

Stephanie Bennett

Prof. Schilling

EDUC 340

2 May 2007

Observation Reflection

Throughout the course of the spring semester, I managed to obtain 11 hours of observations in an elementary setting. I was also fortunate enough to observe a special education classroom. Grades that were seen throughout these observations range from 1st to 6th grade. Kindergarten and 3rd grade are the only two grades that I did not get to see. The schools I went to were Manchester, Laketon, and South Whitley. With these observations, good and bad techniques were witnessed. All the techniques I observed were discussed throughout Lit. Block as a "do" or "don't."

Writers' Workshop was a great technique that I observed at two different grade levels. The first was at the 2nd grade level. The students sat on the floor as a group and each student had their own mini notepad. The teacher sat up front with a chart and as a class poems were discussed. They talked about how a poem is formed, ideas, and read example poems to get ideas flowing. The student's main focus was descriptive words. Notes were taken in the student's mini notepads and then they were dismissed to start work on poetry. For students to get focused, the teacher called for "no walk no talk" time.

As the students work, the teacher travels around the room to check on progression. Some students were stuck and struggling on ideas. To get creative juices flowing more, the teacher asked a couple students to go around and share ideas of what they had so far. This workshop was

intended for more than one day but some students had finished their poems. The students that were done had an opportunity to share their finished work with the class.

The other workshop I saw was at the 1st grade level. This class was working on story writing, beginning-middle-end process. This workshop came at a good time because they just had their Spring break. Each student got a planning sheet and as a group, story creation was introduced. To start off, the teacher comes up with an idea and fills in her planning sheet on the overhead. While she is writing, she is also thinking aloud to model for her students what she wants.

On the planning sheet, the students can write whatever they want to gather their thoughts. The teacher goes around the room checking on each child's progress. Spelling, writing form, and punctuation are the specifics the teacher is focusing on. For the final product, the students will type their story on lined paper. Pictures can also be added to the final product as well. When the final product is finished, the students will have an opportunity to share by doing author's chair.

Other great techniques I observed were reading groups and running records. First, reading groups are formed. There is an advanced group reading at their level or above, a middle group that reads at the first grade level, and the third group which is almost but not quite at the reading level. The third group goes to specials to work on reading. The advanced group goes with the teacher's aide and the middle group goes with the main teacher.

One thing I liked about this time was that each student had a reading bag. Every week the students would get books to work on and read. Before a running record is done, the book is discussed and the students get to take them home to practice. The teacher had four students in her

group. One student was chosen to do a running record while the other three students read their books to themselves but aloud.

Before the assessment begins, the teacher begins by reintroducing the book. She also asks the students about specific parts of the book to see what he or she remembers. Next, the student begins reading. The books the students read are at their reading level. To assess the student, the teacher has a benchmark of the book for that running record. As the student read, the teacher kept track of added words, omitted words, words read wrong, words that are too hard to pronounce, and self corrections. The teacher will have the student read the whole book or part of it. By the time the evaluation form is completed, the teacher will know if the student's reading performance has gone up, down, or stayed the same. To check for comprehension, there are questions on the back of the assessment that go along with the story.

Another useful technique I got to observe was in the special ed. classroom. It was a mix of guided reading and read aloud. This was a good idea because the students I observed are really struggling with reading. They are in 5th and 6th grade and the students are reading at 3rd or 4th grade level. The teacher and students each had their own copy of the same book. The teacher was the first one to read and model what she wanted to see and hear from the kids. Next the teacher would call on a student to take over. If the student got stuck, she would help him out by giving hints and not simply telling the word. After the student got to a certain point, the teacher would ask him a comprehension question about what he just read. The teacher would take over and the process would continue as she called on different students after she read first. It was not round robin reading. This technique was also ok because it was not in a gen. ed. classroom and the students in the group had the same problems/difficulties.

The only technique I observed that I will not use in my classroom is round robin reading. Together a class was reading a war novel. The teacher started reading first and then called on random students to read and every student read once. At any point a student was reading, the teacher would stop and ask questions. It could be about what the student had just said or what a student had read before. When they finished reading for the day, the teacher would hand out a worksheet for the students to fill out. This worksheet had questions over the material the class just read. It was due by the end of the day.

I got to see a lot of things while observing. Read aloud, guided reading, journal writing, and students working on writing in general. Anytime students had a writing idea, they would write it down and possibly work on it for later use. When it came to writing, I liked how teachers used some type of planning technique to help the students out. For example, idea webs were used in a lot of classrooms. The student would place an idea in the middle of the web and branch out from that one idea related information.

From my observations, I am sure that I will definitely use two of the techniques for my future classroom. A lot of it also depends on what grade I have once I become a teacher. Running records are great assessments for reading comprehension. It also shows you what the student is struggling with specifically and student-teacher relationships are also formed. Writers' Workshop is a must for my classroom as well. It is a fun and great way to develop writing skills and students' creativity. A lot of planning is involved but it will be worth it in the end.

Overall, the observations were not as bad as I first thought and turned out to be very useful or meaningful. There is only so much experience a student can get in the classroom. The rest of the experience comes from seeing a concept in action and/or actual teaching. Most of the

techniques I saw were very effective and will be used for future use such as Writers' Workshop, web planning, running records, and etc. The round robin reading was the only negative. It is a great feeling to see the kids get excited about learning and knowing that as a teacher, you helped give the students that feeling. I hope to experience that one day