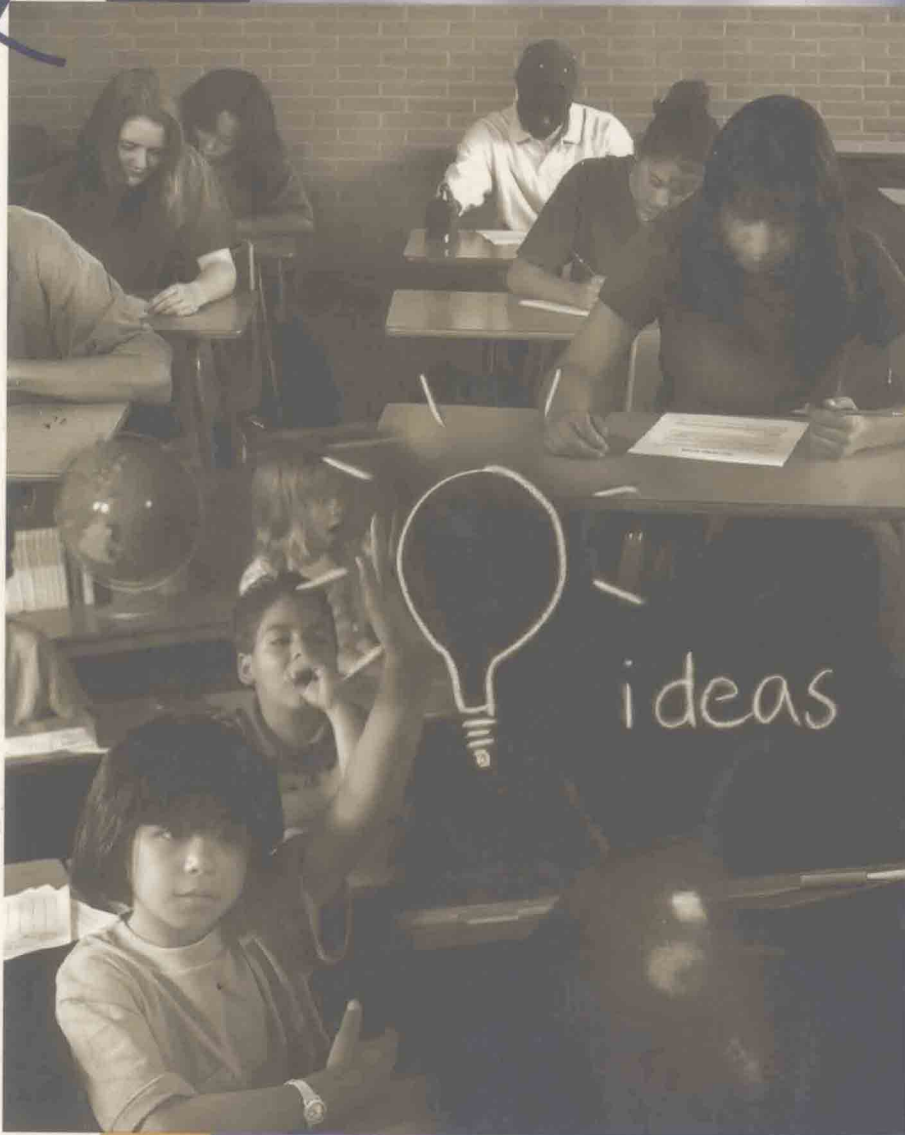




# Guide to Observation, Participation, and Reflection in the Classroom

*Fourth Edition*



*Arthea J. S. Reed  
Verna E. Bergemann*

# A Guide to Observation, Participation, and Reflection in the Classroom

FOURTH EDITION

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IN THE CLASSROOM, FOURTH EDITION

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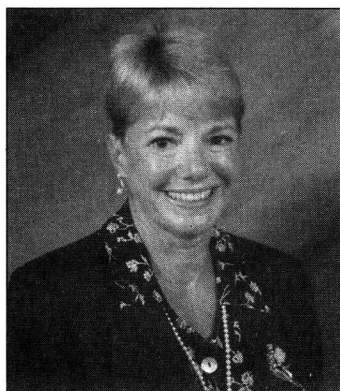
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# About the Authors



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she has worked closely with volunteer organizations that attempt to improve adult literacy. In 1989, she was named Woman of Distinction and Woman of the Year by the city of Asheville for her outstanding contributions to literacy education. In 1992, she chaired a school-study committee for private schools in Asheville. In 1997, she was selected to appear in the 1997/1998 *Who's Who in the South and Southeast*. In 2000/2001, she continues her work in teacher education, supervising student teachers.

# Introduction

*A Guide to Observation, Participation, and Reflection in the Classroom, Fourth Edition* is written for you, the student. However, it is designed to help you move beyond being a student. It provides you with sequenced school-based observation, teaching experiences, and reflection that not only will bridge the gap between the world of the student and the world of the teacher, but also help you connect the world of theory to the world of practice. In beginning the process of becoming an effective teacher, you must learn to view students, schools, and teachers as a teacher would. In addition, you must develop, practice, and reflect on the skills and techniques of effective teaching in order to perfect them.

