



HIBERNIA
COLLEGE

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The Professional Master of Education (PME) in
Primary Education
School Placement Observation Report



Introduction

Why is reflection important?

Teacher beliefs and perceptions develop from personal experiences and influences throughout life. Creswell (1998) noted that:

Knowledge is within the meanings people make of it; knowledge is gained through people talking about their meanings; knowledge is laced with personal biases and values; knowledge is written in a personal, up-close way; and knowledge evolves, emerges, and is inextricably tied to the context in which it is studied. (p. 19)

Written Reflections

Learning to write reflectively is a process. Hillocks (1995) encouraged teachers of all disciplines to use reflective writing. He noted that *"writing is a process of discovery...our inquiry results in a construction, an account of our observations and the transformations we impose upon them"* (p. 15). Hillocks states that it is through the construction of our reflections in written format that our thoughts are again transformed through the written process.

Daniels (2002) advises that *"writing reflective journals facilitates the writer in inquiring into his or her existing assumptions and beliefs by looking at them again, turning them around, and viewing them from a different perspective. This method of inquiry facilitates looking inside our beliefs and understandings and developing a solid grounding for those beliefs."* (p. 54)

Through this process of inquiry, one often finds disequilibrium in one's own thoughts. This feeling is the uneasiness that arises when observed practices do not match existing held beliefs or when one starts to question one's own beliefs and practices. A teacher might start asking questions, such as: "Why am I using this approach to teach this lesson?", "Why does the school promote this practice?", "Why does the curriculum content prescribe that we teach using these approaches?" The goal of reflective journals is to address questions such as these, to start an inquiry into our thought patterns and actions, to make connections from prior experiences to new knowledge and find where and how these connections fit. Maybe they do not fit; maybe one will make adjustments and change former beliefs. However, beliefs are not altered until old ways are confronted and new ways are considered (Daniels 2002, p.54).

The Observation Report is a record of your time with Hibernia College as a Graduate Student Teacher (GST). It enables you to keep a note of your achievements and reflect on your performance as well as apply theoretical learning to practical situations. This in turn allows you to set yourself action plans and goals for the future, whether it is for a further school experience block or the National Programme for Teacher Induction and your subsequent career.

It is important to consider your Observation Report as something that is ongoing; *recording and reflecting* on your progression through your academic learning and professional placement means that you will have more achievements to record and *reflect* on.

Your reflections should be on your own learning as a GST. We learn from experience all day and every day. Learning is more than the acquisition of knowledge and skills. The complete process addresses the application and review of effects of the knowledge and skills.

Completing Each Entry of Your Observation Report

- Write clearly and concisely.
- Be very honest about your feelings, experiences and opinions.
- Keep the reflection focused towards your learning as a teacher.
- Use the guiding statements and questions to help structure your responses.
- Be guided by the work that you have observed and experienced on the day.
- Respect the confidentiality of the children and staff in the school.

Initial Statement

To begin, identify and describe what you consider the most challenging aspects of this observational placement. Identify 3-4 challenges.

What do you hope to gain or learn from this experience? Identify 3-4 points.

Observation Days

During the observation days, you need to complete the relevant sections of the Observation Week template in your Observation Report.

You should follow the order of the days, **where possible**, as it is reflected in the Observation Week template contained in this document. You have flexibility according to the principal's requests.

Please note the following:

- If you have to substitute the activity specified on a particular day with the suggested activity for another day, you should complete the relevant part of the template for the activity you did perform and change the day numbering accordingly in the template.
- If you are unable to complete the suggested activities for a particular day, you should write your Observation Report for that day based on the observation experience that you did complete.
- Your Observation Report should be uploaded to your MyHelms School Placement folder by the date as advised by the college.
- All parts of your Observation Report should be printed and signed and then inserted into your hard-copy School Placement folder at the beginning of placements.

