

Did You Attend a Good Elementary School?  
Evaluating elementary Classrooms  
By Janet Bliss

<b>Name of Course</b>	Methods and Materials in Early Childhood Education
<b>Course Level</b>	300
<b>Possible subject Areas</b>	Child Development, Primary and Elementary Education, Sociology
<b>Quantitative concepts/skills that students will develop</b>	Create tables and graphs; collect and analyze data; read, understand, interpret, and communicate quantitative information; engage in hypothetical reasoning; develop logical thinking skills; calculate weighted averages
<b>Overview</b>	<p style="text-align: center;">Did You Attend a Good Elementary School?</p> <p>Being a competent teacher includes understanding and recognizing appropriate classroom practices and school policies. Using a constructivist perspective, students must visit and analyze 2 classrooms/schools and determine the appropriateness of the site. One of the classrooms includes a primary grade they attended. The remaining classroom will be a NH site. Using performance standards/criteria from the National Association for the Education of Young Children and the APEEC (Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms) scale the students will prepare tables/graphs to summarize comparisons. There will be a variety of considerations requiring them to determine important variables, develop alternative interpretations of the data, and decide if current standards are relevant to children's development.</p>
<b>Background</b>	Students require an understanding of child development, developmentally appropriate practices, constructivist theory, and the

	educational systems intended to support children.
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<b>Measurable outcomes or learning goals of your activity</b>	Assess classrooms/ schools for developmentally appropriate practices Create an appropriate graph of findings Gather and analyze information using a variety of sources Graphically present findings in class Understand how qualitative data can be represented numerically and how subjective opinions can influence the numerical data Write a paper connected to relevant research
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The assignment will be explained in class and worked on over time. Students will respond to weekly questions on Black Board that will help the instructor gauge their understandings and progress as well as provide feedback accessible to all class participants. Students will be able to engage in Bb dialogue with each other as they gather and share data, analyze the information, and arrive at conclusions.

**MAIN ACTIVITY**

**Did You Attend a Good Elementary School?**

Using a constructivist perspective, students must visit and analyze 2 classrooms and determine the developmental appropriateness of the site. One of the classrooms is a primary class they attended. The remaining classroom will be a NH site. Using performance standards/criteria from the National Association for the Education of Young Children <http://www.naeyc.org/faculty/college.asp> and from *Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms* (Hemmeter, M.L., et al, Teachers College Press) students will prepare tables/graphs ( see [http://www.education-world.com/a\\_tech/techtorial/techtorial025.shtml](http://www.education-world.com/a_tech/techtorial/techtorial025.shtml) for help) to summarize comparisons. They will use a variety of resources to gather, analyze and present information. There will be a variety of considerations requiring them to determine important variables, develop alternative interpretations of the data, and decide if current standards are relevant to children’s development.

**Student Assignment:**

1. Determine 5 criteria from the NAEYC and APEEC that you will use for comparison. Explain why you think these are relevant criteria for a developmentally appropriate environment. Post your explanation on Bb.
2. Visit the 2 classrooms/schools and use the NAEYC and APEEC checklists for appropriate classroom/school practices to collect initial data on the classroom. Record your conclusions about the classroom and the school. Post on Bb.
3. How do the performance criteria support constructivist theory and developmental understandings? What variables might impact classrooms/schools in achieving a positive ranking? Are there alternative ways to interpret the data that could either lower or raise a classroom/school ranking? How will you summarize the quality of the 2 classrooms/schools?
4. Develop a graph that shows a comparison of 5 criteria from the APEEC and NAEYC for ranking school practices. What is the average score for each class?
5. Rate each of the 5 criteria in terms of importance to you, giving a 5 to the most important and a 1 to the least, and use these ratings to develop a revised, weighted average score for each class. To do this, multiply the rating for each criterion by its numerical score as in the tables below. Does this change your overall conclusions about the developmental appropriateness of the 2 classrooms?

