

## Peer review on Sophie Hubbell's teaching

Class: Advanced Practicum

Topic: Lesson planning

Completed by SHW

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I met with Miss Hubbell to discuss her approach to teaching, her previous experiences and goals for the current opportunity to teach master's level students in Advanced Practicum Course. The class was approximately an hour long with no breaks. Sophie utilized PowerPoint as an instructional aide to her lecture with time for questions and answers during the session.

### Overall Approach to Teaching

This instructor's overall approach to teaching is revealed first of all through an examination of her syllabus. Although, there was no opportunity to develop a syllabus, it seems like Ms. Hubbell would be unlikely to improvise much in the classroom, preferring instead to prepare well and to anticipate different directions it might take. At the same time, she does appear to have a decidedly "student-centered" approach as well. Although she clearly wants to cover the required material well, she wants to do it in ways that give students at least some of the responsibility for their own learning. This is evidenced in her use of class time for lecturing versus letting the students lead the conversation or discussion. She is also very concerned that her students get plenty of resources to continue their learning instead of receiving this one shot of information.

### Instructional Strategies

Ms. Hubbell has considered the instructional strategies that she uses and makes a conscious effort to move away from pure lecture and involve students more actively in their learning. To that end, she makes students responsible for some of the discussion items.

This instructor also tries to monitor the success (or lack of success). She reported that not everything she tried worked as well as she would like. Some of this might have been due to the fact that the regular instructor did not allow enough time for her to deliver all she planned to deliver.

### Environment

Sophie taught this class in a high-tech classroom that is available for instructors to try out instructional approaches using different technologies. It is a small room arranged for meetings and seminars. It includes laptops for students, enough to have one computer for each student. There is also an instructor's station with a computer, document camera, video recorder, SmartBoard, and projector.

Ms. Hubbell made use of the room fairly well. She taped her session and utilized ppt/projector. She clearly believes that environment has an important effect on her teaching.

## Teacher

Ms. Hubbell appears to have interest in teaching in higher education settings, and she seems to have a good start. She cares about both the subject matter and the students. She is detail-oriented and wants to improve her skills. At the moment, she does appear tentative, and not completely pleased with her current level of skills, but this seems appropriate to her developmental level as an instructor. This instructor's self-description of her "philosophy" of teaching includes such aspects as engaging students in classes through activities other than lecturing, setting high standards, being flexible, and using real-world examples. Sophie brings in her life experiences as a special education teacher—which is invaluable.

## Content

The class that was the focus of this review is focused on the development of lesson plans for young children, especially as it applies to early childhood intervention in inclusive settings. From what I could observe, the session seemed to fulfill that mission ok. Sure, more time would have been needed for a thorough job and to assure actual understanding or improvement in student skills.

## Style

I think that Sophie's style is engaging and fast pace. The atmosphere of the class was relaxed, easygoing, yet focuses on the topic. Miss Hubbell is quite open to questions and different points of view. In fact, she seems to encourage them. As noted below, the students are not exactly overwhelming in their participation much of the time, but not because they are suppressed by the instructor.

## Assessment

N/A

## Learners

The learners are graduate students in Early Childhood Intervention. Many of them are new to graduate studies; others may have a course or two under their belts. They all work full-time before coming to class, and they first received a regular session from the regular instructor, before Sophie actually them. From my observation, the instructor did engage the students with the topic fine. Again, more time would have enabled more opportunities to really address the various learner needs.

## Recommendations

Sophie should continue to develop herself as a teacher along the paths that she has already begun. She has been taking college teaching this semester—which is a great start. She knows what she wants to be as a college/university teacher (and that she wants to be a teacher), and her goals are good ones. If she continues to try new approaches, observe and document the results,

and make changes, then she should see continuous improvement. In doing that, she should keep in mind that she will need multiple sources of feedback. Keep looking at what the students are learning as well.

Some specific recommendations are

- Use quality resources on course design and development
- When you do lecture, work at becoming more dynamic and engaging. Let your own enthusiasm for the material show through more, and model the interest, curiosity, and inquiry that you want students to develop as well.
- Use PowerPoint effectively. Never read your own slides, but make them useful backgrounds to what the point you want to get across (less is more when it comes to ppt)
- Whenever possible, show data and share personal examples that you and the class can discuss.
- May want to consider testing out the classroom response system. Miss Hubbell has an interest in technology and this might be a good way to check for student comprehension as well as engagement
- Mandate that the students engage themselves—don't let them off the hook. Or don't let one person to answer for the whole class. Follow-up to help reinforce the discussion directions that you value the most.
- One thing to try out is to raise more controversial issues, perhaps by taking (at least temporarily) an unusual stand. When students argue points, you can demand that they find the theories and data to back up what they say. But again, this might be tough to do with the topic of lesson planning...

Thank you for the opportunity!

SHW