



## Conducting Effective Classroom Observations



Many of the experiences encountered during observation/participation in early field experience will provide a rich background for your development as a professional teacher; therefore, journaling, recording, and analyzing events as they happen are all important parts of the pre-teaching experience.

It is important for you to plan observations and activities well in advance. Know the purposes and goals for each observation. Careful planning is critical to a valid observation.

The good observer is objective. This is difficult since each person's past experience, value system, and relation to observed events serve to maximize certain aspects and minimize others.

Since your previous teaching experience is limited, you should not make premature judgments and pronouncements about the schools and teachers you observe. Your role is one of description, not criticism. Try to suspend your biases and strive for objectivity. In everyday life as well as in professional circles, it is not always necessary to express an opinion on each and every topic discussed.

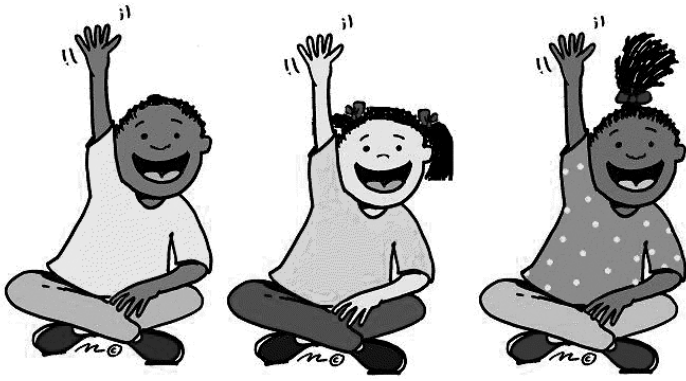


The following observation instrument is designed to guide the observer to "observe with meaning." Use these suggestions to make mental, and if relevant, physical notes of your observations.

1) Observe the learning environment. Note the size of the space, the arrangement, furniture, equipment, number of students, displays, storage of materials, noise level, etc.



2) Note pupil/teacher interaction. What are the teacher's methods of building rapport and maintaining a positive learning environment? What is the ratio of teacher-talk to student-talk? How does the teacher recognize good behavior or correct responses? How are transitions made between activities? How are non-verbal cues used by the teacher? The students?



3) Observe student activity. Are the students capable of completing assignments on their own? What activities are provided for students when regular assignments are completed? What types of activities are students engaged in with other students?

4) Observe teacher activity. Was evaluation of pupil work apparent? How? Is there evidence of teacher preparation of materials, lessons, etc.? How are record keeping, housekeeping, and other routine duties handled?

5) Note instructional specifics. What organization patterns are used (grouping, etc.)? Are the goals different regarding individual instruction vs. group activity? How does the teacher convey the goals? What content, or content areas, are being learned? What learning aids are being used?