

**West Windsor - Plainsboro Regional School District
Observation of Instruction**



May 24, 2005

The Observation Report

Purpose

In the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District we believe that the process of observation is a collaborative effort between the teacher and the administrator for the improvement of instruction. We believe that nothing is more important than what goes on between teachers and students everyday. Therefore, we want teachers who are doing a good job to get authentic and useful feedback. We want to provide a knowledgeable facilitator who will help teachers to articulate and meet their own agendas and who will help them to solve problems. We want to monitor the fidelity of the curriculum delivered in relation to state and local standards. We want to identify weak areas and focus teachers on specific steps for improvement. Finally, we want valid and reliable data for making decisions about rehiring and the granting of tenure. To that end, we use an observation report form that enhances the collaborative approach by providing specific feedback to the teacher.

Lesson Overview

The Lesson Overview section of the observation report form provides a summary of the lesson with background and context. It provides objective information as a basis for the observation report. It may also include other items listed on the reference sheet.

Lenses

The Classroom Management, Instructional Practice, Classroom Climate, and Curriculum Design and Assessment sections of the form are “lenses of instruction” through which we provide the specific feedback. Within these sections we support claims (your preparation and planning were evident) with evidence (the demonstration computer and all supplies were prepared before class began) and include the effect on students (so that students could immediately begin the lesson). Suggestions for alternatives or new techniques that will help the teacher to stretch and grow may be embedded within these sections. It is not necessary to “fill in” each section with feedback of equal length. The form is merely a template. It is not designed to limit discussion of important parts of the lesson, nor overemphasize less important parts.

Summary Statement

The summary statement indicates the overall effectiveness and quality of the lesson and includes a restatement of suggestions or alternatives, particularly for the non-tenured or beginning teacher. It, too, may include other statements as indicated on the reference sheet.

Reference Sheet

The reference sheet itself includes examples of the common language and concepts necessary for successful evaluation. We do not feel compelled to comment on every item listed on the reference sheet, preferring to concentrate on those items most germane to the observation. For a more thorough discussion of the lenses and the terms that apply to each, see Sapphire and Gower, *The Skillful Teacher* and *Understanding by Design*, by Wiggins and McTighe.

In summary, the observation report is designed to help administrators provide specific, knowledgeable, objective feedback to teachers within a context that supports both teachers and administrators viewing themselves as constant learners.

Lenses of Instruction

The lenses of instruction provide a way for supervisors and teachers to observe teaching practices. Each lens focuses on a different area of teaching. Teachers will receive copies of *The Skillful Teacher, 5th edition* by John Saphier and Robert Gower and *Understanding by Design, 2nd edition* by Wiggins and McTighe when they join the West Windsor-Plainsboro faculty. We encourage the use of these resources to obtain an in-depth understanding of each lens. The chapters noted in this summary are from these books.

Classroom Management

- Skillful teachers make certain moves to engage students' **attention**: to capture it initially, to maintain it, and to recapture or refocus it when it wanders off course. Within this general class of attention moves it is possible to distinguish five categories of teacher behaviors: Desisting, Alerting, Enlisting, Acknowledging, and Winning. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 2: Attention).
- The concept of **momentum** pertains to the smooth, ongoing flow of events in the classroom. When momentum is properly kept up, students experience smooth and rapid transitions from one event to another. There are specific behaviors that teachers perform to maintain momentum and keep things moving along in the classroom. The sub-parameters of momentum include: provisioning (materials are prepared in advance and ready to go); overlapping (ability to manage two or more parallel events simultaneously); fillers (ability to include meaningful activities during transitions); intrusions (minimizing to avoid distracting students); lesson flexibility (ability to change planned activity if necessary); notice (preparing the students for transitions into the next subject); sub-dividing (dividing students into smaller groups to avoid jam ups); and anticipation (prepare to side step trouble spots). (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 3: Momentum).
- Skillful teachers make the most advantageous use of classroom and school **space**, both in the arrangement of furnishings to support the kind of instruction going on and in meeting the students' needs for ownership and privacy. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 4: Space).
- Skillful teachers **time** events and regulate schedules so that students get the most productive learning time. The issues of time management for students center around allocation, efficiency, and pacing. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 5: Time).
- Classroom **routines** need to be efficient and they need to be clear. The routines parameter encompasses a variety of kinds of classroom routines including housekeeping, class business, and work habits and work procedures. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 6: Routines).
- Good **discipline** is a prerequisite for good education; skillful teachers build self-discipline and responsibility in students. Monitoring by the teacher is subtle and preventive. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 7: Discipline).

