

Appendix C

EFFECTIVE CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS (Cooperating Teacher)

Cooperating teachers, especially inexperienced ones, often find it difficult to observe and evaluate a student teacher's performance as they teach a lesson. The relative inactivity of sitting and looking makes the observation time seem tedious.

Here are a variety of simple observational tools that could be used by a cooperating teacher. Properly chosen and interpreted, these techniques could lend purpose and interest to the observational period and provide a basis for a fruitful, insightful conference with the student teacher.

Seating Chart Observation Records (Score):

Several observational tasks can be accomplished with a class-seating chart as the basic form. Each is designed to help the teacher take a closer look at a specific behavior-of one student, the whole class, or the student teacher as they interact with the class.

At Task: This observation provides data on whether individual students, during a classroom activity, were engaged in the task or tasks that the student teacher indicated were appropriate. The observer may examine each student in the class every three or four minutes or a few students every minute.

1. On a seating chart, indicate name, sex, and any other identifying characteristics necessary for later interpretation.
2. Create a legend to represent "at task" and each type of inappropriate behavior.

Example:

- A. At task
 - B. Stalling
 - C. Doing other work
 - D. Out of seat
 - E. Talking to neighbor about unrelated work
3. Examine systematically; every three to four minutes for each student in the class, or every minute for three or four students. Put the legend in the box representing a desk-"1A" would mean "First observation-at task", "2A" means "Second observation-at task", etc.
 4. Continue until the period or lesson ends.
 5. Analyze the findings. Some of the questions you might ask: What percent of the time did each student remain on task? When the student was not on task, what activities did they do? At what point in the period was the student on or off task? Were some sections of the room more consistently on task? Why?

Verbal Flow:

This observation indicates the patterns of a teacher's verbal behavior and differences between students in their verbal participation.

1. Make a seating chart and identify students by name, sex, and whether they are high achieving, average, or low achieving.
2. Use arrows to indicate the flow of verbal interaction. Place arrows within the box representing the student's desk. Point the head of the arrow toward the person to whom the comment is directed. To save space, you may place a hatch mark on the arrow for similar comments.

If you wish to identify the comments more specifically, use other legends over the arrows. Examples of student teacher categories: Praise (+), Criticism (-), Questions (?), Statement of questions to entire class (I). Student categories: Correct Response (*), Incorrect Response (X), Question (??), Student comment to whole class (C).

Possible questions:

- Who does the student teacher talk to the most?
- What kinds of comments does the student teacher make?
- Which students respond most often?
- Who was neither called on nor commented during the lesson?

Movement Patterns:

This observation shows the traffic flow of teachers and students, highlighting congested areas and inadequate seating arrangements that might affect management, discipline, etc.

For a specified period of time (perhaps one period or one hour), an observer can map on paper the student teacher's movement about the classroom. The observer can use the following directions:

1. Draw a map of the classroom, including the furniture arrangement.
2. Chart with a pencil the student teacher's location at the beginning of class, and follow their movements throughout the agreed-upon time period.
3. Consecutively number points at which the student teacher stops.
4. Draw concentric circles around points where the student teacher remains for significant time periods: one circle for every three minutes.

Possible Questions:

In which areas of the classroom did the student teacher spend most of their time?

Did the student teacher neglect any area(s)?

Did the students' activities determine the student teacher's movements?

Does the student teacher want to make any changes, based on the new information? Why or why not?

Verbatim Records:

Another basic type of observation is the keeping of written records of a particular aspect of the student teacher's verbal behavior.

Questioning: list all student teacher questions in a lesson. Analyze the data as to types of questions and clarity of intent. It is also worthwhile to determine the number of seconds that elapse between the end of the question and the response by a student or the student teacher. More time usually gives more thoughtful and complete answers and encourages more students to participate.

Controlling: record all student teacher control statements on two different occasions. Use the same amount of time and the same type of lesson for each observation. Analyze as to number of control statements needed and the language used.

Student Behavior (Pie Graph):

Divide a circle into 30 segments. At the beginning of each minute, write brief note in one segment about the actions of a student. At the end of the 30-minute observation period, analyze the student's actions: What percent of the time was the student on task, talking, etc.?