The *Guide* is divided into six parts: Part I—Understanding Fieldwork, Part II—Observing in the Schools, Part III—Developing Successful Teaching Skills, Part IV—The Portfolio, Part V—Glossary, and Part VI—Forms. This edition includes expanded approaches to observation and participation, including the reflective process, standards of measuring teaching excellence, teaching to multiple intelligences, identifying teaching styles, and keeping portfolios.

Observation to gain knowledge and understanding must come first. Thus, Chapter 1 presents the importance of early fieldwork, based on the authors' experiences in elementary, secondary, and university classrooms and documented by recent research of teacher educators and by professional organizations that focus on teacher education. The next three chapters of the guide provide examples and methods of anecdotal, structured, and reflective observations of teachers, as well as of classrooms, and students. The observation techniques have been designed to help you become a critical and objective observer.

Once you have had the opportunity to reflect on your observations, Chapters 5 and 6 provide you with guidance for developing a gradual and reflective approach to becoming a teacher and include many of the tools and techniques used by effective teachers. The first part of this section explains the importance of classroom participation during teacher training. The rest of Chapters 5 and 6 provide you with information for preteaching, planning, tutoring, teaching small groups, teaching large groups, and reflecting on your teaching. Chapter 7 will provide you with steps in keeping a portfolio of your preservice experiences in the classroom.

Finally, following the chapters, you will find copies of all the observation and participation forms and instruments that have been discussed throughout this guide, numbered to coincide with the completed samples. These can be removed from the book and duplicated for your use. Each has been extensively field-tested by college and university students over a period of two decades.

The authors of this guide hope that as you complete and reflect on each observation, participation, and teaching activity, you will strengthen your resolve to become an effective teacher.

Arthea J. S. Reed  
Verna E. Bergemann  
Asheville, NC

A Guide to Observation,  
Participation, and Reflection  
in the Classroom

FOURTH EDITION

Many other anecdotal observations of the classroom can be useful. For example, observers may focus on the instructional elements of the classroom or on how the students move throughout the classroom for certain purposes. Marvin notes in his anecdotal discussion of Mr. Schroeder's classroom that it is crowded, and that three of the students do not yet have their own desks. Marvin may want to spend part of a day observing how Mr. Schroeder deals with this problem. If the students are using the learning centers during social studies, what happens to the student desks nearest the ledge? Does Mr. Schroeder use the rear table for reading or other groups? What happens to the three boys if they are not a part of the group using the table? When students leave the classroom for special classes, how do they do so without disturbing the other students?

## Anecdotal Observations of Schools

Similar anecdotal observations can be done on various aspects of an entire school. Observing students in hallways during a change of class periods can reveal a great deal about the organization of the school. It is also interesting to examine the "decorations" in the hallways. Are there bulletin boards displaying student work? Do the bulletin boards have locked glass doors? Are there display cabinets in the hallways? What is in these cabinets? Are the hallways well lit? Do the students have individual lockers? Where are the various school administrative offices? Are they easily accessible to students, teachers, and visitors? How are the offices furnished? What are the "decorations" in the offices, such as the guidance office, that caters to students? What are the school's grounds like? How about the lunchroom, auditorium, and gym? Are there public areas in which students gather? Where are they, and what are they like? What is the playground like? Is there playground equipment? Examining all of these elements helps the observer become more familiar with the school.

## Anecdotal Observations of Curriculum

Anecdotal observations can also be used to examine the curriculum. The observer in Mr. Schroeder's classroom might want to know more about the social studies curriculum. He might write an anecdotal observation that includes information about the text and other classroom materials. Or, he might discuss more detailed information about the learning centers. The observer might seek out the school, district, or state curriculum guide to see what is taught in fourth-grade social studies. How does what Mr. Schroeder is teaching relate to what is required by the school, district, or state? The observer might compare Mr. Schroeder's interpretation of the curriculum in his lessons with the interpretation of another fourth-grade teacher. All of these elements can tell the observer a great deal about the school, its curriculum, and its instructional policies.

## Structured Observation of Classrooms, Schools, and Curriculum

Structured observations of classrooms, schools, and curriculum can be conducted by using the techniques of coding, checklists, interviews, and surveys. Structured observations allow the observer to look for very specific elements. Instruments may be developed by the observer, adapted from other sources, or copied from this text.



