

Classroom Observation Cycle at MS 331

Drew Remiker: What I'd like you guys to do now is flip to the back of your teacher model. All right, take about two minutes and looking at this gum ball machine, we got a lot more in here. All right, try to figure out what's the probability of getting a great...

Serapha Cruz: The observation process at MS331 includes a lot of different components. The process most formally includes a pre-observation meeting with the teacher, an observation, and then the post observation with the teacher. We had so many new teachers we wanted to make sure that they understood what our expectations were and what did good teaching look like. We've been using Charlotte Danielson's Framework for Teaching for three years. Danielson's framework allowed us to really focus our feedback with teachers around very specific elements of teaching. So rather than walking in and giving sort of general vague feedback, we could give very focused specific feedback.

At the pre-observation conference, we talk about mostly the components within domain one of Charlotte Danielson. So all of the components are part of planning and preparation, and we assess how well a teacher plans for their lessons. How have you accounted for different groups of students or individuals?

Drew Remiker: Okay, so the way we have students grouped in the class is sort of a heterogenous grouping and we have sort of lower performing students mixed with higher performance students at each group of four. What's great about today's lesson is that they'll all be engaging in the same activity and hopefully help each other out. It's a very much a social activity and they will be able to discuss with each other, you know, their findings. So for kids who may have had trouble, they'll hopefully get a lot of help from the kids who understand it, you know, automatically and so that will be great for them.

I think what Serapha was trying to tell me in the pre-observation was that we need to focus on certain students who may have had trouble. She talked about certain groupings and so I just sort of made it a point to just make those quick stops and check in with them and make sure that they are understanding the lesson and they are where they should be. "We have 32.6, how would round that?"

Female Student: 33.

Drew Remiker: Yeah it's a 33, so that's where one of your percentages went. All right, if you make the mistake on rounding then it might not add up to a 100. So I would check these also to make sure if you round it up or down.

Serapha Cruz: At the actual observation we're really zeroing in on domain two and domain three of Charlotte Danielson. So we're looking at their classroom environment which includes not only the physical environment but also procedures and management tone, what kind of respect and rapport there is between teacher and students. Then we're also looking at domain three, instruction, during the observation, and all of the components within that. I think it's good practice in the observation to make sure that you're up and going around to each group and accessing how well are they understanding the learning target that was communicated to them in the lesson, how well can they articulate what they're learning, why they're learning it, how does this fit into other learning that they've been doing previously, the rest of the unit that they're going to do, and ultimately that you also want them to be able to self assess how well do I understand what's happening in this classroom and what I'm learning.

Male Student: So far I'm winning.

Serapha Cruz: What color are you?

Male Student: I'm red.

Serapha Cruz: Okay. And what does it mean right now to be winning?

Male Student: That the probability of me winning is high.

Male Student: Every time we pick out a cube, it comes out red.

Serapha Cruz: So is that the experimental probability or the theoretical probability? Assessing student learning and having students be able to self assess is one component you can capture within Danielson. So I'm looking at this from a student point of view rather than only from a teacher point of view.

Drew Remiker: Having someone in your room is the best sort of way to learn from the lesson and how it went. And by having someone give you that feedback and notice things that maybe you didn't because you were at the different part of the room, or give you just another set of eyes to see things that you may have not during the lesson.

Serapha Cruz: At the post observation conference I share with Drew the key elements within Danielson that I've think are his strengths as well as things that I know he should continue to work on.

So I just want to put on the few things from the specific domains and components that we've been working on together. I think you know, once again, I think that one of your real strengths is creating an environment of respect and rapport. The students seem to feel really comfortable with you. They work really well together. There are a lot of classrooms in seventh grade where if you gave the students a bag full of blocks, they would definitely not be using them for a math experiment.

So I think that you've created a really nice environment where they know what they're supposed to be doing but you're fine with a little bit of noise, and you're fine with them as long as they keep working. And I think that it's a really nice tone in the classroom.

Some of the things that we talked a little bit about that I want to keep working with you on and keep talking with it about is in 2D, in management, is making sure there's still directives that you're giving that are passive directives.

Drew Remiker: Serapha mentioned that something I need to work on was asserting myself. You know there are certain things in the classroom that sort of need to be demanded rather than asked for.

Pay attention. Thank you Emily, thank you Clara, Jordalina I need your eyes, up top in one.

You know as a teacher I'm standing there and saying I'm waiting for this group's attention. Instead that should be I need this group's attention now, you need to be looking at me. Serapha has always been telling me ever since I first interviewed for a job here that I've been a little too passive and it's not necessarily in my nature to tell kids what to do or be this authority figure. And she acknowledged that I've been made improvements to that and but I still need to improve and being more assertive, being a little more demanding of the kids' attention and just making sure I'm in command of the classroom.

Serapha Cruz: We're also looking at a teacher's ability to self reflect, which is in domain four, 4A, a teacher's ability to reflect on the lesson and to offer alternative suggestions for how they could have delivered the lesson in different ways.

Drew Remiker: One thing I might have change is to not allow the game to have gone on so long so that kids would know, you know maybe they didn't have to get, I don't know it might have been 24 of the same block to win but instead I made it less so that they could have transitioned to the math part more quickly and if they've done that there would have been more time to do more share outs and probably an exit journal as well. Then the future in this lesson I would plan to play it for less time. So that students could spend more time in discussion, in doing calculations, and you know really showing me that they understand you know, the mathematical purpose behind all this.

Serapha Cruz: I know that he's working in domain two around classroom procedures and classroom management and being more specific in his directives with students. I also know that he has struggle some with the end of the class procedures and we were discussing that specifically. Just because he had a formal observation doesn't mean that now he's done and has accomplished that goal. His next steps will be to continue to work on those things as well as receive ongoing feedback from me. So I'll continue to visit him and see how his procedures are going, see how the management is going and also see how he is communicating with students in the classroom.

Drew Remiker: Through the observation process, we teachers can gain a wealth of knowledge from our superiors. The assistant principals, the principal, have all been teachers before. It's the best way to get advice, to really get the most detailed feedback and really understand what it is you're doing well and where you need to improve as a teacher.