Ethical Procedures

Hibernia College at all times respects the confidentiality of all school and pupil information. In this regard, it is important that you do not request access to pupil records or files. When recording observations, you are advised to use pseudo names to protect the identity of the pupils observed. It is important that you conduct your observations in an unobtrusive and discrete manner so as not to make pupils feel uncomfortable or under scrutiny. At all times, please be guided by the advice of the class teacher.

Observation Schedule

Please note that this is a suggested schedule in relation to the order of days spent in each class. You must spend at least three days in your 'main class' (1st-6th class only) as outlined below. You should then spend a day/time in an infant class and a day/time in another setting within the school as approved by the school principal.

Day 1
(1st-6th class)
(Whole school experience)



School Profile


Gather as much information as possible about the school, for example:

- Location, size, number of staff
- Description of pupil types – gender, nationality and so on
- Range and number of classes
- Key staff
- Timetables
- Resources
- Policies (in particular procedures in relation to pupils with special educational needs – identification, assessment, parental involvement)
- Code of Behaviour
- Child Protection Policy

Links with History of Education:

Today you should focus on making links with History of Education

<p>Day 2 (1st- 6th class)</p>	<h3>Class Profile</h3> <p>Gather as much information as possible about the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Grade, number and age of pupils, gender, nationality and so on ▪ Personnel working in the class ▪ Timetable <p>Focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Teaching and learning approaches used ▪ Group activities used ▪ Resources used ▪ Methodologies used ▪ Active learning tasks used ▪ Behavioural management approaches used <p>Links with Sociology of Education:</p> <p>Today you should focus on making links with Sociology of Education</p> <p> What do you hope to bring forward with you to your next School Placement block?</p>
<p>Day 3 (1st- 6th class)</p>	<h3>Focus on learning in this classroom</h3> <p>Find out as much information as possible about teaching and learning in this classroom</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Individual learning needs ▪ Ways of meeting the individual learner's needs ▪ Work carried out with non-classroom teachers <p>Not just a static observer – by now you should be aiding the class teacher and helping out where appropriate</p> <p>Link with theory:</p> <p>Links with Psychology of Education:</p> <p>Today you should focus on making links with Psychology of Education</p> <p> What do you hope to bring forward with you to your next School Placement block?</p>

<p>Day 4 (Junior and or senior infants)</p>	<p>Today you should consider the following question;</p> <p>What mix of pedagogies are you observing in the room that might have its roots in ...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Different styles of learning? ▪ Child centered practice? ▪ Constructivist understandings of teaching and knowledge? ▪ Behaviourism? ▪ Inquiry? ▪ Play-based learning? <p> What do you hope to bring forward with you to your future School Placement block in an infant classroom?</p>
<p>Day 5 (Other setting)</p>	<p>Observation in other settings in the school – observe the practice of a teacher other than a classroom teacher in the school, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Special Education Teacher (SET) ▪ HSCL Co-ordinator ▪ EAL Teacher ▪ Behavioural Support Teacher ▪ Special Class <p>In larger schools students may be able to observe the work of more than one teacher on this day.</p> <p>Focus on the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The work that these teacher do with these children ▪ How individual needs are met ▪ Strategies employed ▪ Communication with the class teachers ▪ Communication with parents <p>Link with theory: Philosophy of Education</p> <p>Today you should focus on making links with Psychology of Education</p>

Observation Report - Week Template

Read the activity for each day of the observation week and type your answers in the cells provided in the following template:

Observation Week	Day 1
<p>Personal Reflection</p> <p>Reflect on your day and consider what you have gleaned from your experience.</p>	

Observation Week	Day 2
Personal Reflection Reflect on your day and consider what you have gleaned from your experience.	

Observation Week	Day 3
Personal Reflection Reflect on your day and consider what you have gleaned from your experience.	

Observation Week	Day 4
Personal Reflection Reflect on your day and consider what you have gleaned from your experience.	

Observation Week	Day 5
Personal Reflection Reflect on your day and consider what you have gleaned from your experience.	