

# ROEA REPORTER

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Royal Oak Education  
Association

17500 11 Mile Rd. Suite 100  
Lathrup Village, MI 48076

Phone: 248-559-4770  
Fax: 248-559-4758  
Www.ROEA.com

## EVALUATIONS

There is no good news on the evaluation front as teacher evaluations have been expropriated by politicians. And as we all know, those folks have extensive training in pedagogy. Others have joined the fray. There are education demagogues such as Michelle Rhee. Her expertise is based on three years as a Teach for America instructor (aka Teach for Awhile in MEA circles) in which she lied about the performance of her students. But a little lie didn't prevent Rhee from becoming chancellor of the Washington D.C. school district. As chancellor, Rhee presided over a major test cheating scandal in which an inordinate amount of erasures of wrong answers changed to correct answers were discovered. But a little scandal didn't stop Rhee from becoming the education darling of the media and a guest of Michigan's legislators.

Then there are business demagogues such as Bill Gates. Gates freely weighs in on issues such as teacher evaluation and charter schools. In terms of Gates' teaching experience it is...well, let's just say that Rhee has him beat by 3 years. However, Gates is a billionaire which makes him an expert on pretty much anything that he wants to be an expert on.

The only good news about the attack on teachers is that it is bi-partisan.

President Bush started the dummifying down of curriculum with No Child Left Behind. NCLB looked at test scores as absolute and irrefutable proof of achievement. By punishing districts based on isolated bits of data, curriculum continued to become narrower to suit the demands of the test, states lowered baseline standards to "demonstrate" improved performance over time, and districts cheated. President Obama exacerbated the trend with Race to the Top. RTTT proclaimed that teacher evaluations had to be based in significant part upon test scores and made it easy to convert public schools to charters. We could have told him in advance that Detroit and Pontiac would be chartered and Bloomfield Hills and Birmingham would not be, but why spoil rhetoric with socioeconomic facts?

In Michigan, the Republican Party joined the evaluation mess with a vengeance when they eliminated just cause standards and essentially made all teachers at will employees. But even that wasn't enough for the Michigan Department of Education. The MDE is now proposing a life sentence of losing your career for one unsatisfactory evaluation.

All of these influences affect our administrators. The careers of teachers are literally in their hands. My hope is that they will not use evaluatively meaningless differences in test scores and minor differences in teaching style to give someone a Minimally Effective evaluation or worse. Under the proposed rules only one such evaluation would cause a newer teacher to lose their certification.

In order to get off to the best start possible under the intrinsically unfair evaluation system, this edition of the Reporter has a live model of the [Teacher's Plan for Classroom Observation](#) to help guide your evaluation. Remember that for this year there is still contract protection of evaluation standards.

Sid

**PLAN FOR CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

***(This form MUST be completed and returned to the evaluator PRIOR to the scheduled Classroom Observation.)***

TEACHER	<u>XXXXXXXXXXXXX</u>	BUILDING	<u>Royal Oak High School</u>		
DATE	<u>XXXXX</u>	CLASS	<u>General Chemistry 1</u>	TIME	<u>1<sup>st</sup> Hour</u>

**What are your desired student outcomes?**

Students are starting a chapter on radioactivity and nuclear decay. The students are being introduced to the concepts of half-life and radioactive decay. After the students complete the laboratory activity on half-life they are expected to understand and apply the following concepts:

- Understand what a half-life is. (HSCE C2.5x)
- How the amount of substance in a radioactive sample affects the time needed for it to completely decay.
- How the amount of time between half-lives affect the number of half-lives (time) for a radioactive sample to completely decay.

From this students will then move on to understand how the age of a substance can be determined by comparing the amount of parent isotope to daughter isotope (HSCE C2.5a)

**How will you begin this lesson?**

The students will take a pre-lab quiz asking them to define half-life, and how the time between half-lives and the amount of substance present affects how many half-lives are needed for the sample to completely decay.

**What methods will you use to achieve these outcomes?**

The students will then do the attached laboratory activity, where they simulate the radioactive decay of a substance. They will all start with the same sample size and the amount of time needed for a half-life to occur. They will then graph their results. The students will repeat the activity using different sample sizes and different times. After graphing this data, they will post these graphs and compare the results of all students.

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**How will you determine student understanding of the lesson?**

The students will compare and contrast their results to those of their class members. From the fact that regardless of what sample size they use, or how much time was given for a half-life to occur, the students should see that all graphs show the sample will completely decay within 6 or 7 half-lives.

The students will then answer questions as part of their laboratory experiment summarizing the class results and using the evidence from the report to support the concepts of half-life and radioactive decay as related to sample size and half-life length.

The students will also

- work on homework assignments related to half-life to practice these concepts
- after completing the notes and class discussions for this chapter related this to radiometric dating answer questions in the form of "Ticket Out the Door" to self-assess their understanding and ask for help.

The students' results on the laboratory experiment, homework, "Ticket Out the Door," and later the test on this material will be used to help determine their understanding as they progress through the material.

**How will you end the lesson?**

The class will discuss the results and work together through the discussion how half-life is affected by the sample size and length of half-life.

The students will need more than one class period to complete the lesson. The first class period will probably end with them needing to work on their graphs.

**Student assignment (if applicable):**

Students will complete their graphs of Number of Undecayed Atoms vs. Time.

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### Are there any particular conditions the evaluator should consider?

- Through the use of analogy (pennies as atoms) I am trying to improve student understanding of these historically difficult concepts since they involve particles that cannot be measured directly with materials present in the science classroom. I have never tried teaching these concepts in this manner before, and therefore do not know if the students will find this easier to understand than how it was taught before. I also do not know what in the directions will be confusing or difficult for the students until they try the lesson.

I will compare the results the students in my classes had on the test last year over this material to this year's results to see if this lesson better helps the students understand these concepts.

- This class is over the contract size limit and therefore I have more students working in the laboratory than I have lab stations. Since this particular experiment does not involve the use of actual chemical, there is no issue with safety, but the students will be crowded and not necessarily working in group sizes that will optimize learning.
- This class also has attendance issues. On a typical day, I have to make 13-20 attendance entries in the first 20 minutes of class. This is due to students being absent, tardy and later tardy over 5 minutes.
- This class has 6 students who are special education students, some of which are emotionally impaired. That is why it is being taught with both a general education teacher and a special education teacher. There are also two students who have 504 plans, one student just transferred into the class from E20/20 less than a week ago, and at least two students who have failed this course or another chemistry course before. All students are in this class because they have difficulties with mathematics and/or science.

**NOTES:** Below are explanations of things I included in the lesson plan that fit Charlotte Danielson states highly effective teachers do:

The state High School Content Expectations (HSCE) were included in the lesson plan to show why the topics were being studied. They were discussed as objectives for the lesson with the students so they know why they are doing the lesson. (Objectives for the day can also be written on the board for students.)

The section on checking for student understanding is where I define how student growth will be measured in this lesson. It is better to create your own parameters for student growth instead of letting them be imposed upon you.

By including information about how these objectives are being taught by a new method this year, I am showing an understanding of my students and that I adapt the lesson to fit their needs. It also shows reflection on my teaching and a willingness to try new techniques.