

DAVE JOHNSON

DOMAIN: 4

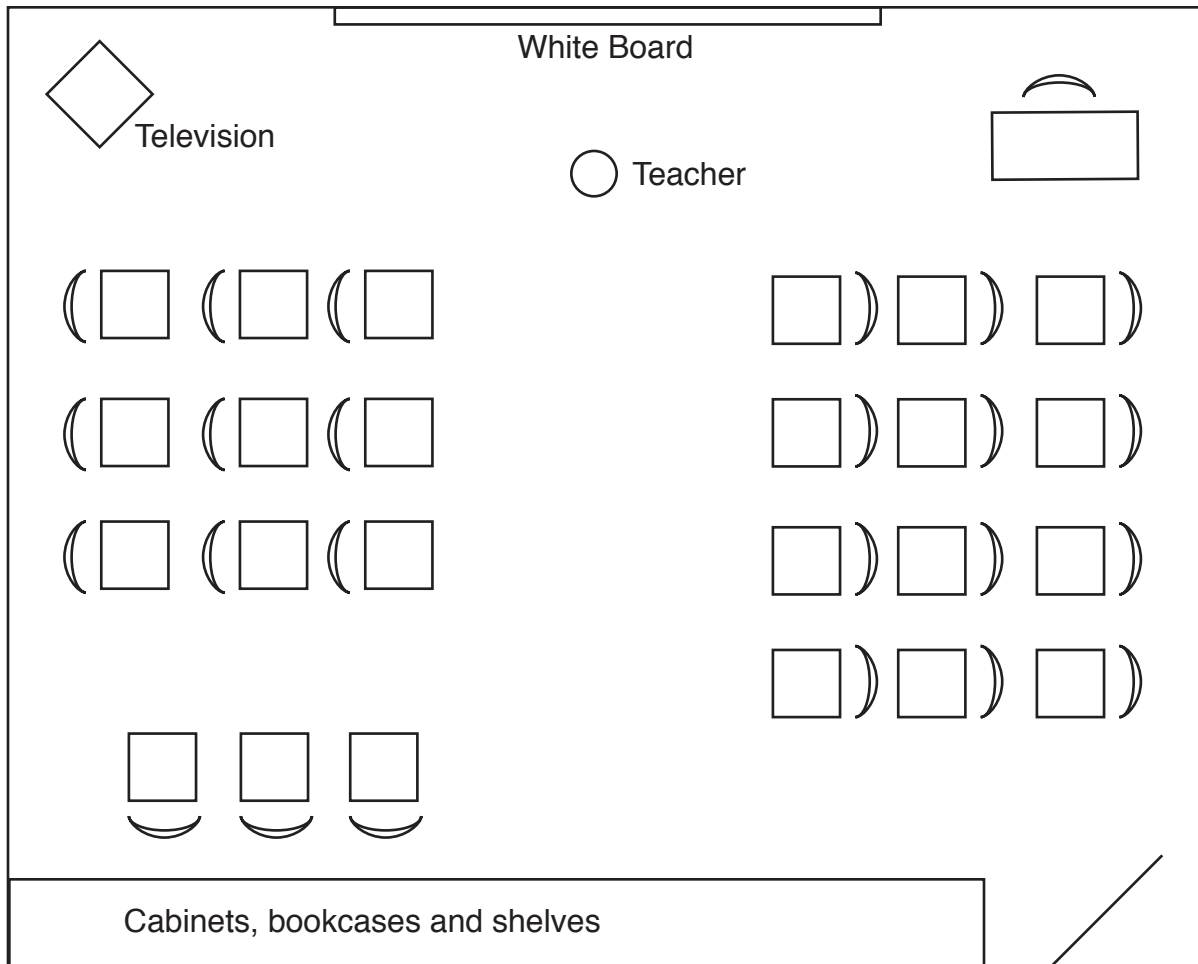
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT -
CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

DESCRIPTION: As a student within the ABCTE program (<http://www.abcte.org/teach/idaho>), I discovered the program does not have a practicum or classroom observation program. I created my own. While going through the academic stage of the program, I contacted as many local teachers as possible and asked if I may observe their class. I chose a variety of ages and disciplines so to have a wide range of experience. The following is one of the observations I was blessed to conduct.

DATE: 10/28/10

CLASS: MR. STUERMER'S AP HISTORY CLASS
Coeur d'Alene Senior High School

CLASS SETUP



CLASSROOM: The wall is covered with various flags (Canada, Older U.S. flags such as "Don't Tread on Me"; China) and a few other graphic bulletin boards with papers too small to read. He has a television in the corner - no LCD projector. He has arranged his desks on either side of the room, facing each other. He stood at the front to the center and lectured/questioned his students.

TEXTBOOK: The class uses Houghton Mifflin's *The American Pageant*.

CLASS SESSION: The following describes the class session time period.

