

## SELF-ASSESSMENT

My name is Sherry Housley. I have been teaching for twenty-three years. Presently I am located in Camden, SC, teaching grades 1 – 8. Over the years I have taught at only three different schools, Plymouth, Michigan, Columbia, SC, and have recently returned to Camden.

Due to the activities available to teachers in the Carolina Conference, I feel I have grown professionally since arriving in 1980. Becoming so active in my profession was totally unexpected.

My classroom looks wonderfully clean and well organized at this moment. It is obvious that nothing is going on. During the school year it doesn't look like this because I get totally caught up in my students and their immediate needs. While I do admit my desk is very messy inside and fairly neat outside, I also acknowledge that the children call it "the magic desk" because it is there that things become clear to them, they feel encouraged and comfortable to attempt solutions that seem to come easier just by standing there.

At our school each person has responsibilities. At the beginning of the day; the student arrives, puts belongings away, turns in homework and proceeds to the assigned cleaning job.

Our classrooms walls and bulletin boards reflect what we are involved in at the moment. Pictures of our many activities surround the calendar.

My organizational skills are very good, but the follow through isn't always as good. I know what I want to do, when I want to do it, and how I plan to get there. It isn't always reflected on paper because I am constantly assessing my students and their needs.

I post a schedule at the beginning of each school year, but usually change it three to four times. The students always get copies of the changes but the wall doesn't.

Several of my subjects are student-driven (individualized), but I make yearly pacing guides for the ones that aren't. I don't maintain lesson plan books in the same manner I used to. Because of the way I go about things, it would be too time consuming. My classroom is orderly, structured, and somewhat predictable in its perimeters and requirements. The variety comes in use, presentation, and mastery of the material presented.

Even though my parents are not presented with a written classroom management plan (of which I have never seen an example), they know I expect homework to be completed, respect to be shown, and behavior to be self controlled. They know that I have the best interest of their children at heart and support me highly. My students definitely know and understand the rules, rewards, and consequences. We make many decisions together and add rules only as classroom climate makes it necessary. I have no problem being the one to say no and stand behind it. Some students will moan and groan about these things one minute and tell me the next that they want me to stay healthy because they plan to send their children to me to learn the same things.

My students and I definitely enjoy each other's company. This has been enhanced by our bi-yearly campouts. These are one hundred percent attended by students and well attended by parents and other church members. One student recently remarked that one reason she thought I was a good teacher was because I would get up in the middle of the night and go with you to the bathroom. This may not seem to have anything to do with the three R's, but it sure does help when the relationship is strained by pushing the child academically (although it wasn't done for this reason). All of my students know that I will only talk to them and treat them in the manner in which I wish to be treated and that I wish for them to treat each other. They are reminded that what I want for them and myself is to reflect the Master Teacher.

Sometimes it seems things are going well enough procedurally that the students could do it all without me. When I don't feel well they offer to do just that.

Study groups have been and are very important to me. Important enough that being a cadre leader is part of my yearly involvement. Because of them I have assisted in workshops on cooperative learning, simulations, math meetings, literature, and motivation. I use strategies in my classroom and my students use them in presentations. At this moment I could not tell you how many or how often strategies are used.

Teachable moments are very important to me. Having students work with each other has made teaching in the small school more bearable. Other factors that make a major difference are ECRI, a more reasonable approach to grade combining, and not being required to cover every page in every book. The one-room school has now become a more comfortable place to work.

Regular student/parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year and as needed. The ITBS test is used as a tool to demonstrate growth and to access areas where improvement is needed. We also use portfolios to show progress. It is very important that my “kids” perform at their ability level, whatever that may be for each one. When someone achieves after striving long and hard the students have been known to react in a loud and spontaneous manner. Everyone knows and is sometimes kindly reminded that each student is working at his own level, speed, and ability and that grades or age are not the determining factors. They can all recite the following statement on demand, “Mrs. H. does not teach grades; she teaches children.”

I believe in preventive and redemptive discipline. My students are very familiar with the words self control, responsibility, attitude, example, choice, consequences, and earned privileges. Whether it is parents, students, or myself, I try to head off problems when they first appear, trying to put everyone in the position where we can feel good about ourselves.

I guess I have reached a point where professional reading, videos, and workshops reflect my interest. I am not opposed to addressing my needs as they are brought to my attention. I usually scan the journals, get the high points, and look for useable ideas. Curriculum interests me most when it contains simple, concise ideas that translate into improvements for my students and not just things to make me look and sound good.

At this time I am revising my recently written mission statement, working on my portfolio, exercising, and trying to eat well. I am attempting to grow spiritually and remain fresh and consistent in my approach to teaching. While I know there are always goals to be set, I can't seem to name them one by one. The improvements I strive to make are to do what I do even better. I am not really concerned about my messy desk, but totally concerned about anything and everything that will make me a better teacher, a good example, and someone who leads students to Jesus!