

## **GUIDELINES FOR STUDENT TEACHING:**

### **AN ADAPTATION OF THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE CRITERIA IN TEACHING TO AN ACTIVITY IN LANGUAGE ARTS**

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In March, the Upper Midwest Regional Educational Laboratory sponsored a five-state A.S.T. conference on teacher competence in six different subject matters. It was the task of the conference members to study the Stanford University Performance Criteria in Teaching and to adapt these criteria to particular activities of special subject matter areas. The English committee is quick to acknowledge that what follows is not new material. As they now stand these criteria do, however, represent one consensus of high school and college teachers of English and supervisors of student teachers of English, worked out under the support of two organizations concerned with developing performance criteria in all subject areas by means of which student teachers can be judged.

The guidelines were devised to foster better training of teachers and to expedite communication between the student teacher and his cooperating teacher. They can improve teacher training by providing a positive and discussible chart, instead of a nebulous and prosy set of maxims. This chart does not replace the need for teacher decisions. Once the student teacher has decided what to teach, the performance criteria can help him to choose suitable activities and to consider how these can be implemented. The guidelines serve as a check list for the student teacher, the cooperating teacher, and the supervisor, and help the student teacher and the cooperating teacher to communicate.

This committee's adaptation of the Stanford Performance Criteria centers on one activity which is pertinent to teacher training in language arts--the writing of a composition. The criteria were developed for student teachers, not for experienced teachers. They were devised to be applied as needed and are intended to be flexible. The activity that results in composition is divided into stages: preparing for the assignment, guiding the writing of the composition, evaluating the work, and returning the papers. The composition program is organized around rhetorical principles, and the criteria are designed for assignments in exposition or persuasion. For certain writing assignments which have their own unique writing patterns, these criteria are not pertinent. They are, however, applicable to many writing assignments in academic areas other than English.

It was impossible for such a group to confer without recalling and discussing some of the abysses into which they had individually or collectively fallen. Such considerations led to the statement which is addressed to student teachers and which is attached to the last section of this paper.

## CRITERIA

### AN ADAPTATION OF THE STANFORD UNIVERSITY PERFORMANCE CRITERIA IN TEACHING TO AN ACTIVITY IN LANGUAGE ARTS

#### ACTIVITY: WRITING A COMPOSITION

##### Observable Performance Criteria

##### I. Preparing to write

The teacher

1. Chooses an auspicious time to begin a writing experience.
2. Develops sources for composition.
3. Identifies and explains the rhetorical problem to be emphasized in the composition (e.g. definition, generalization and specification, explanation by example, etc.)
4. Provides models.

## EXPLANATION

Note: The numerical symbols preceding the comments below are keyed to related items in the Criteria section.

I.1. Since writing is a subtle, elusive, and difficult endeavor, a composition assignment should not be initiated when pressure of school activities diverts the students' attention or when time is lacking to develop and to complete the assignment. Sometimes the failure of a composition is related to a flaw in the assignment. It is good practice for a teacher to follow his own assignment and write a composition himself. Such a procedure can show a need for clearer directions, can help him to anticipate students' problems, can determine the amount of time to be spent on the paper, and may even show whether or not the plan is worth pursuing. In some situations the teacher can show his composition to the class in order to inspire confidence and trust.

I.2. The teacher extends the possibility of the students' finding ideas to write about by using such materials as serve the purposes of the rhetorical problem: literature, mass media, personal experience, contemporary issues, etc.

I.3. The choice of a particular rhetorical problem to be emphasized in a composition helps the teacher to arrange for a sequence of content to be taught. Such a choice of emphasis helps the student to develop and master a specific skill. He is also helped to choose the arrangement of his material which is best for a specific audience.

Rhetorical principles are applicable for writing in other fields of study such as science, social studies, etc.

I.2,3. In making the assignment, the teacher not only discusses the matter of the assignment but also isolates and demonstrates the rhetorical strategies to be used in accomplishing the assignment.

I.4. The use of professional and/or peer models can encourage and direct students as well as clarify the assignment. Use of flawed professional prose can effectively demonstrate the difficulties of writing. A good treatment of the problem by one of the students can be shared with the class while it is working on the assignment. The teacher who uses students' themes for demonstration should use them anonymously.

## CRITERIA

### II. Composing

The teacher

1. Observes to identify specific problems and general progress.
2. Confers to encourage and motivate students.
3. Demonstrates to provide solutions for general problems of content arrangement, style, usage, and mechanics as they arise.
4. Signals conclusion of writing and gives final instructions before the collection of the compositions.

