

OBSERVATION / REFLECTION PAPER GUIDELINES:

Part I: Observations and Reflections

Provide a brief description of the school and a map of the classroom and your reflections regarding the school and classroom context.

School Context:

Descriptive questions:

1. What does the school building look like?
2. What does the community immediately surrounding the school look like?
3. What do you see when you first enter the building?
4. What are the interior walls like?
5. What is on the walls?

Inferential Questions:

1. Is the school inviting? Why or why not?
2. Does the structure of the building seem to serve a distinct purpose?
3. Does the building appear to be part of the community or separate from it?
4. What does the school building remind you of most?
5. What does the building "say" to you?
6. What do you think the building says to parents, students, and teachers?

Classroom Context:

Draw a map of the classroom that answers the following questions:

1. What does the room look like?
2. Does the classroom have windows? (Describe the view in written portion of observation)
3. What is on the walls?
4. How are the desks/tables arranged?
5. Where do students and teachers sit? (Mark the map)
6. What else is in the classroom in addition to desks and tables and how is it arranged?
7. What types of educational resources (books, computers, etc.) do you see?

Inferential questions to answer in text:

1. Is the classroom inviting? Why or why not?
2. Is the room comfortable?
3. Are learning resources accessible to students?
4. Are families welcome in the classroom?
5. Do wall displays and materials/equipment seem current and used?
6. Does the furniture arrangement seem more conducive to cooperative, competitive, or individual learning? Explain.
7. How do you think the classroom environment impacts student learning?
8. Does the classroom reflect the school philosophy/mission?

Briefly describe any schooling practices that you observed.

Include the _____ and teacher/student interpersonal relations.

1. What is the teacher doing during your observation?
2. Describe teacher movement.
3. What are the students doing?
4. Do the students have a choice regarding where and how they spend their time?
5. What resources are used?
6. What is the level of noise activity?
7. Who does the teacher call on / interact with?
8. How would you describe student engagement in learning?
9. How does the teacher respond to student questions?
10. What other interactions do you notice? (eg: student-student, nonverbal, etc)
11. How do students and teachers affirm and/or punish each other?
12. What is the classroom like in terms of cultural, ethnicity, linguistic and ability diversity?

Inferential Questions:

1. How responsive does the teacher appear to be to moods or interests of students?
2. Is there a spirit of cooperation or competition in the classroom?
3. Is there to be mutual respect (teacher-student, student-

teacher, student-student)? Relate to observations.

4. How would you describe the relationship between teacher and students?

5. Are the students in the class treated differently or the same? Is this treatment to the benefit or detriment of any student or groups of students?

What connections can you make between your observations and readings/class discussions and printed school material?

Part II: Discussion of a Dilemma

- Describe and identify one classroom dilemma/issue.
 - Define the dilemma (pedagogy, curriculum, societal, etc.)
- Describe what you believe is evidence that the dilemma exists; be as specific as possible.
- Give an example of behaviors that illustrate the dilemma in the classroom.
 - Where do the students, teacher and/or principal seem to stand on this issue. Provide evidence to support your position.
 - How does this issue fit in with what you have read in your class textbooks?

Part III: The school from your perspective

- What would it be like to be a teacher at this school? What would it be like to be a student at this school?
 - What educational philosophy is reflected in the schooling practices? How well does it fit your philosophy of education?
 - How does it contrast with your own school experience?
- What were your insights?
- How did your experience affect you in terms of your idea and thinking about schooling and education in a diverse society?
 - What did you learn that you want to remember as a future teacher or interested taxpayer?