

Supervisory Cycle: Final Reflection

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For this supervision cycle I observed a first grade teacher with whom I have worked before. During the previous supervision cycle, I observed her with a focus on student engagement. During this cycle, my focus was on her pedagogical strategies. I encouraged the teacher to think about a “problem of practice” she was having in her classroom that I might be able to help her with. In part, this was because I wanted to practice giving feedback on pedagogy versus student engagement. However, I also wanted to make sure I was giving the teacher a chance to hear a variety of feedback from me, rather than focusing exclusively on student engagement.

Context

This teacher uses a literacy center model to teach reading. Students rotate stations or tasks within stations and the teacher circulates among the stations to model, assist, reteach, and allow for independent practice time. Literacy stations are a significant portion of the daily activity in this classroom, in part because this elementary school is a communications magnet school. All science and history curricula are integrated into reading or math, so students spend a significant portion of the day focused on reading or writing.

During the lesson I observed, the teacher was introducing a new literacy strategy to a group of struggling readers (see Appendix A for Lesson Plan). The students she was working most intensely with are above grade level with decoding skills (i.e., they can read words and sentences fluently), but below grade level with reading comprehension (i.e., they struggle to understand and remember what they have read). She introduced them to the partner reading strategy to assess whether it might be helpful with these readers. The remaining students in the class were finishing an Earth Day themed writing and art project.

The Pre-Conference

Due to time constraints with this teacher's schedule, we conducted the pre-conference during her planning period, immediately before the students returned for the literacy block (see Appendix B for the Pre-Conference Protocol). We discussed the plan for her lesson and the reason she had selected the partner reading strategy for this group of students. She explained that she had purposefully chosen a book that was well within the decoding range for this group, but she anticipated they might have trouble demonstrating their comprehension of the story. She planned to assess the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy in two ways: student reflection at the end of the lesson and a follow-up retelling activity during the next day's literacy block. The teacher was primarily interested in having me observe her modeling of the partner reading strategy and the effectiveness of her time management during the literacy block.

Evidence of supervisory behaviors. During the pre-conference, I spent most of the time listening and clarifying. I wanted to ensure I had a solid understanding of what the teacher planned for herself during the lesson and which pedagogical behaviors she wanted me to observe. At times, the teacher had a tendency to talk more about what students would be doing than what she would be doing. I redirected her toward thinking about her own actions and behaviors in the classroom. The pre-conference was effective, but more challenging than the pre-conference for my previous observation. I found it somewhat awkward to redirect the teacher toward thinking about her pedagogy. Overall, I had the impression that she did not have much practice talking about and reflecting on the choices she makes in the classroom—instead, it seemed her usual focus is on what students need, what they learned, and what they will need more of before mastering a given topic.

The Observation

I observed the class for 40 minutes (see Appendix C for Observation Notes). For the first 5 minutes, the teacher gave directions and organized students into stations. This was very effective, as she reminded students what they should be working on in their small groups and students seemed to understand and follow directions easily. There was some “lost time” when she realized several students had returned from their art class (where they were during her planning period) with prizes from the art teacher’s treasure box. She sent those students to their backpacks to put away the prizes before having them return to their centers. She then circulated throughout the class and ensured that students had started working before turning her attention to the small reading group.

During the next 15 minutes, the teacher worked with the small group of struggling readers, modeling and practicing the partner reading strategy with the students. She reviewed expectations with the small group before they started reading. She also used a hook question to spark their interest and encouraged them to flip through the book before they started reading. Students were excited to do this since they had not read the story before. The teacher also used this time to introduce the vocabulary words she thought might be challenging for these students. She then modeled the partner reading strategy, using one of the small group students as her partner, and stopping to explain the steps she was taking. In the partner reading strategy, one partner reads aloud while the other follows along silently, ready to make corrections if the reader does not know or skips a word. Then, the silent reading partner asks the reader, “What happened first in that part of the story?” and “What happened next?” until the significant events of the selected section have been retold.

After the teacher demonstrated these steps, she had the other two students in the group practice partner reading while she observed. This gave her a chance to clarify the procedure

before allowing the students to practice independently. She also provided a cue card, to be shared among the students in the group, which reminded them of the questions to ask during partner reading.

