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Educ 340-Observation Reflection

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Reflection Paper

By being in an actual classroom observing experienced teachers, I have learned a great deal more about the way the classroom works. Watching the students go through many of the processes and motions which have been discussed in class, connects a textbook to real life and actual occurrences rather than just words on a page. The observations which I completed for this class have given me great detail into the process of teaching, the different ideas that are out there, and many great and interesting ideas that I may implement in my classroom within the next few years. These observations have provided me with a better understanding of the text's basic ideas and what to do with my very own classroom.

Many of the observations which I was involved in focused on what the teachers labeled 'writers workshop' in the lower grade levels. These teachers did not follow the text's writers workshop process but would customize it to meet their own preferences. In three separate classrooms, the teachers had very similar setups. Each student would have a 'writer's folder' in which they would get out during every meeting. The students would store their past completions and present ideas in the pockets. Each student would be given new pages to add to continue to expand his or her ideas and complete newly assigned works. During each meeting, the students would bring their folders and sit around the author's chair. The teachers would

present a mini lesson focusing on one aspect that the students had been working on. Many times they were writing poems or letters; therefore, the focus was mainly directed towards word choice, topic selection, or expanding the students' thoughts into words. After the completion of the mini lessons, the students would spend 30 minutes writing in the folders. Many times, the teacher would encourage a few readers to do a read aloud so that the students could showcase their works.

While I was visiting the lower grades, I took a moment to look around the rooms for connections to the text. What I found directly related to the text. I found posters of the writing and reading processes. The steps were the same concepts as the text only labeled slightly differently for children friendly words. I saw word walls in most of the classrooms which contained high frequency words and vocab words. One teacher followed many of the word wall steps found in our course textbook. She was very affective teaching these words which was evident to me as they quickly responded to the teacher, seemed to be engaged, and were willing to participate. They were also eager to use these words in their writers workshop writings.

The high level elementary classrooms mainly focused on literature circles and vocab development. The classroom was divided into two groups focusing on the books: *Bridge to Taribethia* and *Pinball*. The literature circles were not modeled directly from the text. The teacher did not split the groups up into small groups of four or five but rather two large groups of fifteen. The students did not seem to have a choice in their book selections like the text stated should occur. During Education 340, the class participated in literature circles which gave me a basic understanding of this process. The elementary teacher gave the students the same jobs which we

focused on in class. The students worked on their jobs and many times successfully accomplished the main goals of developing comprehension. The worksheet which they filled out were also very similar to the ones given as examples in Education 340.

The students in the upper grades also focused on vocab development. As we read in our text, there are good ways to develop vocab and others which have gone out of style and proven not affective. This teacher did not follow the recommended steps suggested by the text, but instead followed the old school style of teaching a vocabulary lesson. She gave the list of vocab words in which they went over as a class. The students had to find definitions and use the words in a sentence. Every Friday, the students were given a spelling test which meant that afterwards, the words could be forgotten and never retained or applied. This was not something I found to prove useful in my classroom. I felt that the text provided better and more tangible ways of teaching vocabulary development.

A third idea which was used in the upper grades was the concept of reading a short book as a form of a reader's workshop. This was not the process given in the text, but it did provide the same purpose and met the same concepts. The teacher would hold a mini lesson about a concept she wanted the students to focus on when reading the short stories for example folklore, descriptive works, and tall tales. The teacher would then do a read aloud, think aloud which directly followed what the text suggested to do which seemed to help guide the students. After completing the short book, the teacher would then form groups or partnerships, and the students would focus on what the teacher had just completed in the mini lesson. There was a form of written assessments given in order for the teacher to gather written proof of

her student's understanding.

I found several good ideas in these classrooms which I will use and apply in my classroom. The lower grade levels' writers workshop seemed to be affective and easily followed by the students of that particular age level. If I have a young class, I will choose to develop my writers workshop as these teachers did by simplifying it to fit my personal preferences. The word wall was another very interesting concept which I had never been exposed to prior to this class. I find that I love this idea and most certainly will have one in my room regardless of grade level. The reader's workshop focusing on short books would be another consideration for my room depending on grade level. The vocabulary instruction which I was able to observe will not be something I wish to implement in my classroom. I feel that there are better ways for children to learn besides memorization.

There was one concept which I found very affective that was not found in our text. This was called "no walk no talk." A teacher had a rowdier class and developed this system to help the students focus on their writing folders. The mini lesson would conclude, and the teacher would dictate "no walk no talk." The students would then return to their seats without talking, and they would remain there. This is when the students had to focus on their writings. The teacher would start with a five minute period of "no walk no talk" and then lengthen it if needed. The students responded well to this rule, and I feel that it would be beneficial to me in the future.

After the observations were complete, I felt that I learned a great deal about the topics discussed in class. I found that some of the modifications that the classroom teachers made helped the process flow better than the books suggestions.

I enjoyed seeing the teachers add their own ideas and personalities to things that seemed so dry when reading them in the textbook. The processes and ideas from the text were evident everywhere, even if they were in a different format. The observations provided me with excellent ideas and models for my future classroom. This seemed to be more beneficial to me personally than reading the text. I enjoyed learning and seeing the different methods of teaching through these observations. I hope that the skills I learned about and hopefully acquired from these observations will prove beneficial in the near future as I start to student teach.