.
3. Student perspective and experience often not included in analyses of teaching.
4. Language for describing teaching is thin and imprecise.
5. Weak norms within the profession (and across communities) for watching and discussing teaching (compare typical observation of teaching with sports video analyses).
6. Rush to judgment and evaluation.

But: Teaching has powerful impact on learning; seeing teaching is necessary for helping to develop and improve it. It matters.
(How) Could we build capacity for seeing teaching?

Could we work on seeing with the complexity needed for practice?

Could we do this in ways that seek and respect different and also conflicting and irreconcilable perspectives?

What might we be able to learn about this while we are here?

Slides will be available on Deborah Ball’s website within a week.