Next, the students had 10 minutes to practice partner reading independently while the teacher circulated among the other students in class and had a reading conference with another struggling reader across the room. Note that this portion of the lesson was not reflected in the lesson plan. During independent practice, I observed one student in the small group was not consistently following along in her role as partner. All three students struggled to stay focused when it was time to pass the cue card the teacher had provided. Overall, though, the students were successful in implementing the partner reading strategy. The teacher returned promptly as the students finished reading the story.

When the teacher returned, she met with the small group for 10 minutes about what they had read and about the partner reading strategy. She encouraged the students to reflect on what they found useful about the strategy, asking them if they thought this strategy would help them. She prompted them to defend their answers, asking, “How will it help you?” She also asked them to reflect on their independent reading choices; one student observed, “I need to choose easier books.” At times during this portion of the lesson, the teacher gave very short wait times after asking a question. Shortly after meeting with the group, the literacy block ended and students prepared to leave for lunch.

Effective teacher pedagogy observation form. I used the Effective Teacher Pedagogy Observation Form (Appendix C) to make notes during this observation. I found the form to be very straightforward and easy to use. It was somewhat difficult to remember to focus on teacher behaviors rather than the effects of teacher behaviors (i.e., student engagement). In the end, I was

surprised by how many of the effective behaviors I was able to observe in a relatively short amount of time, especially considering that the teacher worked mostly with one small group during my observation. This did make me wonder whether the behaviors on the form are so broad that a wide range of teachers might appear to be using these effective strategies.

Pre-Conference vs. Observation

There was clear evidence in the observation of the plan the teacher shared during our pre-conference. She followed the actions outlined in her lesson plan. Previewing potentially difficult vocabulary with students before they started reading was consistent with her stated goal of selecting an easily decodable text for this small group. There was also clear evidence of the concerns the teacher had shared during our pre-conference. Namely, time-management appeared to be a challenge. She had hoped to spend only 10 minutes modeling partner reading, then 10 minutes in independent practice and reflection with the students. The only area where she deviated from this plan was in the first block of time, which took 15 minutes. However, part of this extra time was that her directions were less clear in small group than what she had planned for herself. She struggled at times to present the steps in a clear order and frequently found herself slipping out of “student model” mode and into “reading teacher” mode. Also, her plan for circulating around the room while students practiced independently was not reflected on her lesson plan. This might be why she was only able to work with one student during that block of time.

Post-Conference

The post-conference was significantly more challenging during this cycle than the last (See Appendix D for the Post-Conferencing Protocol). Pushing the teacher to reflect on her own pedagogy was much more difficult for me than pushing her to reflect on students’ engagement.

Even though the concepts are related, this felt much more personal and I worried I would offend the teacher with my questions. I intended to elicit the teacher's reflection related to different ways she could use time during independent practice since she only got to spend focused time with one student during that 10-minute block. I also wanted her to reflect on other ways to manage time. She gave me a perfect opening to problem-solve with her on this point, but in the moment, I did not offer any ideas.

Although I asked leading questions, I did not push the teacher to give meaningful answers. Further, when she mentioned that one of her professional goals is to restructure the way she teaches literacy blocks, incorporating writing with reading, I did not probe to encourage her reflection on how important time management will become if she adds more content to this already-full block of time. I believe both of these points—the teacher's use of independent reading time and her management of time overall during the literacy block—were missed opportunities on my part to push her toward more effective practice.

Evidence of supervisory behaviors. I spent most of the post-conference asking questions and listening (see Appendix E for the Chart of Supervisory Behaviors). I clarified points throughout the conference, checking with the teacher to make sure I understood what she meant or what I had observed. At some points, my questions were more leading than exploratory, but overall I was not direct in pushing the teacher toward solving the (relatively minor) problems I observed in her classroom. Although the conference was collegial and did give the teacher the opportunity to reflect on her practice, I believe I could have been more effective as a supervisor.

