TEACHER OBSERVATIONS: TRIUMPH OR TRAUMA?

by:

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One of the many goals of our teaching should be an ongoing process of self-evaluation and fine-tuning our skills as educators. Observation is something that from the earliest moments of childhood is a method we use to learn about each other and the world around us. We spend great amounts of time with observation. Therefore, as hard as it may be to go through an observation, we need to approach it as necessary part of becoming a better teacher.

There are several keys to having a positive observation. The first is knowing as much as you can about what to expect. Whenever we present a new assignment to our students it is important that we give them expectations. If a teacher is being observed by a principal there should be a pre-observation conference. The purpose of this conference is to give the observer a copy of lesson plans, go over the time and date for the observation, the approximate length of the observation, and share any unique information about the classroom situation.

Secondly, we need to begin developing good teaching habits at the beginning of the year. These should include the following:

1. Be prepared
Have all your supplies and materials laid out and at your fingertips. A good preparation is vital to your day running smoothly. And always have a back-up plan!

2. Be organized

Good organization skills alleviate a tremendous amount of stress. This can include setting up a good filing system, and having a designated place for materials used every day.

3. Structure

Your students should have a clear picture of classroom expectations and the daily routine. The daily routine should be structured enough so that the student’s developed good and consistent classroom habits, but flexible enough to allow for a bit of change now and again.

4. A positive approach

Infuse a positive and enthusiastic attitude in every aspect of your teaching from the presentation of your subject to dealing with student behavior.

More preparation tips before and during the observation may include:

1. Peer coaching
Access other professionals to provide information from their past experience. Enlist a fellow teacher to do a pre-observation or video tape you are teaching a lesson and give feedback.

2. Prepare your students

Talk with your students about the observation and what you expect from when visitors are in the room. Review and reinforce expectations for behavior.

3. Focus and concentrate

During the observation, keep the flow of your lesson smooth and relaxed. Ask and answer questions, but keep the lesson on track.

4. Behavior

If you have to stop and deal with behavior, make it unobtrusive and use redirection, signals, visual or verbal cues.

With adequate preparation, good habits and a positive, motivated attitude, teachers can use observations as invaluable tools to become the kind of quality educators they want to be.
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