

*Criticize the performance, not the performer.*

*Anonymous*

## **OBSERVATION TECHNIQUES**

The student teaching experience is designed to be a growth experience. The primary change agents in this experience are the Cooperating Teacher and the College Supervisor. Through the use of both formal and informal observation and conferencing techniques, Student Teachers should receive valuable ongoing feedback from Cooperating Teachers and College Supervisors. Through observation and conferencing Student Teachers are provided opportunities to reflect on their teaching effectiveness and improve their self-evaluation skills.

### **OBSERVATION and CONFERENCING TIPS:**

1. Use a variety of data collection tools to collect objective data (video/audio, etc.)
2. Feedback should be as specific and objective as possible. Scripted notes as well as audio/video tapes are excellent tools for this purpose.
3. Clearly define one or two purposes for each observation (e.g., pacing of lesson and follow-through, student participation, positive reinforcement, etc.).
4. Use the following criteria to limit the number of concerns addressed in each conference with the Student Teacher:
  - a. impact on the Student Teacher's physical/emotional well-being
  - b. impact on the class (motivation, unity, general rapport)
  - c. impact on the classroom students' learning
  - d. your perception of the Student Teacher's ability to change her/his behavior
5. All observations should be followed by either formal or informal conferences.
6. Schedule formal conferences on a regular basis.
7. Forewarn the Student Teacher that to increase the effectiveness of his or her self-evaluation, questions will be asked that encourage reflection and assist in assessing the strengths and weaknesses in his or her planning and enactment of lessons.
8. Avoid asking the Student Teacher to respond globally to overall effectiveness of lessons. Judging "goodness/badness" and a general question, "How did you think the lesson went?" are counterproductive. Analysis should be in terms of specific objectives, strategies, and/or techniques.

## OBSERVATION TECHNIQUES continued

9. During the early weeks of the assignment, emphasize "growth not perfection". Compare the Student Teacher with other novice teachers and give supportive feedback frequently.
10. Use self-disclosure to give examples of your own funny or unsuccessful experiences.
11. When a Student Teacher identifies a concern, assist in clearly defining the concern and encourage the Student Teacher to reconcile the matter.
12. Recognize classroom students' responses as indicators of Student Teacher effectiveness. Use comments such as: students appear bored, are restless, are engaged and/or actively involved, to assist the Student Teacher in self-evaluation.
13. Substantiate feedback with specific data and utilize many examples to clarify as much as possible.
14. Look for patterns in teaching behavior. Critical judgment should be followed with specific suggestions for improvement and strategies for analyzing the effect of changed behavior. The major function of supervision is to upgrade teacher effectiveness.
15. Emphasize the continuing aspect of self-evaluation by relating present remarks to past observations and providing a foundation for future observations.
16. **Conferences should end on a positive note with a summary of current strengths and a plan of action for future attention.**

*Everyone who remembers his own educational experience remembers teachers,  
not methods and techniques. The teacher is the kingpin of the educational situation.  
He makes or breaks programs.*

*Sidney Hook*