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## PART I

# Understanding Fieldwork



## ⑥ Chapter One

# *The Importance of Fieldwork*

The 1999 report, “Teacher Quality: A Report on the Preparation and Qualification of Public School Teachers” (U.S. Department of Education), concluded that preservice teachers do not spend enough time in elementary and secondary schools during their preservice training. The report emphasized that early field experiences play an important role in shaping and maintaining high-quality teachers. When Daphnia Raye Pierce, teacher educator at Utah State University, asked secondary teachers about the kinds of training experiences they had in teacher preparation, the most frequent complaint they voiced was they were not given the opportunity to work with students until reaching student-teaching status or on-the-job-training. The teachers thought that was too late and that they needed earlier field experiences during their first courses in their teacher-preparation program (Pierce 1996, 223). However, a 1997 survey sponsored by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) revealed that teacher-preparation candidates receive substantial early field experiences. According to the survey, 79 percent of elementary-education teacher-preparation programs and 49 percent of secondary programs require students to spend more than 90 hours in classrooms prior to student teaching. The colleges and universities that participated in this survey, which was conducted by three Southwest Texas State University teacher educators, concur that field experiences for teacher-preparation candidates must be increasingly complex. Early field experiences involved preservice teachers shadowing elementary and secondary students, engaging in general classroom observation, participating in focused observations, then gradually assisting teachers in directed tasks such as bulletin board preparation, grading students’ papers, working with small groups of students, and eventually teaching the entire class. In addition, preservice teachers in these institutions were taught to observe the contextual features of the classroom, school, and community. It appears from these studies that new teachers believe that they needed more time observing and participating in the classrooms in which they were being trained to teach, while the colleges and universities they attended can document significant fieldwork in their training programs. Why the dichotomy?

The need for more preservice time spent in real classrooms is acknowledged by teacher-education institutions as well as by beginning teachers. However, increasing the time spent off campus in public school settings is frequently impractical. So, what is the answer? There could be more than one, including increasing the length of teacher-education training programs. However, again, this may be impractical. Hence, the best answer seems to lie in improving the quality rather than the quantity of preservice teacher observation and participation.

The National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), a national accrediting agency of teacher-education programs, sets aside clinical and field-based experiences as one of its major standards for accreditation of teacher-education programs. The NCATE also suggests that it is not only the quantity of experiences that is important, but that the experiences must be systematic and provide opportunities for preservice teachers to observe, plan, and practice their skills in a variety of settings and with culturally diverse and exceptional populations (NCATE 1997, 20). These field experiences should encourage



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reflection by the preservice teacher, as well as feedback from university and public-school faculty and the student's peers. According to the National Association of State Education Chiefs (NASTEC), 38 states now require a specified number of field-experience hours prior to student teaching, from a low of 40 clock hours in Washington to a high of 300 in Ohio (NASTEC 1999). Likewise, the importance of field experiences has been recognized by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) in the redesign of its national examination used in many states prior to teacher licensure or certification. The series of tests, previously called the *National Teachers Examination*, is now called *Praxis*, acknowledging the role of practice and reflection in teacher training. Included within the series of examinations are tests that require students to apply their academic knowledge in classroom situations. The Association for Childhood Education International (ACEI) states that field experiences for preservice teachers should be carefully sequenced so there will be a gradual increase of responsibility in the classroom. Likewise, the ACEI believes that preservice teachers must be provided with opportunities to work with students who come from culturally diverse backgrounds and possess diverse abilities, including mainstreamed or special-education students (ACEI 1997, 167).

John Goodlad, an education professor and researcher at University of Washington, Seattle, asked senior teacher-education students to rank on a seven-point scale the most beneficial aspects of their programs. Not surprisingly, they ranked in this order: social foundations courses (3.8), educational psychology (4.9), general methods courses (5.2), field experiences prior to student teaching (6.0), and at the top, student teaching (6.7). However, although field experiences are considered to be exceedingly valuable, teacher-education students and faculty tend to agree that the most effective field experiences are well-organized, well-planned, and allow for reflection (1990, 247). Authors H. Frederick Sweitzer and Mary A. King report that field experiences in teacher-education programs afford future teachers the opportunity for:

- Understanding the complexities of teaching.
- Personal growth.
- Self-knowledge.
- Clarifying career and educational goals (1999, 4).

A study conducted at Alverno College affirms these contentions. Preservice teachers who had extensive structured and developmentally sequenced field experiences in a variety of settings prior to student teaching graduated with more conviction and confidence about teaching. According to this study, 93.5 percent of those students in the experimental group were self-assured and confident about their knowledge of teaching skills and subject area as compared to 33.6 percent of the students who graduated in teacher education without the extensive field experiences (U.S. Department of Education 1999, 4).

In a study of elementary teacher-education seniors at the University of Central Arkansas, Carol Anne Pierson asked the students to reflect on the field experiences they had prior to student teaching. They identified four priorities to ensure successful experiences:

- Clear expectations and objectives for the field experiences; knowing what to look for so as not to miss significant events in initial observations.
- Opportunity for feedback and discussion about the experience to help students understand what they were learning.
- Careful correlation of the field experience with the theory and/or method taught in the college classroom.
- Well-defined procedures for the field experiences (1993, 288).

This chapter and those following are designed to help you get the most from your preservice, practical field experiences. This chapter provides you with guidelines for a gradual, reflective approach to beginning teaching. Chapters 2, 3, and 4 provide you with techniques for observing teachers, students, classrooms, schools, and curriculum. Chapters 5 and 6 give you tools to plan your teaching, organize what and how you will teach, and reflect upon your