Final Reflection

Overall, this process was a powerful learning experience for me. Whereas I felt very good about my supervisory behaviors during the previous cycle (observing the student engagement in

this teacher's classroom), this cycle revealed the areas where I still have a lot of room to grow as a supervisor. I anticipated a smoother process during this cycle than during the practice cycle, but the shift from student engagement feedback to teacher pedagogy feedback was challenging. Many of the skills I felt proficient with during the practice cycle seemed to escape me during this cycle, especially with the post-conference. It was difficult to be as direct and persistent as I think I should have been.

Two things about this cycle were less-than-ideal, and I would change them if I had the opportunity to repeat the process. First, as I mentioned previously, due to time constraints with this teacher's schedule, we conducted the pre-conference during her planning period, immediately before the students returned for the literacy block. This did not allow for the depth of conversation or "think time" we had during the practice cycle. I think it could have been helpful for this teacher and for me if I had allowed more time for reflection between the pre-conference and the observation. Second, our post-conference, which was originally scheduled to take place the day after the observation, had to be rescheduled for several days after I observed. This felt like too much time had passed since I observed the lesson. At times, the teacher struggled to remember what she had been doing during the specific literacy block I had observed; I think in future, it would be more effective to have the post-conference in closer proximity to the actual observation.

Areas of strength. The combination of watching the video and charting my supervisory behaviors was an important part of the learning process for me. I think the balance of my listening and talking was an area of relative strength in this post-conference. I elicited a lot of reflection and explanation from the teacher. I also think I did a better job of being warm and friendly during the post-conference than I did during the previous cycle. This may have led the

teacher to feel more comfortable sharing with me. Finally, it was a relative strength that I clarified my understanding with this teacher throughout the post-conference. I gave her frequent opportunities to explain and tell more about things I observed during the lesson.

Areas for growth. I see an opportunity for me to further develop my ability to work with experienced, effective teachers like this one. Had this been a novice or ineffective teacher, I think I would have been much more comfortable pushing her on some points related to her practice. As it was, this teacher has more classroom experience than I do, is teaching a grade level I have no experience teaching, and is overall very effective. Those presented barriers for me in the post-conference when it came to really guiding her toward solving the problems in her classroom. Ultimately, I am not sure my feedback was very helpful for this teacher.

Now that I know this about myself, I know I need to spend more time preparing for these kinds of conversations, especially with experienced, effective teachers. Instead of preparing only questions or talking points about the observation (which was sufficient for talking about student engagement with this teacher), if I repeated this post-conference, I would also prepare suggestions related to the two areas of concern. I hesitated to prepare advice for this teacher for two reasons: (a) I have not been particularly motivated by supervisors' unsolicited advice in my own teaching career; and (b) I did not feel confident and qualified to offer advice about the teacher's time management concerns. In retrospect, I should have done more research about this topic so I could have capitalized on the opportunity she gave me during the post-conference. She seemed sincerely open to hearing my ideas and I do plan to follow up with her about this topic the next time we talk.

Connection to Supervisory Platform. In my Supervisory Platform, I wrote about my desire to serve as a coach and a guide for teachers. I also expressed my belief that even the best

teachers have room for improvement. After completing this supervision cycle, I realize I need shore up my own ability to work successfully with strong, effective teachers. These teachers are often overlooked in the supervision process. They either get passed over altogether during observations or they are given ineffective feedback. In my previous teaching experience, it was always frustrating not to receive feedback or to receive feedback that was not helpful. I do not want to be the kind of supervisor who is only helpful for struggling or novice teachers; I want experienced teachers to see me as a resource as well. This supervisory cycle was eye opening for me, in that I realize now how difficult it is to prepare and provide effective feedback for teachers who have relatively minor (but no less complex) problems in the classroom.

Conclusion

Since I was working with the same teacher I worked with during the practice cycle, I purposefully guided her toward “a problem of practice” she was having in the classroom. At the time, I thought it would be beneficial for her to receive feedback on her pedagogy, since we had focused on student engagement during our previous cycle. Now, I realize it was even more useful for me to practice giving feedback on a teacher’s pedagogy rather than student engagement. Although I am a direct communicator and rarely shy away from difficult conversations, when it came to balancing the need for encouraging a very effective teacher with the need for solving some of the problems she is having in her classroom, I was not very successful. This is a valuable learning experience to have at this early point in my career as a school leader.

