

CURR 451/CURR 526 Teaching for Learning I Creating a Community for Learning: Guidelines for Report

Over the course of the semester, you will have the opportunity to get to know one school and one classroom very well. The focus of your observations and reflections should center on what your cooperating teacher and the school do to ensure that students are learning and achieving. The keys to student achievement center on the environment that is established in the school and the classroom. Sometimes schools act as a unit with clear ideas about success that are shared between and among teachers, students, administrators, and staff. Sometimes, teachers act in ways that are counter to the school culture. In this report, your goal is to try to uncover the messages, both overt and implicit, that students are being sent and receiving about the kind of school/classroom they are in and what they need to do to succeed.

Your data for this paper can come from a variety of sources: classroom and school observations, interviews and informal interactions with students, teachers, and administrators, artifacts such as school newsletters, classroom handouts, signs in the hallways, and explicit statements of expectations for student behavior.

In a paper of 6- 8 pages, please address the topics listed below. Keep in mind that you are writing *an integrated essay*, not a set of answers to individual questions. The questions which appear under the topics are designed to help you to gather your data, not to organize your essay.

1. DEMOCRACY:

In what ways does the school/classroom provide space for student participation and voice? To what extent is the school/classroom an environment which embraces multiple points of view? In the classroom, are students given responsibility for their own learning? Are divergent modes of thinking encouraged? Are students given opportunity to connect the curriculum to their own culture and knowledge?

2. COMMUNITY:

How does the school/teacher establish and maintain an environment that is conducive to learning? Do students collaborate? Do faculty collaborate? Are the rules clear and enforced equitably? What is the nature of the school community? Is the community caring and respectful? How well does the teacher know the students? How does the teacher relate to the students? Are students respectful of one another and their teacher?

3. INSTRUCTION:

What are the emphases in the lesson (discovery, application, recitation)? How does the teacher organize the use of instructional time? Does she plan carefully? Does she make adjustments to accommodate students' input? Are students exploring and investigating phenomena? Who is doing most of the talking? Are the teacher's expectations for students clear? What kinds of interactions does the teacher have with

the students? How does the teacher get to know her students? What modifications does the teacher make to support individual students?

4. ACHIEVEMENT:

What messages is the school/teacher sending about how to be a successful student? What do students understand about what learning is? Are there support structures and programs such as after school tutoring, clubs that promote interest and success? How does the teacher convey her expectations to students? What opportunities are there for all students in the class to understand and achieve? How does the teacher deal with students who are struggling? How does the teacher handle students who learn quickly and easily?