Instructional Practice

- Skillful teacher behaviors in the **clarity** parameter underlie the process of delivering clear instruction. Situations requiring clarity include presenting new material, explaining concepts, giving directions or explaining directions when they need to be elaborated, activating prior knowledge, reexplaining old material, dealing with student confusions, and making connections during instruction. Clarity involves "Cognitive Empathy" that enables teachers to know when students do not understand and to pinpoint what material is not clear. Skillful teachers also take into consideration the "Big Picture" when planning and implementing a lesson helping students place current information or operations in a larger framework of meaning. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 8: Clarity).
- There are approximately twenty-four **principles of learning** that enable teachers to make lessons more efficient and effective. They are techniques that increase the rate and durability of students' learning. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 9: Principles of Learning).
- A **model** of teaching is a particular pattern of instruction that is recognizable and consistent. A model has particular values, goals, a rationale, and an orientation to how learning shall take place. Models of teaching enable educators to vary their teaching styles to reach a broader range of students. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 10: Models of Teaching).

Classroom Climate

- *Nothing influences behavior so strongly as the clear expectations of a significant other. (J. Steffen, Management Consultant).* The four kinds of student performance for which teachers have **expectations** include: quality and quantity of work, work habits and procedures, business and housekeeping routines, and interpersonal behavior. Expectations need to be direct, specific, repeated, positive, modeled, and tenacious. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 11: Expectations).
- The parameter of **personal relationship building** concerns the relationships that teachers forge between themselves and their students and the elements that go into making those relationships productive. Skillful teachers examine ways of relating to their students and develop traits and behaviors that students identify as important. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 12: Personal Relationship Building).
- The three major strands of **classroom climate** include: Community and Mutual Support, Risk Taking and Confidence, and Influence. When community and respect are well developed a student can say, "I feel accepted and included in this group. People are on my side and want me to do well. I can help others and they will help me." The confident risk taker can say, "It's safe to take a risk. If I try hard, learn from errors, and persist, I can succeed." In addition, those who can say, "I can have some influence on the way things go here. I can have something to say. I matter," indicate students are learning in a positive environment. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 13: Classroom Climate).

Curriculum Design

- Programs and courses should be conceived and framed in terms of *essential questions, enduring understandings, key performance tasks, and rubrics*. These overarching elements thus serve as a blueprint for all units and the connections between them. (*Understanding by Design*, Chapter 12: The Big Picture: UbD as Curriculum Framework)
- Teacher planning should follow a three-stage, "backward design" model -- Stage 1: Identify desired results; Stage 2: Determine acceptable evidence; Stage 3: Plan learning experiences and instruction. (*Understanding by Design*, Chapter 1: Backward Design).
- One model of instructional planning (WHERE TO) highlights these key considerations:
 - **W**--Ensure the students understand WHERE the unit is headed, and WHY.
 - **H**--HOOK students in the beginning and HOLD their attention throughout.
 - **E**--EQUIP students with necessary experiences, tools, knowledge, and know-how to meet performance goals.
 - **R**--Provide students with numerous opportunities to RETHINK big ideas, REFLECT on progress, and REVISE their work.
 - **E**--Build in opportunities for students to EVALUATE progress and self-assess.
 - **T**--Be TAILORED to reflect individual talents, interests, styles, and needs.
 - **O**--Be ORGANIZED to optimize deep understanding as opposed to superficial coverage.

(*Understanding by Design*, Chapter 9: Planning for Learning)

Assessment

- Assessment influences what is taught, how it is taught, how much time is spent on topics, and what activities students are asked to do on a daily basis. It reflects and also pushes clarity of thinking about objectives. It influences how clear students are on what they're doing, why they are doing it, and how focused and motivated they are to do it. (*The Skillful Teacher*, Chapter 16: Assessment).
- Thinking like an assessor boils down to a few basic questions. *What kinds of evidence do we need to find hallmarks of our goals, including that of understanding? What specific characteristics in student responses, products, or performances should we examine to determine the extent to which the desired results were achieved? Does the proposed evidence enable us to infer a student's knowledge, skill, or understanding?* (*Understanding by Design*, Chapter 7: Thinking like an Assessor)

WEST WINDSOR-PLAINSBORO REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT
Princeton Junction, New Jersey 08550

Classroom Observation Report

Teacher:
Administrator:

Subject:
Date:

Grade:
Time:

Lesson Overview:

Classroom Management:

- To what extent and how does a teacher gain the attention and maintain the focus of students?
- To what extent and how does a teacher maintain clarity of learning objectives through the implemented lesson plan?
- To what extent and how does a teacher maintain the flow of events through processing and facilitating simultaneous events?

