SAMPLE OBSERVATION NOTES

OBSERVATION #1

Probability lecture– class of approximately 15 students, class started at 9:55 with most students on time, several drifted in after class began

Students seated at tables in a physic lab, books and notes + instructor handouts opened; difficult to see overhead from the back of the room, projection unit blocks view of some students, seating pattern creates obstructed views for some students, most have to look through/around water fixtures to see overhead

Instructor moved freely about the room making eye contact with all students, asked questions of numerous students – some volunteered, others were asked to respond by the instructor – continually asking if students needed help with the problems, whether they understand how the answer was determined before moving on to the next topic; always checked to see if students had the information in their notes before moving on to the next slide; actively prepared notes on the overhead for students to copy for their own notes

Called students by their first name, appeared to have a good rapport with students

Classroom environment is stale, boring, lacks any décor that would be stimulating (no fault of the instructor)

Good effort to keep the private conversations to a minimum – either the instructor moved toward the students or called on them to discourage “chatting”

Instructor has a sense of humor, willing to admit mistakes, creates a comfortable and caring environment, seems genuinely interested in whether students are learning,

By 10:50 – students are leaning on hands, slouching in their seats – time to reenergize class – how? Could have provided opportunities for students to work on the sample problems for the new material in small groups and report their results to the class, Instructor willing to own up to mistakes, - comfortable enough in class to admit “I screwed up” difficult to do

Good examples of real life applications of the concepts that were introduced providing context for learning

Used examples of mistakes that students were making to help others

OBSERVATION #2

The instructor checked at intervals to make sure the students were understanding the concepts. The instructor would ask how does this concept relate to our prior session, or simply question, “What does this mean?”

Students felt comfortable interrupting for clarification or to share an understanding about the concepts presented. The instructor used a variety of instructional strategies to accommodate different ability levels and different learning styles. In addition to using handouts, board illustrations, and computer simulations, the instructor had the students working in small groups on problem solving. Also, the students, who quickly got the concept, were asked to share their findings and the process of discovery with the other students. If concepts needed re-explaining, the instructor would use analogies and associations other than what was previously introduced. The enthusiasm the instructor showed for the subject was also shared by the students.
The instructor had structured the class so that it was student-centered. Student responses were woven into the framework of the lesson. The instructor used a variety of approaches to encourage student response and participation. Students participated as both learners and teachers. On one hand, students did not hesitate to ask for clarification on a concept or statement; on the other hand and in a respectful manner, they challenged the instructor or their student colleagues by sharing their point of view or belief. Overall, the instructor set the tone of a highly respectful attitude by eliciting courteous remarks, speaking directly to the students, and modeling positive behavior during debate or when an opposing viewpoint was offered. The instructor also ensured that cooperative learning would take place in the class by having students share their thinking in large and small groups.

OBSERVATION #3

Where Ms. Jakobs clearly defined what students were to know by the end of the lesson, the lesson did not support mastery of the concept of theme. The posted and stated objective of the lesson was for students to “identify the theme of poetry and historical fiction text through analyzing the author’s word choice.” The modeled activity and instruction presented to students focused more on mood than theme. Ms. Jakobs shared a poem highlighting vocabulary for ESOL students, and specific words an author chose for a purpose of communicating the theme and mood. Students were instructed to think about and visualize how the author’s words made them feel. A whole group discussion on the theme and mood of the poem followed. The class then transitioned into guided reading groups where Ms. Jakobs modeled again using a historical fiction text. At the end of this story, students were to determine the theme individually. Ms. Jakobs assessed the students by having them complete a BCR explaining the theme of a text using supporting evidence from the text. 18 of the 23 students successfully completed their BCR.

Ms. Jakobs was able to get inside students’ heads by checking for understanding and unscrambling confusion several times throughout the lesson. When highlighting new vocabulary, Ms. Jakobs asked students if they had any questions. One student commented about how “dew” would appear when it rained. Ms. Jakobs said, “No, dew is when it didn’t rain and it is still wet.” Thus, the student’s thinking was corrected in a manner which helped him to gain a better understanding of the poem’s vocabulary. Ms. Jakobs also checked for understanding later in the lesson when she asked students, “So, is this a happy poem?” As a result of student raised hand responses, Ms. Jakobs was able to quickly assess their understanding of the poem’s mood. After the class had finished their discussion about the poem, Ms. Jakobs explained to students their assignments during guided reading groups. After her explanation, Ms. Jakobs asked, “Any questions before we start?” Thus, students were given the opportunity to assess their understanding of the directions and ask any questions they had before working independently.

