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Observation Report of: Dr. Marigrace Walker

November 19, 2025 (1:00-2:50pm)

Course Observed: EDU 201 (Observation and Assessment)

Submitted by: Katherine Sinsabaugh

This class session focused on teaching, valuing, and assessing creativity in early childhood education. As students arrived, they were warmly greeted by Dr. Walker, who engaged in brief, informal conversations and responded to student questions. From the outset, it was clear that Dr. Walker has established a positive rapport with her students, creating a welcoming and supportive classroom environment.

Dr. Walker began the session by checking in with students regarding the status of their observation hours and by distributing materials they would need for their upcoming preschool observations.

The instructional portion of the class began with a discussion of creativity in early childhood classrooms and the growing emphasis on assessing creativity as part of best practice in early childhood education. Dr. Walker introduced Ken Robinson's perspective on how creativity can be stifled in traditional school settings, emphasizing the importance of intentionally teaching and assessing creativity. She clearly outlined the agenda and learning objectives for the session, an important part of the structure of a classroom lesson.

Students participated in a warm-up activity where they generated three words or images representing creativity, and shared their ideas with a partner. The students were then encouraged to share their responses with the whole group. Some responses included: free thinking, versatility, individuality, expression, imagination, being unique, and the ability to imagine and think of something that nobody else has.

Dr. Walker connected the discussion to key theorists, including Vygotsky, Einstein, and Runco, emphasizing creativity as a way of thinking rather than an innate talent. She highlighted how creativity is often visible in young children but tends to diminish by about third grade, where there is a shift from "learning to read" to "reading to learn."

Through a series of slides, including "Creativity Is... and Isn't," Dr. Walker further clarified misconceptions about creativity. Students felt comfortable sharing personal experiences, with one student providing an example of using process-based art during her student teaching experience. Dr. Walker then reflected on her own experience as an early childhood teacher, and talked about sending home children's art and typing a descriptor to help families understand and relate to their children's work.

The importance of creativity in early childhood education was reinforced through discussion of its relationship to executive functioning, curiosity, social-emotional development, and approaches to learning. Dr. Walker introduced additional theorists, including E. Paul Torrance, Mark Runco, Kaufman and Beghetto, and Anna Craft, highlighting concepts such as divergent thinking, "mini-c" and "little-c" creativity, and everyday creative thinking.

Dr. Walker then incorporated a video from Ken Robinson's *Creative Schools* and facilitated a discussion on its relevance. Students actively participated, with one student sharing a detailed example connected to the video's themes. Dr. Walker then shared a powerful example from her own teaching experience involving a highly creative first grader whose behavior was initially misunderstood. This example effectively illustrated the importance of meeting children where they are.

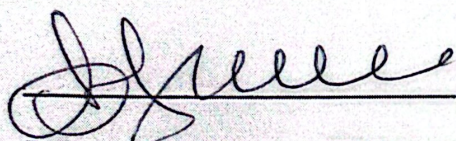
Dr. Walker introduced the Torrance Circle Test as a way to illustrate the value of multiple ways of thinking and provided students with a concrete example of how creativity can be measured. She then connected theoretical concepts and assessment tools to practical classroom applications, including the use of student portfolios and anecdotal documentation drawn from her own teaching practice.

Students also completed the Runco Ideational Behavior Scale (RIBS), and Dr. Walker facilitated a discussion of the results, explicitly linking them to classroom teaching and observation. This activity reinforced the connection between theory, assessment, and practice.

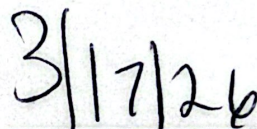
Later in the session, Dr. Walker modeled a read-aloud of *Not a Stick* by Antoinette Portis. Following the read-aloud, students engaged in a hands-on, creative activity using sticks and open-ended materials such as aluminum foil, pipe cleaners, and playdough. This interactive exercise effectively reinforced concepts of creativity, imagination, and play in early childhood settings. The class session ended with some reflection focused on encouraging, observing, and assessing creativity. Students completed an exit ticket addressing new ideas about creativity, strategies for observing and assessing creativity, and ways to support creative risk-taking in their own classrooms. Several students shared their reflections aloud.

The lesson demonstrated such thoughtful preparation and a clear commitment to supporting student understanding. As the course continues to evolve, there may be opportunities to further enhance presentation and pacing by using slides with fewer words and occasionally taking additional time to explore key slides in greater depth. These considerations could help students more fully engage with and reflect on the already rich and meaningful content presented.

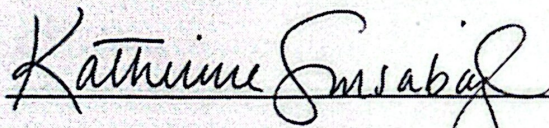
Overall, Dr. Walker has adjusted wonderfully into her role as a new full-time faculty member in the Education Department. This lesson was a testament to the significant time, care, and intentionality she brings to her teaching. Dr. Walker cares deeply about her students and their learning, and her kind, approachable demeanor fosters an environment in which students feel comfortable engaging meaningfully with the course content.



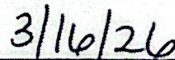
Dr. Marigrace Walker, EDU Instructor



Date



Dr. Katherine Sinsabaugh, EDU Dept. Chair



Date