Appendix A

NEW READ	<u>Johnny Appleseed</u> (Lara, Ja’Nay, Peyton)
<p><u>Before</u> Intro / Summarize Prior Reading Words or Concepts- vocabulary, language structure, purpose for reading, cueing strategies, comprehension</p>	<p>Vocabulary: bare, clothes, cider Comprehension Strategy</p> <p>You are going to practice retelling with a partner to help with comprehension. We’ll read a small portion of the book and stop to retell. We’ll retell the most important parts of the book.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You will take turns reading. • While your partner reads, you will read along silently. Help and correct each other when reading if your partner makes a mistake or needs help. • After a section of the text has been read, the student who was not reading asks her partner “What did you learn first?” (Ask only once at the beginning of each section.) • “What did you learn next?” (Asked as many times as necessary to cover all the information students learned while reading the section.) <p>While we practice retelling this way, I’m going to help you know where to stop and retell.</p>
<p><u>During</u> Read New Text / Listen in Teaching Points: Observation of student behaviors</p>	<p>Stopping points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrate summarizing page 7 (What did you learn first? Johnny Appleseed was a real person named John Chapman who planted apple trees.) (What did you learn next? When Johnny was you people were moving west where there weren’t many people and no apple trees.) • Demonstrate page 9 (What did you learn first? Johnny was going West too.) (What did you learn next? He took apple seeds so he could plant apple trees.) • Now you try it. Remember to follow along while your partner reads. Stop at the end of page 13. (Ask what did you learn first?) (What did you learn next?) • Now switch and the other person reads. Remember to follow along while your partner reads. Stop at the end of page 15. (Ask what did you learn first?) (What did you learn next?) • Switch. Stop at the end of 19—21—23—27—32. (Ask what did you learn first?) (What did you learn next?) (What did you learn next?)
<p><u>After</u> Discuss, reinforce cueing strategies, comprehension skills and strategies introduced during whole group</p>	<p>This was our first time to practice retelling this way. I’d like for you to read the book again, stopping to think about what you’ve read and retell to yourself. Tomorrow we’ll read again and decide the most important events we need to remember to retell the story of Johnny Appleseed.</p>

Wonderings / Questions for Day 2.

I wonder where he got the seeds? I wonder why his clothes were rags? What does the author mean when she says, “The whole world is my home.”? (p. 27) On the last page, what does “It was all thanks to Johnny Appleseed” mean?

Appendix B

PRE-CONFERRING PROTOCOL

- Ask teacher to explain the instructional objective of the lesson you will be observing. What are the intended learning outcomes (ILOs) for students throughout the lesson?

-small group literacy rotations

-focusing on work with one small group: teaching them partner reading strategy

-focus for students is on comprehension and retell

- What instructional strategies does the teacher plan to implement to elicit the desired learning behaviors and achieve the lesson's learning objectives?

-partner reading with a retelling cue card

-Johnny Appleseed (low level reading book so decoding is not a challenge)

-teacher will model, cue partners to stop and retell, then allow time for independent practice; there will be additional follow-up at the end of the block and during the next lesson

- How will the teacher know if the objective is achieved? What are some possible [observable and measureable] indicators of students' success in achieving the objective?

-tomorrow's lesson: create a story wheel with the same story

-student reflection at the end of today's block

- What data collection tool will provide the most appropriate data for the teacher to reflect on?

-Effective Teacher Pedagogy Observation Form

- What other data or feedback would be helpful or useful from the observer?

-time management: teacher wants to get more accomplished in a shorter amount of time; aiming for 10 min. lesson/modeling; 10 min. independent practice; 10 min. follow-up/closure

Appendix C

EFFECTIVE TEACHER PEDAGOGY OBSERVATION FORM

Teacher Name Sanders School _____ Grade 1 Content Reading
Last, First

Date _____ Time In _____ Time Out _____ Observer Name _____
Last, First

Use this form to record elements of **Direct Instruction**, one of the highest impact strategies (Hattie, 2009). Place a check in the middle column if an item is observed. Indicators are not checked without evidence; not all items will be observed in a single observation. Write specific examples or non-examples in the far right column for feedback data and discussion with the teacher.