### III. Evaluating

(While the evaluation of a finished composition is not capable of being translated into observable performance criteria, the process is a crucial one and thus deserves special consideration. For some help in this evaluative process, see Explanation for Criterion 1 under Section IV.)

### IV. Returning the papers

The teacher

1. Comments on specific strengths and weaknesses.
2. Measures achievement against assigned rhetorical problem.
3. Shares representative papers or selected passages from papers with class.
4. Counsels for revision or correction where desirable.
5. Invites questions on evaluation of paper.
6. Induces student evaluation through exchange of papers.
7. Extends the experience.

## EXPLANATION

- II.1. The teacher provides for the major part of the writing in class. He keeps an eye on the process of composing and anticipates problems before they arise. Observation also alerts the teacher to the range of individual differences and needs. A matter of immediate concern will be the differing amounts of time students will need to complete the same assignment satisfactorily. The teacher must be flexible and resourceful, respecting the reality of these differences and attempting to meet them.

When the teacher is free to do so, he should walk about the room, examining students' work to make sure they are working on the specific rhetorical problem assigned. This observation should express interest in the students and give significance to the process of composing.

- II.2. The conference keeps the student in contact with part of his audience--the teacher. It should also help him to learn how to evaluate his own work. Some arrangement or schedule should be devised so that every student has a conference with the teacher while he is working on his composition. In the causes of courtesy to other students and of practicality, these conferences should be at the teacher's desk. An extra chair should be provided so that teacher and student can sit down to confer.

The teacher does not tell the student what he should have written. He asks questions. He asks the student to justify the rhetorical choices he has made. He asks the student to explain meanings. He guides the student to alternate choices where necessary.

- II.3. Meeting these problems as they occur eases the writing process, strengthens good writing habits, uses teaching time economically and effectively, and cuts down the amount of time a teacher must spend on final papers.

- IV.1. Some methods for identifying strengths and weaknesses

The teacher

Skims a selected group of themes in order to sense the achievement of the group.

Skims each composition before making any comments on it.

## EXPLANATION

Measures success against the specified rhetorical principle and/or previously demonstrated competency.

Places emphasis on ideas, not on mechanical details.

Gives evaluative comments rather than letter or number grades.

Gives specific recommendations which provide alternative choices for solving specific rhetorical problems.

IV.3. The teacher may share students' themes by use of the overhead projector, by dittoed copies of the themes, or by public reading of the themes. Present papers anonymously to prevent embarrassment to students.

IV.7. Extend the experience by using such things as displays, publications, exchange of themes, public reading, filing.

Have a folder for each student in which all of written work or a representative sample of that work is kept. Both teacher and student should review these papers periodically to assess the student's growth in writing.

### To Student Teachers

As students work with the process of composing, help them to be aware of audience and of point of view.

Give students help in discovering topics, and demonstrate the necessity of limiting their topics.

Anticipate problems to be ready to help students solve them effectively.

Assign short papers.

Have students do most of their writing in class.

Be aware of and provide for individual differences in writing speed and in manner of composition. For example, the teacher does not have to be rigid about a due date if more time would be an honest benefit to a student.

Not every paper needs to be evaluated. Some papers are to be skimmed, some are to be evaluated for special problems, and some papers require thorough evaluation.

Overcome the tendency to overcorrect themes.

Participants at the Five State A.S.T. Conference, English Section:

Miss Edythe Daniel, Wisconsin State University, Platteville, Wisconsin, associate professor of Education, Methods teacher, and off-campus supervisor of English and speech student teachers;

Mrs. Lucille Duggan, Richfield Sr. High School, Richfield, Minnesota, English teacher and supervisor of student teachers;

Mr. Gerald Kongstvedt, J.I. Case High School, Racine Wisconsin, English department chairman and supervisor of student teachers, who served as chairman for the group;

Sister Mary Roy MacDonald, Alverno College, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, assistant professor of English, department chairman, Methods teacher, and supervisor of student teaching;

Sister St. Alfred, College of St. Catherine, St. Paul, Minnesota, assistant professor of English, Methods teacher and supervisor of student teaching, who served as recorder for the group;

Mr. Harriet W. Sheridan, Carleton College, Northfield, Minnesota, professor of English, Methods teacher, and supervisor of student teaching.

UMREL representatives included Ronald Brandt, Miss Donna Smith, and Mrs. Barbara Long; A.S.T. representative was John Pearson, Wisconsin State University.

Mrs. Lucille Duggan teaches English at Richfield High School and supervises student teachers.

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