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Peer Coaching and Observation Techniques

Purpose

Peer coaching is an important means of ongoing professional development that help colleagues strengthen their practice through focused observations and specific feedback. The observations enhance strategies, techniques, and research implemented in the classroom.

The Peer Coaching Format

The Briefing

The participants initially meet to provide an overview of the lesson and determine the observation focus. It is best to select a facilitator for these sessions. The briefing format includes:

1. The lesson outline. The participants meet in a quiet room. The presenting teacher will provide an outline of the lesson. All participants need to be part of the briefing.

2. Focused observations. The participants organize specific observation goals. The specific observation(s) are determined.

3. Materials. Participants can use the included observation forms.

While the forms included here provide a template, ultimately the *forms* need to be developed by the observers.



The Lesson

The lesson will provide an opportunity to observe strategies and techniques that interest all the participants. The lesson format includes:

1. Observing. The teachers will position themselves to clearly observe.

2. Notes. Teachers will use the observation forms to assist with their focus and recording information about the lesson.

3. Student debriefing. The presenting teacher will debrief the students on their successes at the end of the lesson.

4. Video. Optional support includes still and video images to revisit during the debriefing.

The Debriefing

The teachers will meet immediately after the lesson to share observations. It should involve all participants including the teacher leading the lesson. The debriefing format includes:

1. Highlights. Each participant shares a key observation with why it was important to them. Facilitator will lead discussions that further understanding.

2. Inquiry. Each participant will share specific questions on an observation to clarify and extend their understanding of the observations.

3. What you will use. Each participant will share something they learned that they will implement in their classroom.

4. Written reflection. Each participant will write a double column entry (key observations & importance of each) in their reflective journals.

Categorization (List-Group-Label)

List-Group-Label (LGL) is a technique for drawing out and organizing information on a topic from participants in a group setting. Participants are given index cards on which they write responses to a question. One thought or idea will go on each card. Participants are modeled to sort the index cards into groups based on the information on the cards. It is important to group the cards first, then develop a heading (categorization) for each of the groupings based on what is in each group. Then each of the participants can work as teams with the same categories or work with a category individually.

For a peer observation the LGL question could be, “What different things could you look for during a modeled lesson?” The question should deliberately be broad so that a wide variety of responses will be brainstormed on the cards.

Beginning a peer observation with a LGL accomplishes three objectives:

- 1. Draws out the prior knowledge of the group.** The participants will have a more specific understanding of what they already know coming into the peer observation.
- 2. Builds ownership.** Participants will have a greater buy-in and willingness to use the information for their observation guides if they begin developing the information from their own base of knowledge.
- 3. Builds community.** By developing the observation rubric together the participants are building a collaborative goal and purpose.

Peer Observation Form Templates

While the preference would be to build the *observation forms* from within the group through List-Group-Label or similar exercise, the templates provide a vehicle to build from. The templates are presented in three different categories: Class leader facilitation, lesson, and children. Each of the templates are divided into sections for topics and notes for the observations. The categories are topic, examples, importance of (example observed), and what do I think.



Class Leader Facilitation

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Importance of</i>	<i>What do I think?</i>
Transitions			
Rhythm & Pacing			
Focal Points			
Children's Involvement			
Community Building			

Lesson

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Importance of</i>	<i>What do I think?</i>
Threads - How do the different parts of the lesson connect?			
What was the focus of the children?			
How did the lesson connect with the children?			
How did the teacher develop prior knowledge?			

Children

<i>Topic</i>	<i>Examples</i>	<i>Importance of</i>	<i>What do I think?</i>
Are the children engaged?			
Are the children working collaboratively?			
Specific child(ren) observations			
On task analysis			