OBSERVATION "LOOK-FORS"	Observed	SPECIFY EXAMPLES/NON-EXAMPLES
1. Clarifies and articulates specific, appropriately challenging learning objectives/learning intentions.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	reminding students of learning and behavioral expectations prior to dividing up; small group review of objective
2. Identifies and communicates challenging success criteria in checklists and rubrics.	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3. Assesses and builds upon students' existing knowledge and skills.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	choice of low reading level book
4. Engages and hooks, builds commitment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Have you ever eaten an apple? What other foods are made with apples? Let's flip through before we read.
5. Provides input, explains, and models	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	modeling partner reading; prompting to pay attention to pictures; extra prompts for Laura
6. Guides practice: monitors, provides feedback, coaches and remediates as needed	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	clarifying modeling process during 1st independent practice round
7. Provides closure and assesses lesson impact on students, engages students in reflection	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	asking if partner reading will help; prompting students to reflect on independent reading choices
8. Provides time for independent practice	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
9. Develops vocabulary and connects concepts and ideas.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	reviewing challenging words before reading (spelling and definition)
10. Questions for high level thinking and deep learning, responds appropriately to students queries, promotes student questioning.	<input type="checkbox"/>	Wait time before moving on to the next student?

Comments:

-one student on wrong page during 2nd round of modeling (not following along during independent partner rdg)
 -pushing them beyond reliance on pictures for recall
 -Maybe have reader flip over book/no lookbacks during retell? Passing card might have been a distraction?
 -seemed to stay with only one group/one student during independent practice, rather than circulating around room

Appendix D

POST-CONFERENCING PROTOCOL

1. Ask the teacher to summarize h/h impressions of the time h/s was observed and to share evidence to support those impressions. Script your questions in advance from the resources provided to focus yourself, the teacher, and your desired reflections or outcomes.
2. Share the data you collected and analyze the observation evidence together. Were there discrepancies between what the teacher intended/expected and the evidence collected?
3. Synthesize the evidence and learning, draw conclusions, establish any next steps.
4. Collaboratively develop a plan of action (strategies/objectives) for the teacher to resolve discrepancies identified by the observation data.

POST CONFERENCE PLANNING TEMPLATE	
Teacher __ Sanders _____	Date __ 4/26/16 _____
Grade/Class __ 1 st ; reading _____	Lesson _____
What did you observe? To what do you want to draw attention? What questions might you pose? What instructional coaching might you provide?	
Effective Practices Observed (based on data collected): -clarifying/articulating specific learning objectives -developing vocabulary -assessing/building upon students' existing knowledge & skills -engaging/building commitment -modeling -monitoring/providing feedback/soliciting student reflection -providing time for independent practice	
Areas of Growth (based on data collected): -additional wait time with questioning -modifying partner reading to not allow lookbacks -eliminating cue card during partner reading -making better use of time during independent practice blocks	
Outcomes for conference: identify and PLAN your specific questions to pose to the teacher: What went well? What would you change? How do you think the lookbacks affected the effectiveness of the partner reading strategy? Would you consider this an effective strategy for these students? What other strategies will you use with these students? Thinking about independent practice time, what else might you do during this time? Are there any other ways you could keep time protected?	
Instructional coaching to provide: -having a specific plan for how to use independent practice time -following LP more closely when delivering small group instructions to retrieve some time -What professional goals do you have right now?	
Next Steps for Teacher & Observer: -return observation during reading/writing integration activity	

Appendix E

Charting the Supervisory Behavior Continuum

Supervisor's Name Theisinger Date of Conference 4/24/16 Time of Conference 9:45 -- 10

Time Interval	1 Listening	2 Clarifying	3 Encouraging	4 Reflecting	5 Presenting	6 Problem Solving	7 Negotiating	8 Directing	9 Standarizing	10 Reinforcing
1	x		x		x					
2	x									
3	x		x							
4	x	x	x							
5	x	x						leading		
6	x									
7	x									
8	x			x						
9	x	x								
10	x	x								
11	x	x								
12*	x			x						
13	x		x			x				
14		x								
15	x	x						leading		
16	x									

*missed opportunity to problem solve re: time management