

The Middle School Classroom  
A Classroom Environment Observation

Course: Introduction to Teaching 111

Professor Eastman

Observation By: Stephanie Hofer

Classroom Observed: Mrs. Susan Griffey, Shawnee Middle School

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## The Middle School Classroom

Over the past week, I have been taking notes about what the middle school classroom environment is like. I observed Mrs. Griffey's seventh and eighth grade classes, which gave me a good perspective. I took notes concerning the classroom management plan, such as the classroom rules and enforcement system. I also was able to examine the classroom arrangement and how the classroom itself was set up, based on where resources are located.

Mrs. Griffey has a truly effective classroom management plan. Each year, she begins by distributing to her students a packet that contains all of the rules and expectations for the upcoming school year or grading period. According to my copy of the packet, the classroom rules are very basic, just like any other classroom. Students are to be in class and in their assigned seats on time. Students are expected to have all required materials everyday and to begin working on class work as soon as class begins. All directions must be followed carefully and students are supposed to raise their hand to ask questions. Students are only dismissed from class with Mrs. Griffey's permission, not just the sound of the bell. Respect for others, their ideas, differences, and personal belongings are a must. Homework for other classes may not be done during Spanish class. Most importantly, students must follow all rules in the Fort Wayne Community Schools Handbook.

If students choose not to comply with any of these rules, punishments will be in order. After the first offense of breaking a rule, the student would receive a simple verbal warning. If the student does not listen to the verbal warning and still continues to misbehave, he or she will face the second level of punishment. Mrs. Griffey has a neon binder that is designated for behavioral problems. Any student that has to face the second level of punishment will get his or her name written in the binder, along with a description of their offense. This binder is showed to the administration frequently. If the student still continues to be a disruption, the third level of punishment will be in action. Typically, the third offense is a referral to the office, but the punishments may vary depending on the situation.

Along with specific rules and enforcement systems, Mrs. Griffey also has other important information written in her packet of expectations. She describes the students' textbook and offers ways to study from it most efficiently. She requests, but does not require, for students to have a folder to organize class work and materials. Also included in the packet are the grading scale and procedure, tardy policy, regulations for hall passes, how absences should be handled, how late work is dealt with, and how to communicate with or get help from the teacher.

It is important to have a strong classroom management plan, but it is equally important to have a classroom arrangement that is beneficial for the learners. As I entered Mrs. Griffey's

Spanish class, I began to notice all of the different visual aid and cultural pieces around her classroom. Everywhere I looked, I saw eye-catching posters and signs. Each wall and bulletin board is decorated and filled with helpful vocabulary posters or pictures from Spanish speaking countries. Interesting artifacts can foster an interesting learning facility, which is why it is important to engage the students' attention. Students also have easy access to bookshelves containing student resources, such as textbooks, research books, and other reference materials. In fact, the whole back wall and corner are designed to be very student-friendly and helpful. Because of the way the classroom is shaped, the students' desks are arranged in rows, but some are in groups of four to provide everyone with more space around the room. Also located for student use in the back portion of the room is the resource table, used for working with individual students or for group work.

The opposite end of the classroom is where the teacher's materials are located. Unlike most classrooms, Mrs. Griffey's room is very spacious and contains many built-in shelving units and storage options. She has bookshelves designated for students as well as a few for her only. Her personal space is well-organized and is very open for easy access by both herself and her students. The way her area is set up makes for a very welcoming environment for students to ask her questions when she is busy at her desk. All of her important information that may not be appropriate for students to see is located in the very corner, which makes it easy to access for her and tougher to access for students. Her area leads right into the main front area of open space, used as her "teaching stage," where the overhead projector can be easily maneuvered or where she has enough room to move around to maps or the chalkboard. With this open space, it is also easier for students to see her as she is instructing them.

By viewing a copy of Mrs. Griffey's classroom rules and by analyzing how her room is arranged, I have learned more about the middle school environment as a whole. Students at this age are not quite young adults, but they are definitely not children either. In order to be a successful educator for this in-between group, I will need to incorporate classroom management skills that are mature, but clearly explained. It is important to not over explain, like an elementary teacher would have to because these students need a sense of maturity. However, it would not be appropriate or rewarding to be too vague with rules or expectations either because they still are young enough to need a large amount of direction. The same goes for how a middle school teacher should arrange his or her classroom. If I was the educator, I would certainly not make it look like a playground, mirroring an elementary classroom. I would also not want my classroom to be as blank or as independent-learning-centered as a high school setting because these students are not ready for that type of freedom yet. In order to become a successful middle school teacher, I would have to intertwine the concept of complete direction with the idea of student independence. I would need to construct a classroom management plan that incorporates these two concepts of teaching and arrange my classroom for optimal learning.

**EDUC 111  
ANALYTICAL WRITING RUBRIC**

<b>Name:</b> <i>Hofer</i>	<b>Section:</b> Classroom management	<b>Date:</b> 01.20.09	<b>Score:</b> <u>30</u> /30	
	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Ideas &amp; Content</b> [Ex., Answers to four questions; Details and examples]	Clear, focused topic; Provides interesting and relevant details; Fresh ideas	Clear, focused topic; Shows promise; Sketchy development of expected content	No clear purpose or central theme; Reads like a collection of random thoughts	No content knowledge provided; Unclear or confusing
<b>Organization</b> [Ex., Introduction; Body of Information; Closure]	Strong introduction and conclusion obvious; Smooth transitions between ideas; Displays order as structure moves reader through text	Introduction and conclusion present; Some good transitions; Logical, yet ineffective structure	No internal structure; No clear transitions; Awkward pacing throughout; Details in random order	No order within text; Confusing pacing
<b>Word Choice</b> [Ex., Details related to grade level; Professional terms]	Specific and accurate terms; Strong imagery; Striking, yet natural phrasing; Powerful verbs; Incorporates professional jargon	Correct, yet terms not precise; Lacks punch, yet gets message across; Few energetic verbs; May sound verbose	Limited vocabulary; Vague and abstract words used; Incorrectly uses clichés and/or jargon	Inappropriate terms throughout; Predominately slang and informal language
<b>Sentence Fluency</b> [Ex., Complete sentences; without run-ons]	Easy flow; Easily read aloud; Varied sentence structure; Sounds natural; Complex sentence contains closely related ideas	Good control of simple sentence structure; Favors one pattern; Sentences go together	Difficult to follow; Choppy, rambling, or incomplete sentences; Not natural sounding; Monotonous	Awkward to read; Incomplete sentences difficult to read.
<b>Conventions</b> [Ex., Capitalization; grammar; punctuation; spelling; paragraphing] meaning	Grammar usage correct; Smooth punctuation; Correct spelling; Sound paragraphing	Spelling usually correct; Grammar problems not serious; Acceptable paragraphing; Internal punctuation errors	Frequent spelling errors; Incorrect paragraphing; Grammar/usage errors cloud the meaning; Many punctuation errors	Errors distract from content; Need to improve writing skills
<b>Voice</b>	Writer speaks to reader	Sincere, but not engaged	Distanced from topic	Confusing; Inconsistent

Comments: