

**'Things to Notice'  
Cultural Diversity in  
Schools EDUC-X 425.02**

**CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**  
Student-Centered?  
Opportunities for relevant conversation encouraged?  
Low stress environment?  
Culturally Relevant Posters?

**MATERIALS**  
Interesting realia?  
Charts/Graphs/Visuals?  
Culturally Relevant Posters?  
Adapted Technology?

**LEARNER/ ENGAGEMENT**  
Are students motivated by the relevance of the content?  
Are they active participants?  
Are they active listeners?

**HIGH QUALITY LESSON**

- Culturally relevant lesson? Objectives & learning goals obvious/ stated?
- Clear understandable opening hook? Motivating topic? Phases of lesson evident? Direct instruction? Scaffolding of ideas? Transition between activities?

**TEACHING STRATEGIES, LESSON DELIVERY, AND ASSESSMENT**

- Quality of student/ teacher relationship?
- Enthusiastic?
- Student Friendly and Inviting Tone?
- All students are recognized?
- All students have a voice and opportunity

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## *Classroom Observation*

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### Observation Report

**Observation Guidelines:** An Observation

Report from each core class is required.

Question #6 on the Observation Sheet will be specific to each class and provided by the instructor.

- Arrange ahead of time with the school and instructor an observation of your choice and level
- Sit quietly and do not disturb the class while observing
- Bring the “**Things to Notice**” sheet to help guide your observation
- Final observations must be typed
- Students must complete a minimum of four (4) observations to include in the final portfolio class
- One in-person observation will be done in EACH core class
- One of the observations may be done observing an online class (these URL’s will be provided by your teacher)
- A recommended observation time is 25 – 50 minutes

➤ **Name: Russell Fung**

➤ **Class: 8<sup>th</sup> Grade – English Language Arts**

➤ **Date: Upload February 28, 2019. Assignment October 16, 2020**

➤ **Online:** [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=\\_CoV2pPmTCQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_CoV2pPmTCQ)

➤ **Class subject observed: English Informational Text; Primary Text; analysis; discussion**

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## Classroom Observation

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- **Class level: 8<sup>th</sup> grade**
- **Teacher's name: Vanée Matsalia**
- **Amount of time in observation: 6min, 9sec video length; rewatched several times**

### General Notes While Observing

Take *notes* during your observation.

Use the *Things to Notice* sheet for guidance.

Pay particular attention to:

- **Learner Engagement:**
  - The teacher asks for a volunteer to read the first paragraph of the assigned reading. One student gets chosen and he reads the passage outloud. This allows the student to engage with the text and also broadcast his vocal reading skills to the class. Along the way, he stumbles on the pronunciation of a new term, "pejorative." Thus the class learns that new vocabulary word and adds it to their repertoire.
  - Students are pushed and challenged with a rich amount of text to read.
  - Analysis and discussion are a huge part of the lesson.
  - Students split into groups to engage with the lesson.
  - After group work, students reflect and express their thoughts to the teacher.
  - One student provided an anecdote and had a revelation.
  - Students shown actively listening. Not sure if it's because they know they're on video.

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- **High Quality Lesson:**
  - “This is a really vigorous text.” “Take a moment to get through this vigorous reading.”
  - The text itself seems very daunting when looking at it. It looks long. When a student reads this out loud, the quality of the text really comes out.
  - The text is later accompanied by a video that’s “rich with text and data.”
  - After the lecture, reading, and viewing, there is a group session where everyone splits up into small groups. In each group, students talk amongst themselves to discuss and analyze the lesson.
  - The final part is reflection with the teacher.
  - Culturally relevant lesson about Mexican-American people. It sounds like an ethnic studies class.
  - Students seem to be made up of Black and Latinx backgrounds.
  
- **Teaching Strategies and Lesson Delivery:**
  - I noticed that the teacher delivers expectations at the beginning of, and throughout the lesson.
  - She tells the students what the purpose of the lesson will be, what tasks will be required, and possible obstacles along the way.
  - She delivers this in a declarative manner, neither gentle nor harsh. Mexican culture is incorporated into the lesson.
  - Small groups allow more students to engage. It’s not just a class of 30 students raising their hands to respond to one teacher. It’s small groups of four people interacting with each other. Then they all come back together.
  - Enthusiasm projected very well. Asks good questions for students to think about as they begin to dig through the text.
  