OBSERVATION #4

Mr. Jones is a first year teacher. There were twenty students present, eleven boys and nine girls [5 ELL, 1 with a 504, 5 African American, 2 Hispanic, 8 Caucasian, and 5 Asian. Desks were arranged in groups of three to four students. This was the second lesson for the students regarding direct variation from Unit 2 of the algebra curriculum. The observation was unannounced.

The lesson was planned for mastery. The objective “SWBAT write and graph direct variation and solve problems involving direct variation”, and the agenda were posted and verbally reviewed. The lesson followed the math block [warm up involving linear functions, exploration on the patterns as a small group activity, guided practice with students working in pairs, and a summarizer with a self assessment]. Students were able to master the content as assessed through teacher observation, class
discussion, and completion of class work and an independent exit card. All 20 students successfully completed the exit card requiring them to complete a graph and complete one application problem.

Mr. Jones had varying degrees of effectiveness in communicating standards for his students.
• He reinforced the standard for working in groups.
  o “If you need to talk with your buddies next to you that’s OK, but you have to keep your voices down.”
  o “Maybe you could move your book over a little bit.” [to a student in a group struggling to find space for the exploration.]
• He held students accountable for completing work.
  o While students worked on the warm-up, he checked to see who had their homework and recorded the information on sticky notes.
  o “What you don’t finish today will be homework, so it’s in your best interest to work hard.”

Mr. Jones adapted her instruction based on student performance on an exit card given during the previous lesson. Mr. Jones shared her reasoning for the review of previously taught concepts during the post-observation conference. He said, “They had a difficulty accurately seeing patterns within tables. They knew how to graph the values but could not generate the equations.” Because of this, Mr. Jones decided that she should begin with linear functions to build the concept of variation. He shared their exit cards saying, “Now they have it. They made the connection from patterns in tables from Chapter 4.” As a result of Mr. Jones’s change in plans, students were able to build the connection of prior learning to their understanding of direct variation.

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**OBSERVATION #5**

The instructor's objectives for the class session were difficult to discern and there was not an apparent lesson plan. Major ideas of the session were poorly defined and communicated, making it difficult to develop and summarize the presentation. The pace of the class was erratic. The instructor read from a book, and when he wrote on the board, his back was toward the class the entire time.

The instructor never solicited student feedback and allowed little time for questions. It appeared that the instructor was more intent on delivering than on engaging students in meaningful ways to discuss the concepts. Most of the time the instructor read from a book or his notes and did not attempt to illustrate the concepts verbally or in writing. It was difficult to discern if the instructor was enthused about the subject, and students spent most of their time looking confused, chatting, or daydreaming.

There was little evidence of student interest in the class as demonstrated by little note taking and a low attentiveness. Private discussions were in progress during a good part of the lesson. Sharp verbal exchanges occurred between instructor and students and among students such as, "Please pay attention. I think you all should take notes......remember your last quiz scores." Often the instructor talked down to the students and avoided allowing time for questions.

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**OBSERVATION #6**

Class room in h.s. but in an extra room
5 tables, 4-5 chairs each; teacher’s desk in front – pile of books, tissue box, pencils and pens in cup, world map and US census map on wall – EFF Skills Wheel poster,

10:20 – Group continues working. Two or three people have either talked to each other or the teacher about what they are doing. Teacher has returned to her desk.
10:45 – T. comes to front of the room and again asks if anyone has questions and if they are clear about next steps in their work plans. Everyone seems ok. She asks them to finish what they are doing and to get ready to work on their letters. She tells me that they are all working on writing a letter requesting a meeting with their child’s school counselor. T. reminded group that now that they all had the names and addresses for the first part of their letter, they needed to work on the content of the BODY of the letter – she pointed to the poster as she mentioned these sections of the letter. She asked for ideas about what the letter should say and listed on the board as students named them.