

Karissa Tatom

Summary of Classroom Observation

March 3, 2011

For my classroom observation, I have been placed in Mrs. Harvey's 4<sup>th</sup> grade class at Sacajawea Elementary School in Caldwell. I observed in her class last year, so it is interesting to see the differences from the last time I was in her classroom. I have been learning extensively in her classroom about different classroom management skills and literacy approaches. She focuses intensely on quick verbal cues, such as talk to your neighbor really quick, pair-share, or yellow tell orange (her version of pair-share). Sometimes these cues are also non-verbal such as thumbs up, thumbs down; and clap three times if you think the answer is correct. Typically these are used to reinforce past knowledge, such as a skill learned in the previous week. Another way she cues her student is by using frequent timing cues, such as counting down from three, giving time signals and asking students to wait to share unless it is vital at that moment. Frequently she also instructs her students by memorization. I was quite surprised because her students could go on for about 3 minutes of memorization while reciting grammatical rules that they were using for the sentences. Many times she also reinforces learning by questions. This is done in the practical sense by rewording questing, asking secondary questions to follow up, and asking students to justify their response. All of these questioning approaches help the students to really understand what is going on in the classroom and not simply memorize rules.

Frequently after these small group responses though, she tries to lead it back to a whole group discussion. I have also really enjoyed the fact that she tends to diversify her teaching to a wider degree than you typically see in a classroom. Some examples of this that I have seen is when she used sit-ups and jumping jacks for math data, writing a restaurant recommendation for language arts, and rolling dice for a line plot. These activities were very interesting for the students so they were highly engaged in

the lesson. I thought the idea of sit-ups and jumping jacks was particularly effective because it integrated nutrition and exercise within the classroom in a positive manner. The idea of health seems to be highly encouraged at Sacajawea as they typically have students run a lap as the first thing that begins recess. Also, there are many signs and posters for reaching goals such as running a certain number of miles, joining fitness teams, and tracking students' progress.

Another interesting element is Mrs. Harvey's room was the addition of a new student in the first week of my observation. It seems quite difficult for a teacher to suddenly have a student move into their classroom. I was impressed though, with how well Mrs. Harvey seemed to manage it. She quickly welcomed him, giving him a nametag on his desk, taking time to explain classroom procedures, and emphasizing that he could ask about questions. I thought it was interesting when talking to her because according to her, Sacajawea technically did not make AYP for this last year because of Caldwell's choice to use Reading, Math, and the amount of growth since the previous year. This was disappointing for the school because they have large numbers of students who move in halfway through the year. Therefore, it is difficult when students join and yet the schools are expected to read a certain progress level with them, sometimes in a matter of weeks, such as this case. This was especially disappointing last year because Mrs. Harvey said that the Reading scores were about 90%, the Math scores were about 81%, and the Language Arts scores were about 80%. So under the typical guidelines of choosing to review Math, Reading, and Language Arts, the school would have made AYP and been entitled to funds from the government.

Lastly, I have found it helpful to see many of the techniques she uses as a sort of mini lesson within the greater content she is teaching. Many times she emphasizes respect within her classroom by correcting any demeaning behavior, such as laughing at the wrong answer, and emphasizes that every student should have the right to learn and disruptive actions make this impossible. She practices making

so important

planned mistakes and redirects students when they are incorrect without making them feel stupid, which seems to help students feel more comfortable with getting the wrong answer. In the classroom observation that I have experienced so far, there seems to be a huge emphasis on respect underlying everything within the classroom. She practices classroom management in a way that she is firm but not mean. Lastly, she tends to always give each student the chance to rise to a higher potential.

25/25

Outstanding  
Notes +  
"Ethnographic  
Eyes" 😊

She will be an excellent  
role model for your teaching