- **Materials:**
  - The students receive a physical copy of the primary text to read.
  - A youtube video is screened using a projector.
  
- **Classroom Environment:**
  - The desks are individualized for the beginning of the lesson. Later on, the desks get rearranged into groups for cooperative discourse.

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- I noticed that the classroom is somewhat tidy.

### Essay Response

Answer the questions below in essay form.

#### **Learning Strategies**

1. **What did you learn about culturally relevant teaching from this observation? Include at least one in – text citation from the current class readings to support your response.** Is there something that was particularly useful in this lesson? Was there clear evidence of a high quality lesson? Were the learning goals and objectives clearly reviewed and evident? Please give examples and specific details (150-300 words)

From this observation, I learned that culturally relevant teaching enriches the quality of student engagement. I saw how the teacher supplemented her lesson plan with a video about the Mexican-American experience. She decided to combine social studies to her English Language Arts lesson. Noticeably, the teacher comes from an African-American background, whereas the majority of the students in her classroom looked to be from a Hispanic background. Before she presented that video, she spoke to the students in a very engaging manner, at moderate volume, often times warming up the students by vocalizing expectations on the lesson. Specifically, the lesson was about Primary Text, in which students study a document from an actual person in a certain period of time. In this case, the primary text was literally an interview the students had to watch on a screen.

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The teacher did not talk down to the students, but rather prompted various challenges and questions that might come up as students consumed the material presented to them. She challenged the students to extrapolate all the data (the text being everything the man in the video had to say) and come up with a discussion. Donna Y. Ford states in her article, "Welcoming All Students To Room 202," that students who bring their differences to our classrooms want to be respected, appreciated, affirmed, and validated. The teacher in this observation assignment considered the makeup of her classroom. Yes, there were some non-Hispanic students, but she didn't single out any group. She included all people to engage with the material. Again, Ford states that the materials are culturally relevant and meaningful – students' backgrounds and experiences are central to teaching and learning. The result was a high quality lesson that allowed students the space to find a central idea from the text presented to them.

2. **What have you learned from this observation that relates to your current TESOL class? Discuss two strategies from your current course work and readings that were evident in this lesson. Was there a section where learner engagement and student understanding could be improved? (150-300 words)**

My current TESOL class is about cultural perspectives and teaching methods. In relation to this TESOL class, this observation video showed me that students can learn English through reading a text from the perspective of different authors. For example, when the author writes on behalf of the experience of the Mexican-American people, A) Mexican-American or adjacent students can connect to the entire lesson and B) Non-Mexican-American students get an opportunity to learn the perspectives of people different from themselves.

One strategy from the current course work involves getting to know the students' background and culture. In the context of an English Language Arts class, a non-English-speaking culture as curriculum acts as a Trojan Horse to learning English. There was a part in the lesson where the teacher called on a volunteer to read the text out loud. As the student read aloud, he was exercising his ability to pronounce words, develop rhythm, and encounter challenging vocabulary words. For example, the student had a hard time pronouncing the word, "pejorative." This was an opportunity for the whole class to stop and investigate what that word means. Thus, a spelling and vocabulary lesson was inherently and spontaneously built into the lesson. Had the teacher read the text out loud for the students OR have the students read quietly to themselves, there wouldn't have been an opportunity for engagement.

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Another strategy is having the students learn cooperatively in addition to working alone. We don't know from this one observation which students work better by themselves or in a group setting, so why not do both. The teacher first had the students read the texts individually to themselves WHILE a volunteer read out loud. Then the students split into groups to discuss the reading. This allowed students to engage amongst their peers and develop their thoughts before the class comes back together to present their findings to the teacher.