Instructional Practice:

- To what extent and how does the teacher show "cognitive empathy" (e.g., teacher is continually figuring out what he/she must do to ensure that each learner learns what is intended)?
- To what extent and how does the instruction require students to think critically?
- To what extent and how does a teacher engage students' interest by varying instructional modalities?
- To what extent and how is instruction action oriented and does it involve students in solving real life problems?
- To what extent and how does instruction differentiate by accelerating, extending, enriching, and integrating?

Classroom Climate:

- To what extent and how does a teacher communicate the expectation that he/she believes students can learn what is being taught?
- To what extent and how does a teacher promote risk-taking on the part of students?
- To what extent and how does a teacher promote positive relationships based on courtesy, respect, fairness, and tolerance?
- To what extent and how does a teacher foster an intellectually safe learning environment?

Curriculum Design and Assessment:

- To what extent are the objectives of the lesson clear?
- Do the lesson's objectives reflect thinking beyond the basic dimensions of "coverage," "activities," and "involvement" to strive toward explicit "mastery" and "thinking skills" objectives?
- To what extent and how does the lesson promote "active learning" (through kinesthetic, auditory and visual) experiences that are clearly linked to higher order objectives?
- Does the lesson begin with "activators" that surface misconceptions, assess what students already know, add new information, assess interest, and spark intrigue?
- Does the lesson include "processors" that counter natural low points and re-energize students by checking for understanding and by promoting physical activity?
- Does the end of the lesson include "summarizing activities" that require students to tell/show what they have learned?
- What should students understand as a result of the activities or the content covered?
- How will students be helped to see *by design* the purpose of the activity or resource and its helpfulness in meeting specific performance goals?
- Through what authentic performance task(s) will students demonstrate the desired understandings?
- By what criteria will "performances of understanding" be judged?

Summary:

Administrator: _____

Date: _____

Teacher: _____

Date: _____

My signature indicates only that the report has been reviewed by me and does not necessarily indicate concurrence. Comments may be added.

(Descriptors of the *Lenses of Instruction*)*

Lesson Overview

- background
- context in curriculum
- context in course
- objectives of lesson
- demographics of class
- teacher requested focus

Classroom Management

- attention, focusing students
- preparation – materials are ready, sequence of lesson, etc.
- momentum – handles intrusion, flows from activity to activity, anticipates breaks
- space – room arrangement
- routines
- time management
- discipline – expectations and consequences

Instructional Practice

- active learning – uses activators to engage students
- cognitive empathy – “I won’t give up on you”
- promotion of critical thinking
- questioning strategies
- differentiation of instruction
- wait time
- consideration of learning styles
- anticipation of misconceptions
- clarity – directions, instruction, purpose, expectations
- time/pace of instruction

Classroom Climate

- high expectations – “I believe you have a capacity to learn”
- consistency
- student centered instruction
- risk taking
- intellectual safety
- working to have student become confident
- relationship building – respect, courtesy, fairness, humor, realness
- environment – learning centers, bulletin boards, reference areas, etc.

Curriculum Design and Assessment

- lesson plan shows evidence of clear objectives for mastery and thinking skills
- content/concepts at appropriate level of difficulty
- embedded ongoing assessment – “I can’t assume anyone got it”
- varied assessment, a repertoire of ways to assess
- checking for understanding throughout the lesson
- continuity – sequence and integration with other learning experiences
- closure – summary at end of lesson

Summary

- strengths of lesson
- indication of overall effectiveness and quality of lesson
- needs/concerns
- suggestions/recommendations
- directions for future
- reference to potential
- evidence of response to prior feedback
- attention to PIP (if appropriate)

*It is not necessary to include each descriptor in the report.

WEST WINDSOR-PLAINSBORO REGIONAL SCHOOL DISTRICT

School _____

Year _____ Professional Improvement Plan

Professional development includes district and individual professional development experiences, and other opportunities offered by a New Jersey reg provider. Goals and activities may be modified throughout the calendar year to meet emerging needs of the staff member.

Name: _____

Department: _____

Year: _____

Goals	Standards	Activities to Accomplish Goals	Methods/Measuring Achievement	Target Date

Teacher

Date

Administrator

Date

A summary Guide to NJ Professional Development Standards

- Enable me to develop new methodologies – Standards 8,9,11
- Promote collegial and collaborative dialogue – Standards 8,9,11
- Broaden my knowledge and expertise – Standards 1,2,3
- Offer new visions of continuing education – Standards 4,5,9,12
- Reflect how adults learn – Standards 6,7
- Be ongoing – Standards 2,3,4
- Refine my skills and practices – Standards 2,3,4,5
- Have financial support, time and planning as appropriate – Standards 10,11