### Sample Table

	Essential Criteria <b>APEEC</b> Scale				
	Choices for children	Diversity	Physical Environment	Curriculum	Teacher Qualifications
<b>Weighted Rank</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
My Class	3.2	5.1	4	1.2	4
NH Class	5.2	3	5.2	6	7.1

Overall score for My Class =  $(3.2 \times 5 + 5.1 \times 4 + 4 \times 3 + 1.2 \times 2 + 4 \times 1) \div 5 = 10.96$

Overall score for NH Class =  $(5.2 \times 5 + 3 \times 4 + 5.2 \times 3 + 6 \times 2 + 7.1 \times 1) \div 5 = 14.54$

	Essential Criteria <b>NAEYC</b> Scale				
	Choices for children	Diversity	Physical Environment	Curriculum	Teacher Qualifications
<b>Weighted Rank</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>1</b>
My Class	3	4	4	2	3
NH Class	4	1	4	4	4

Overall score for My Class =  $(3 \times 5 + 4 \times 4 + 4 \times 3 + 2 \times 2 + 3 \times 1) \div 5 = 9.2$

Overall score for NH Class =  $(4 \times 5 + 1 \times 4 + 4 \times 3 + 4 \times 2 + 4 \times 1) \div 5 = 9.6$

6. Graph the revised, weighted scores and present the graph and your conclusions in class.
7. Is there a set of ratings for the criteria that would change the conclusion about which class is better (according to these criteria)? Put these values in a table to show how the

average score would change.

8. Write a short paper (3-4 pages) explaining your use of criteria and results of your investigation. Connect to at least one additional research study on constructivist practices in early childhood classrooms (K-3).

<p><b>Assessment</b></p>	<p>As this assignment continues over several weeks with students expected to post things weekly on Bb, I will have continual information on students' ability to collect and analyze data, to interpret and communicate quantitative information, and to think logically. Students will receive prompt feedback from the Instructor, a TA, as well as from peers.</p> <p>Students will present their findings and conclusions in class using graphic representations to summarize the information. Additionally they will submit a paper connecting their conclusions to their investigations of the 2 classrooms.</p> <p>Students will be assessed on the completion and presentation of their graphs, the application of constructivist theory, the application of the NAEYC and APEEC standards, and their ability to hypothesize appropriate school criteria for excellence.</p>		
<p><b>Evaluation of classrooms and schools</b></p>	<p><b>Excellent</b></p> <p>High level of critical thinking and application of knowledge of constructivist theory, and DAP.</p>	<p><b>Good</b></p> <p>Shows clear understanding of constructivist theory, and DAP. Could have developed thoughts further</p>	<p><b>Basic</b></p> <p>Completed assignment but did not demonstrate a clear understanding of constructivist theory, or DAP. Little reflection.</p>
<p><b>Graphical representations and presentation</b></p>	<p>Demonstrates outstanding knowledge and ease in using technology and analyzing data. Graphs and ideas are clear, creative, and highly appealing. Presentation exemplifies outstanding quantitative analysis, logical and creative thinking, reflection,</p>	<p>Demonstrates clear understanding and ease in using technology and analyzing data. Graphs and ideas are well organized and clear with some creativity evident. Presentation demonstrates good quantitative analysis, appropriate logical conclusions, and</p>	<p>Comfortably used technology and analyzed minimal data. Completes graph but with little creativity or clear organization. Presentation demonstrates a very basic understanding of quantitative analysis and central concepts. Creativity, logical thinking, and reasonable</p>

		and imaginative hypothesizing.	reasonable hypothesizing.	hypothesis are minimal.
	<b>Paper</b>	Outstanding writing has original ideas, high level of creative thinking, well connected to a variety of reliable, credible research, imaginative, reflective, and especially well reasoned.	Strong writing, well organized, some originality of thought, reflection and creativity. Good connection to reliable research using more than 2 sources. Reasonable ideas and conclusions.	Completed assignment with minimal creative thinking. Little original thought, reflection, or application of knowledge. Connections to research are minimal and demonstrate lack of curiosity. Suppositions and conclusions not strongly reasoned.