

The Physical Environment of Classroom

(Prompts 1-10, in Blue require a response from you)

As part of your first classroom observation, introduce yourself to the students. Tell the class why you are observing them and let them know that you will be working with them in the upcoming weeks.

Observation Details: record the following

1. Your teacher's name and contact information (email address - you may also exchange cell #'s): Mrs. Wishin, wishinbl@alachuaschools.net
2. School, grade level, class period, subject area: Eastside High School, grades from 9th to 12th, 5th and 6th period, honors geometry and math for liberal arts.
3. Summary of any information provided about students, classroom/lab, equipment availability, etc.

Based on our observations during the first class and the teacher's comments, 5th period tends to be the most talkative. This is largely because it consists mostly of 9th- and 10th-grade students who already know each other, which leads to more distractions. In contrast, 6th period includes students from all grade levels, resulting in a quieter environment with fewer side conversations. Each student is assigned a laptop, and the teacher keeps extras available if needed. The teacher also provides paper copies of assignments in addition to posting them online, giving students the option to choose whichever format best supports their learning.

4. Where is the teacher in the pacing guide now? How closely does your mentor teacher follow the district pacing guide for this course?

Mrs. Wishin told us that she's a chapter ahead of the school's geometry department but about a week behind the district pacing guide. She tries to stick to the guide, but if students need extra time on a lesson, she slows down and spends longer on it.

The physical environment of the classroom impacts instruction. Many teachers default to front facing rows of desks, but there are many ways to arrange a classroom. Some considerations should be:

- *Where do you want the focus of the room to be: A front board? The teacher? Lab stations? Student groups?*
- *Where should the teacher's desk be placed?*
- *How can you work around fixed features like utility poles, lab tables, whiteboards and mounted projectors?*

Remember that a PBI classroom should be flexible to allow many types of activities from individual research, to group meetings, lab investigations and even some whole class instruction. Think about how the room you are observing could be arranged to meet these needs.

Record the overall physical environment of the room:

5. Describe the content of pictures, posters, or other displays in the room. What is the overall theme or tone of this room?

Mrs. Wishin's classroom has a lot of positive and encouraging posters with soft pastel colors that create a calm vibe. The decorations aren't over the top or distracting. She also displays student-made posters that cover classwork, the classroom environment, geometric rules, key ideas, and expectations.

6. Describe any bulletin boards that have content information or interactive activities. Do you sense that the world of mathematics or science is alive in the classroom? Explain.

There aren't many math-specific posters in the classroom. Most of the decorations focus on student progress and encouragement. On the board, the teacher lists the academic standards and the content students are currently working on. There are also paper posters from interactive activities where students shared their expectations for the class and their feelings about the course.

7. What teaching and learning tools are evident? Does the physical environment show evidence of laboratory investigations?

The teacher has a closet stocked with materials, including whiteboards and expo markers. I didn't notice any calculators out, though they may be stored away. There also doesn't seem to be any evidence of lab-style investigations.

8. Describe the technology available to students. Computers / tablets (internet capable?), smart response, Ti-Nspires, etc.? What is the approximate student to tech ratio? (1 laptop per 2 students? Etc.)

Each student has a district-issued laptop with access to Wi-Fi and all school-approved platforms. Right now, students are using Canvas to complete their assignments. Mrs. Wishin also provides paper copies, giving students the choice to either write their work by hand or complete it online.

9. Room arrangement:

- a. Describe the arrangement of the desks, computers, overhead projector, projector, whiteboard (or chalkboard), smart board, and other content-related resources including safety equipment. (You may attach a sketch if you like).

The desks are arranged in groups of four, which encourages student collaboration and discussion. The teacher's desk is set up in the back of the room, while the projector is in the front. This setup makes it easier for the teacher to move around the classroom and use the whiteboard, rather than relying on lecture-based instruction. There's also a shelf with tissues, hand sanitizer, and wipes available for students. Each student either has their laptop out on their desk or stored in their backpack.

- b. What is the focus point of this room? What evidence can you observe to support this assertion?

Even though the main focus of the room is the front, with the projector and whiteboard, the desks are arranged in groups of four so that students face one another.

- c. What type of instruction seems to be implied by the arrangement? What evidence can you observe to support this assertion?

Based on the seating arrangement, it's clear that the teacher encourages collaboration and group work. Students often engage in discussions and practice activities together. At the same time, since the main focus of the room is the front, the teacher can easily bring everyone's attention back for a lecture or explanation. This setup creates a good balance between group interaction and whole class instruction.

- d. Write a brief statement about whether you believe this room supports inquiry learning and project-based instruction / WHY. Include evidence to support your assertion.

I think this classroom setup supports inquiry learning and project-based instruction because it encourages group work rather than isolating students. The arrangement allows students to collaborate on exercises, while still making it easy for them to turn toward the front and focus on the teacher's instructions. No desks face away from the board. Every student has either a direct or side view of it.

Becoming a reflective teacher does not happen by accident, rather it becomes a habit that you develop with practice. Each time you go to your field placement, it is important to take a few moments afterward to recall what you did, consider what went well / not well, and reflect upon your experience and what you have learned from it that will move you forward in your development as an educator.

10. Your reflection on today's experience:

- a. What was **your role** in the classroom today?

Today we introduced ourselves to the class and observed the teacher, classroom setup, routines, teaching techniques, and overall environment.

We sat on the side of the room, visible to the students but not directly involved in the lesson.

- b. What were the **high points and low points** of your experience today?

There really weren't any low points today since it was our first day and we mostly observed. The highlights for me were meeting the students, seeing how the classroom runs, and watching the level of participation. I also noticed how the teacher constantly interacted with the students, which gave me motivation and excitement to keep working with this mentor teacher in such a positive classroom environment.

- c. **What have you learned** from today's experience that will enhance your development as an educator?

I learned that there's a good balance between the teaching strategies we're studying in UFTech and more traditional methods. It creates a steady transition for bringing in approaches like project-based instruction and formative assessments without making drastic changes to the school environment. Mrs. Wishin incorporates a variety of activities that combine teacher-led instruction with student collaboration. I also noticed the different techniques and cues she uses during her lessons to keep the classroom under control while still allowing for appropriate student discussions.

- d. How would you **rate your level of comfort** in the classroom? Rate yourself on a scale of 1-5 and discuss the reasons for your choice.

1= Very Uncomfortable

2= Somewhat Uncomfortable

3=Neutral (neither comfortable nor uncomfortable)

4=Somewhat Comfortable

5=Very Comfortable