### **Connecting to TESOL Classwork**

3. **Discuss in detail the learner engagement of this particular lesson. (100-200 words)**

This particular lesson had two distinctive parts of engagement: passive absorption of material via video, and active reading of material via text on paper. Both versions of the material presented the Mexican-American experience of hardship. The video material allowed students to utilize their listening skills. Once absorbed, the students were asked to discuss what they heard. This allowed students to engage with each other and the teacher by utilizing their voices. Unbeknownst to the students, they were practicing enunciation, articulation of thoughts, and expressing how they connected to the material. That video interview seemed to keep students engaged because they were able to relate to the feelings of hardship and struggle.

The reading of the text on paper allowed students to connect actively with the author's experiences. One student shared an anecdote to the teacher (and to the class) about her personal experience in relation to the text. As she did this, she expressed an auditory "whoa" mid-sentence. She had a revelation and learning moment.

4. **Were there informal assessments (checking for understanding) during this lesson that prove understanding and clarity on the part of the student? Describe these assessments in detail. Were they stressful? What additional assessments could you add if you were the teacher? (100-200 words)**

The informal assessment happens when a student volunteers to read the text aloud, as stated earlier in this essay. The teacher warns the students ahead of one lesson, "This is a really rigorous text. There is going to be a lot of tough vocabulary." By setting this

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expectation, students learn to be more open about the learning process. They are told to mark places that could be tough and ask questions. The teacher states that she expects and wants her students to struggle a little bit. That it's not just about the Chicano experience on the text, but about making the student both a better reader and human being. If I were the teacher, I wouldn't make any additional assessments. They seem to work just fine.

### **Things to Remember**

5. **Is there something from this observation that really stands out? Give two or more examples and justify your reasoning. (100-250 words)**

One thing that stood out from this observation is the part where the teacher said, "A scholar takes time to ponder." She acknowledged her students as scholars, which meant that she placed onto them a great amount of respect and title. This provides encouragement and an expectation for the learning environment. She also motivates her students to take a pause and think. In a way, this is meditative. Answers don't always come right away, nor are they expected to respond quickly.

Another thing that stood out was when the teacher talked about "Combining Community and Curriculum." This makes a whole lot of sense when relating this to culturally responsive teaching. Community encompasses not only students of a particular race, but also of a particular place. The environment consists of people of various backgrounds. She acknowledged that there is a certain history and future for these people who come together in one room. She caters and facilitates their differences into the lesson plan. The teacher could've made her English Language Arts class just a technical course. Instead, she integrates social studies, social justice, and students' place in this world into the curriculum. This makes them feel seen, heard, and respected.

### **Current Classwork**

6. **Based on the classroom environment, did you find the space to be designed to be inclusive of all learners (race cultures, special needs, genders, religions, SES, etc)? In other words, is it a culturally relevant environment (reference the two videos and article from this week to support your response). (100- 250 words)**

This particular classroom space wasn't cluttered with excessive decorations on the walls. I noticed mostly the desk arrangement: students sat in rows facing the teacher and the board. This is very traditional. It wasn't until they split up into



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### *Classroom Observation*

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groups did the desk arrangement change. None of these arrangements signified to me that the classroom environment was exclusive to anybody. I recall in one video, "Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning," the classroom was adorned with student artwork, cultural imagery, and rules on the walls. I find this to be unnecessary in a post-secondary classroom environment. What matters is that the teacher herself is the environment that is safe and conducive to learning for people of all creeds, backgrounds, etc. Another video, "Becoming A Culturally Responsive Teacher" featured a specialist who said, "The cultural competence of the adults is intimately connected to achievement." I believe this proves my point that it's the adult facilitator in the room, not the walls, that make the classroom environment inclusive. In the article, "Welcoming All Students To Room 202," Ford talks about seating arrangements. I believe the placement of seats greatly affects the environment for student learning. It is up to the individuals and the group to determine the energy and flow of a classroom. In this particular classroom, when the desks rearranged from individual setup to group setup, the energy of the room became lively. When it was time to regroup the entire class for feedback to the teacher, the energy became more focused. I felt the lesson itself was enhanced and appropriate with the shifting environment, and thus was culturally relevant.