Charlotte Danielson’s Teaching Framework: 
Looking at Real Classrooms

Module Two – Domain One: Planning and Preparation/ 
Domain Two: The Classroom Environment

D. Domain Two: Examples from High School Classrooms

High School Class: Editing Writing 
(components 2A, 2B)

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: In this clip of a high school class, students are working in pairs; and, in a couple of cases, in trios, to edit a piece of writing that somebody else has produced.

WINSTON ROSE: Speak Patwa if you have to; that’s fine.

STUDENT: That’s an apostrophe; right?

WINSTON ROSE: It could be. What does your partner say? All right. Work it out, and I’ll come back.

STUDENT: Put a comma here. He was racing down the street, the wind inflating his shirt. That sounds good. Is everything finished? Problem two. My lunch is usually the same. It costs two dollars. We would put a comma in there. Someone said, I’ll do it. Put a comma there. Two tools, a hammer and a nail, are needed for the job.

WINSTON ROSE: Yes, sir, on my way.

STUDENT: That’s five beaches, comma.

STUDENT: That should be a comma. My lunch, comma. . .

STUDENT: My lunch is usually a sandwich, comma, and a glass of milk.

WINSTON ROSE: Did you bounce it off your group already?

STUDENT: Yeah.

WINSTON ROSE: Okay. Which part is the sentence? Which part could you take out and just leave it as a sentence?
STUDENT: Is it two tools?

WINSTON ROSE: He’s showing me the my-lunch-one though. The first one, A; that’s what he’s talking about.

STUDENT: My lunch, a sandwich and a glass of milk, costs two dollars.

WINSTON ROSE: What if you said, My lunch costs two dollars? That’s the sentence. Everything else is the extra information.

STUDENT: So I just put the comma there so that’s one spot where it would go?

WINSTON ROSE: And then there’s another one.

STUDENT: All right, there’s the other one.

WINSTON ROSE: Hold on. Let me see. Yes.

STUDENT: The comma goes before milk?

WINSTON ROSE: No, that’s right. That wouldn’t go there because after sandwich you have and, so you don’t need the comma there. That’s the appositive. And the others are a pretty similar layout too. On my way, Yes, ma’am.

High School Class: Editing Writing – Charlotte Danielson Commentary

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: The teacher is circulating while the students are working, doing several things while he’s circulating. He’s keeping them on task, certainly; but most important, in my view, he communicates a lot of warmth towards the students. That’s a great illustration of 2A, the Environment of Respect and Rapport; in particular, the interactions between the teacher and the students.

In addition, it looked to me as thought the students were themselves highly respectful of one another. I didn’t hear putdowns or people ridiculing. They were working together productively and doing what they considered to be important work. That aspect of the task—that is, the important work—is a good illustration of 2B, which is the Culture for Learning.
High School Biology: Physical Learning Activity

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: This clip is a high school biology class in which the teacher actually has the students act out how the DNA sequence works.

STEVE HARRIS: The first thing that’s going to happen is we’re going to unzip the DNA and we’re going transcribe one strand of it. Our RNA bases come in and pair, and then the enzyme, RNA polymerase is going to bind these together. Where does our RNA go? Does it stay in the nucleus?

STUDENTS: No.

STEVE HARRIS: No. It goes out of the nucleus to the ribozones, and the DNA zips back together. All we’re going to do is basically act that same thing out. We’ve got 20 people. I need 1 person to be our enzyme. Who wants to be our enzyme? Austin, you’d be a great enzyme. Mr. RNA Polymerase. I need 12 of you to be our DNA.

All of you bases are bonded together; right? In one strand. Kevin, I want you to hook elbows with Adam. Adam, hook elbows with Justin and so forth so that you guys are bonded together. Same thing on this side. Right now you are held together with hydrogen bonds; right? All of our complimentary base pair is correct.

The first thing that happens, our enzyme, RNA polymerase, does what?

STUDENTS: Unzips you.

STEVE HARRIS: Unzips you. Go through and break all of the hydrogen bonds. This line just go ahead and move back away from the other one when that happens. In the nucleus, you’ve already unzipped the molecule. Bases just simply come in and complimentary pair; right? Let’s just start giving you guys some bases and go complimentary pair with this side of the molecule. I’ll let you guys figure it out.

Remember there is going to be lots of extra bases just floating around in the nucleus that are not going to hydrogen bond. They just hydrogen bond with the ones that they match up to.

Once our bases all complimentary bond, what do we have to do to this RNA molecule? We have to do what to these bases? We have to connect them all together. What’s RNA polymerase going to do? He’s going to join all of these bases together and check to make sure that they’re bonded right. Austin, work your way on down. Make sure we’ve got the right complimentary pairing and hook these guys together elbows to elbows.
In a real cell, it would go much faster. Most enzymes are a little swifter than what we might have done.

Now the RNA is all bonded together. What’s going to happen to this piece of RNA?

STUDENTS: It’s going to float off.

STEVE HARRIS: It’s going to float off and leave the nucleus, so float off and leave the nucleus. Since the enzyme is now let go, what happens to our DNA? It zips back together. We’ve kept our code in the nucleus, and we’ve sent our messenger RNA code out to the ribozone to make a protein. Easy enough?

STUDENTS: Yeah.

STEVE HARRIS: Give yourselves a hand and put all of the bases here on the table.

High School Biology: Physical Learning Activity – Charlotte Danielson Commentary

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: In this clip, the teacher makes very different use of the physical space than what you often see in classrooms; that is, the students are up on their feet. The furniture is moved away. There is a big, open space that allows them the space they need to act out the biological principles he is describing to them.

The students themselves are—at first, they seem to me, at least, to be sort of lethargic and not really into it; but they become quite involved, at least at the very least, highly cooperative. But they seem to enjoy it; and they seem to appreciate the modeling, the physical modeling, in slow motion, granted, of what is a very rapid sequence of events in the body.

But they are respectful of each other. They aren’t jostling. They don’t—at least I didn’t see them make little nudges of each other and little undercurrent comments. They seemed to be into it and to respond to his respect for them in wanting to illustrate a highly abstract principle in biology.

Taken together, the factors that I just described illustrate 2E, Use of Physical Space; 2A, Respect and Rapport; and 2D, Student Behavior.

High School Class: Importance of Good Writing (component 2B)
CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: In this high school class, the teacher is introducing the importance of good writing; not only for college work, but for just living in the world.

WINSTON ROSE: We have talked recently about the importance of grammar and writing well; on being able to punctuate well as you write; and the importance of it for life and going on as you go to college and writing good essays that are punctuated well. The teachers can really understand what you mean.

Even if you don’t go to college, just the fact of being a parent or being a grownup in this society, having correct grammar and representing yourself on paper well is absolutely important because, oftentimes, your first impression that people get of you is something you wrote to them; so you want to look good on paper.

High School Class: Importance of Good Writing – Charlotte Danielson Commentary

CHARLOTTE DANIELSON: In this very brief clip, the teacher is illustrating, I think really well, Component 2B, the Culture for Learning. That is, he is communicating to the students that it’s important that they know how to write.

It’s not just important for something that might seem not real to them, like somebody reading a college application; but he puts it to a job application, to being a parent. He doesn’t happen to say email, but I’m sure the students are thinking about email.

It’s not just about doing well in school that it’s important to write well; but it’s important for one’s image and one’s personality that you convey that you are a person who knows something and knows how to speak well and write well.