

Performance Assessment

Acton Public Schools

Acton-Boxborough Regional Schools

Staff Evaluation Documentation: OBSERVATION REPORT

Name : Katie Newness

School: Junior High

Grade/Subject: English 8

Date: Nov 21, 1999

Time: from 10:00-10:55

Description of Setting and Event: (Brief graphic description of lesson)

Twenty-five students were in class, 13 boys and 12 girls. The students entered the room, where classical music was playing softly in the background for the first 15 minutes, went directly to the Powerbook storage area, retrieved a computer and took it to their desks. After 15 minutes of work at the computer, students critiqued each other's work for 15 minutes using the Moffett approach.

Katie then introduced new material using a Powerpoint presentation she had prepared on "the mystery as a genre of gender criticism". In the last 10 minutes of class, the students suggested ways in which to select a writer to focus a research project on.

For each of the seven Performance Standards, please comment if observed.

Katie knows the Moffett approach thoroughly. In fact, she has offered several professional development seminars on the approach. She also was instrumental in developing the mystery as a legitimate subject of study in the AB curriculum. (Currency in the curriculum)

When Thomas and Serena projected their "narratives" work on the large screen for the whole class to see, Katie asked students questions such as:

"who is the intended audience?
what characteristics does the audience have that would influence how you would write?
Why did you use the third person rather than the first person?
Why is there a question mark here? "

Students responded thoughtfully. For example, Joannie answered, "I thought of writing this from the first person, but I decided that it that would make it too emotional for me to write." Katie reinforced the legitimacy of this decision by asking students how many choose to read novels written from the first person when they go to the bookstore to buy books for their pleasure reading. When Johnny did not understand the difference between the first and third person choice of voice, Katie asked if someone could explain that to him. Sammy was able to do so (a journal would be written from the first person but a newspaper account would be written from the third person) and Roberta added some examples from the class' previous work (The Diary of Anne Frank vs Hawthorne's The Minister's Black Veil). Katie thanked them both and asked Johnny if he could now explain it himself, which he did. (Effective instruction)

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Katie had given the students benchmarks for their work in the writing process: rough draft, discussion, revision, presentation, revision, final draft and she asked them to hand in their labeled disks at the end of the class so they she could validate the grades they had given each other. She reminded them that the discs would become part of their portfolio which would be used for assessment purposes at the end of each marking period. Katie reminded the students that their work, if it was good enough, and she "had every confidence in their ability to perform", would be on display on the AB website. (Promotion of high standards and expectations for student achievement)

She told the students (and me as the observer) that she had been working with the Technology Resource Center to create a "warehouse" of exemplary student work for public, especially community, consumption, on the A/ AB web site. She also mentioned that she had been working with the art teacher to illustrate the "virtual museum of literary mystery" so that people could tour it ! Both she and the students made some humorous remarks about "virtual reality" and "gloves" and laughter rang out in the classroom for a couple of minutes. (Fulfillment of professional responsibilities)

She wondered if any of the students would be interested in helping to illustrate the "mystery museum". Six hands shot up and she asked the students to see her at the end of the period to set up a meeting. She also asked who would be willing to search the Internet for other similar sites and for information about the mystery genre which the class should look at and consider during its current study. Again hands shot up, this time three students, Katie told me afterwards, she considers to be 'pragmatic learners', that is, those needing more of a hands-on approach to learning. (Effective Instruction)

As preparation for the request above, Katie had already assembled a library of the authors she felt students should look at. The librarian worked with Katie to organize the books, which were on a movable cart in the room. She and the librarian also put together a list of web sites for students to explore and they had purchased CD ROMS which were in the library. (Effective planning and assessment of curriculum and instruction).

After the students did their review of the Internet, Katie plan to encourage students to check out all these resources, those she and the librarian found and those the students find.

Katie mentioned that soon they would be able to access the CD ROMS in the class when the CD Tower was up and running. She also asked if anyone in class knew personally any writer of mysteries. Cybil said her family is friendly with Jane Langdon of Concord and Jonathan said he knew Bill Tapply who formerly worked in the Lexington Public Schools. Katie asked the two students if they could find out whether either or both writers would be willing to come to class or be interviewed through the CUSeeMe medium. (Effective Instruction)

The teacher had clearly given the students directions about how to proceed when they entered the classroom (these were posted on the wall and come up automatically on the computer screens when the machines are turned on!). Students knew how to use their computers but in case they forgot something, there are directions on the wall (as well as on the computer) along with pictures of the "mystery" writers they are about to study.

I was struck by the diversity of the writers she had pictured on the wall: an American Indian, a Black woman writer, an Asian writer, as well as European and white Americans. While the

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class itself is fairly racially homogeneous, diverse students could see themselves (and their history) in those pictures. (Promotion of equity and appreciation of diversity)

Suggestions were made by several students about how they might select the writer for further study: select someone from the same background, or a different background. (Effective Instruction)

The student chair/desk combinations are on wheels so students can easily and fairly quietly move around to produce different groupings depending on the task. The material and the technique are so engaging that there was not a single discipline problem. Not once did she have to call for attention or remind a student of what he or she should be doing. (Effective management of classroom environment)(Promotion of high standards and expectations for student achievement)

Finally, her multimedia presentation was a gem of pictures, excerpts and examples from the work of Josephine Tey with music as emphasis. Brat Farrar became an animated character. The picture books brought to the hospital in "The Daughter of Time" could be seen on the screen. Several observations she made caused students to laugh. (Effective Instruction)

Supervisor's Summary Comments

This was one of the most exciting lessons I have observed in a long time. Katie has always been in the first wave of technology users but I have never seen such a seamless integration of instruction and technology. She told me that it took her several hours to prepare the Powerpoint presentation which ran only 15 minutes, but she said she felt such a sense of accomplishment that she was glad that she did it. As I said above, the students were totally engaged. It was hard to believe this was an eighth grade class. If Katie doesn't mind, I would like to invite others to observe how she teaches English using technology.

Supervisee's Comments
(Self-assessment optional)

[Pre and/or post]Conference Summary (ies):
(please specify)

Conference Date(s): _____

*Supervisee's Signature/Date

Supervisor's Signature/Date

* Signatures denote only receipt of document.