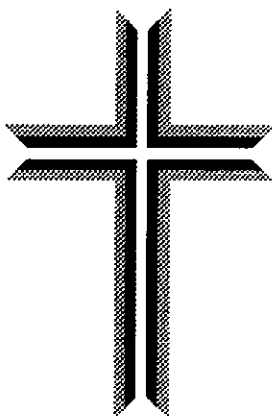


Training Classroom Observers



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Introduction

Making lifelong disciples of Jesus Christ through the teaching/learning process is the primary activity of the Lutheran elementary school (LES). It is logical that we do all possible to help teachers improve their classroom instruction.

One of the best ways of helping teachers improve their teaching is to have an experienced and trained teacher observe classroom teaching and then meet with the teacher to discuss observation.

Preliminary considerations

Both the board of education and the principal need to agree that selecting and training one of the current faculty members as a classroom observer would help improve the instruction in the school.

Selecting an observer

Because the teaching/learning process is so important, the principal and the board will want to select a classroom observer who has been blessed with the appropriate gifts and characteristics and has acquired the skills necessary to do that work. The following questions will help the board and principal with the selection:

1. Is the teacher evangelical?
2. Does the teacher understand what teaching from the Scriptural viewpoint means and how to do that in a classroom?
3. Does the teacher have enough teaching experience?
4. Is the teacher able to teach well, that is, maintain effective discipline, use effective teaching methods, prepare lessons well, maintain good pupil-teacher relations?
5. Does the teacher have effective communications skills? Will the teacher be willing and able to discuss with a colleague both strengths and weaknesses?
6. Is the teacher well-organized?
7. Is the teacher respected by the other teachers, pastor, parents, and board of education?
8. Is the teacher perceptive, that is, does he/she have the ability to detect effective teaching, effective discipline, and effective relationships?
9. Is the teacher able to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behaviors if they are not evident now?

Scriptural Principles

The teaching/learning that takes place in the classrooms of our LES's is an important part of the ministry of a congregation. The study of the truths of Scripture is a key element in improving classroom instruction. Those truths lay the foundation for an observer's and instructor's Christ-like attitudes toward students and colleagues. A valuable resource is a Bible study entitled *Team Ministry*. It reinforces important scriptural truths related to team ministry.

Training an Observer

1. **First Session: Bible study and planning**
 - a. Opening prayer
 - b. Bible study "Team Ministry"
 - c. Discussion of the two guiding principles on p. 3 under "Introduction"
 - d. Discussion of the four-step observation process
 - e. Select a classroom observation tool appropriate for the objectives of the observation.
 - f. Select the teacher to be observed
 - g. Set the date and the time of observation
 - h. Set the date and the time of preobservation conference
 - i. Set the date and the time of postobservation conference
2. **Process for the first classroom observation**
 - a. Preobservation conference conducted by the trainer (about 10 minutes).
 - b. Classroom observation (plan a classroom visit of 15-30 minutes), both trainee and trainer collect data, copy of data to be shared with the teacher
 - c. Analysis and strategy by observer and trainee working together (about 15 minutes).
 - d. Postobservation conference conducted by trainer(plan about 30 minutes), discuss improvement objectives and possible follow up to determine how well those objectives are being achieved.
3. **Process for the second classroom observation**
 - a. Select a teacher to be observed.
 - b. Follow the same steps as No. 2 above only have the trainee take the lead in conferences, and the analysis and strategy session

Explanation of the Observation Procedure

Preobservation Conference

At the preobservation conference, the teacher and the observer do the following:

1. Set the date and the time of the classroom observation
2. Establish the lesson objectives, teaching strategies, and student expectations for the lesson.
3. Set objectives for the observation
4. Agree on the process and tools for the observation
5. Set the date and time of the postobservation conference. Be sure to allow at least an hour between the observation and the postobservation conference. However, do not wait more than a day before conducting the conference.

Classroom Observation

It is suggested that the new observer during his first several observations use the selective verbatim observation technique (cf. Supervision of Instruction).

While taking notes the observer's work is simplified if abbreviations are used, for example, t = teacher, s = students, q = question, a = answer, and RG = a student's initials. Use 1/3 for row number/seat number if observer does not know students' names.

The observer should focus on recording as much of what is said and done as possible. Some of the notes might be highlighted to call attention to some recurring activities or problem which deserves some attention at the postobservation conference.

After the observation, the observer shares a copy of the observation notes with the teacher. These notes are the major source of data for the postobservation conference for both teacher and observer.

Analysis and Strategy

Both observer and teacher need time to analyze the notes the observer took during the observation. During this time the observer will develop the agenda for the postobservation conference being sure to focus on the objectives that were set in the preobservation conference. Also the observer will include items on the agenda which should be discussed but which were not talked about at the preobservation conference and which are important to improving instruction.

On the basis of these notes taken by the observer, the teacher can develop some improvement objectives for his/her teaching. These objectives may relate to the objectives which observer and teacher had set for the observation in the preobservation conference, or those improvement objectives may relate to some other item which surfaced in the observation.

1. Share observation notes and data
2. Identify significant trends related to the objectives of the classroom observation.
3. Identify areas of strength and areas needing improvement.
4. Plan the agenda of the postobservation conference.

Postobservation Conference

This conference is critical to the success of the observation and to the improvement of instruction.

1. The observer may want to begin the conference with prayer.
2. The observer and teacher discuss the observation notes giving special attention to the objectives set during the preobservation conference. They also discuss any other agenda items which either of them have added.
3. During the discussion the two develop one or two improvement objectives for the teacher's classroom.
4. The observer and the teacher then discuss how the observer will monitor the teacher's progress on the improvement objectives. This may be done informally in various circumstances, for example, during after school conversations or during playground conversations.
5. Before leaving the conference, the observer thanks the teacher for his/her cooperation.
6. They may close with prayer asking the Lord to bless their future work.

Following the Postobservation Conference

1. If the observer is not the principal, the observer will report the results of the observation and conference to the principal.
2. The observer follows through on plans to monitor the progress on the improvement objectives. For example, informal discussion of items on the agenda of the postobservation conference can take place at recess time, before or after school. Both observer and teacher can share additional insights. The teacher can relate progress on an improvement objective.

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