On the board was written the main theme of the unit:

"To understand reasons for British taxation and reasons the Colonies reacted to these taxes"

The class began with a **SURVEY** Mr. Stuermer handed out. He took attendance while they took the survey (Coeur d'Alene High does their attendance online).

After taking attendance, Mr. Stuermer sat on a stool at the front of the class in a very layed back style. He passed back a writing assignment that looks like a 3-4 page paper (some typed, some hand written, from what I could observe). I looked over the shoulder of a couple of girls nearby - their papers had grades along the left edge of the paper (3s and 4s). He mentioned that the length was not crucial - from his discussion it sounds like these were essays in preparation of the upcoming exams.

He sat down at the front of the class and called out names of students, inviting them to come forward to pick up their FIRST AP TEST (evidently they just took their first exam in preparations for the AP Exams scheduled for later in the year).

Mr. Stuermer called out each multiple choice question and had the students yell out the answers. Since this was their first AP test he assured them not to worry - that there would be many to follow in the year.

Mr. Stuermer then went over a brief "thesis" statement explanation. He reviewed the essay question and specified details encouraging his students to pull out more details. He suggested they should first make an outline - using a comparison and contrast between Massachusetts Bay Colony and Virginia Colony. He emphasized that "showing the reader knowledge is really important in these essays." He also let them know he is grading light on this one and also encouraged them that they will continue to work on the essay portion in the future.

Afterwards, he had everyone pass the tests back in. He keeps them. I asked him afterward, "Why?" He said it is merely to keep his work level down - so he does not have to make random, extra exams - he just uses the same ones over and over.

Following the test discussion, he had everyone turn to their books to a portion they were to read the night before (the use *The American Pageant*). He read the first, opening statement then began the discussion with "How can the author say that?"

He kept interjecting information with a smattering of questions along the way.

"How do you think the colonists looked at themselves?"

He compared crossing the Atlantic in wooden ships to going to the moon for us today. He also added some subjective comments about how "spoiled" we were (and are). He continued asking key topics (for instance, "Mercantilism") and asking further questions over their reading.

I noticed he lectured in a storytelling style - no students were taking any notes.

One student asked a question on Mercantilism that I did not feel the teacher answered very well. I believe Mr. Stuermer did not clarify the question well and it was apparent on the face of the student. Perhaps he could have asked them to answer the concept after spending a few more time on a few definitions.

There was a political cartoon from 1776 in the book. Mr. Stuermer asked for an analysis of the toon from the basis of the artist (in this case, an Englishman - the American is a savage looking individual next to a beautifully dressed Englishwoman - the "civilized"). Mr. Steurmer used this illustration to further the analysis of the different perspectives (English and Colonial).

Mr. Stuermer split the class for a four minute reading time. Each "group" were to read one portion of the the book and come up with certain details of Mercantilism. I noticed that the "groups" never really formed - each student just read to themselves quietly without any interaction. Mr. Stuermer walked about the classroom letting them read then wrote on the board "Bring Book" (indicating they must not always do so). After awhile Mr. Stuermer obtained the class' attention, pointed to one side of the class and asked a question on the Benefits of Mercantilism.

I noticed the students do not write anything down - they only verbally respond.

After allowing discussion to continue, he concluded this portion with the question, "So were the British really harming the colonists?"

He addressed the other side of the class with the question of the Deficits of Mercantilism. He allowed all to have a chance to answer who wished to, then read a small poem. He asked "In this little rhyme, what can we get out of this?"

He kept goofing off with one student who kept using a "Ghandi-like" voice. It actually was a diversion that was actually a blessing!

He moved onto the Stamp Act of 1765 and the reason it was developed in the colonies (to pay for the Seven Years War). I noticed that only a handful of students answered questions while the others were silent. Perhaps he could address some students directly.

A few students came in and interrupted the class. He joked with them which was a bit of a distraction (but I don't know what else he could have done).

He asked someone to read a portion out loud. He continued the reading by asking other students to read the next section and so forth. He would stop when he wanted to emphasize one point in more detail. I noticed one student made a comment about what they were reading (Salutary Neglect) but he missed the comment. He could have complimented the comment.

I noticed he allows students to read more than once if they wish (he doesn't force anyone to read unless they feel comfortable).

About four minutes before the bell he declared "We're done" and allowed the students to work on "paragraphs".

He walked out three minutes before the bell and left them to talk amongst themselves. The class was essentially finished.

OBSERVATIONS:

His class is extremely layed back and casual - almost to distraction.

His students were not note takers - I don't know if this will hurt them or not, but with most of the class not involving themselves in the class discussion, I wonder if there were prepared for the AP exams they faced.

I really think he needed to draw more students into the debate and interactions.

Mr. Stuermer was very gracious personally, although very shy when I approached him after class.

I noticed posters of Chuck Norris (and he wore a exercise suit and looked like Norris also) - the students generally seemed to respond well with him.

I have heard very positive things about him and his classes.