

Teachers Helping Teachers: Peer Observations

Teachers can collaboratively observe each other for professional development purposes. These peer observations are confidential and non-evaluative in nature.

Peer observations benefit both the observer and the observed teacher:

- Observers see new techniques in action, get new ideas for their teaching toolkits, and can reflect on their own assumptions, beliefs, and teaching practices based on what they witness.
- Observed teachers benefit from analyzing the descriptive data the observer collects about classroom interactions and the class environment; they can also grow through discussions that result from observer questions and suggestions to improve learning outcomes.
- Based on their discussions and reflections, participants can develop action plans or action research projects to improve their teaching practice.
- Peer observations can also improve camaraderie, deepen collaboration, and increase self-awareness among participating teachers.

Peer observation stages:

- **Pre-observation meeting:** The observer meets with the teacher before the class to learn about the lesson's focus and objectives. The teacher should define a focus area, perhaps related to something s/he would like to improve upon or a problem that s/he is trying to solve. Make sure you are both in agreement about how the observation will be conducted (duration, seating, etc.) and when the post-observation meeting will occur.
- **Observation:** The observed teacher should inform students about the observation before the lesson. The observer should arrive a few minutes early and be as discreet as possible: sit in the back of the room; focus solely on the observation and observe the entire lesson (or agreed upon segment); be open-minded and make detailed descriptive records in preparation for the post-observation meeting.
- **Post-observation meeting:** This is the most important part of the observation process. Reflection before this meeting and the discussion about what happened in the classroom is when real learning for both the teacher and the observer occurs. Teachers should treat each other with respect and offer opinions in a kind and constructive way. Participants should set action plans/goals based on what they learn. Both teachers should walk away feeling like they have learned something new and will be better teachers because of it.

Sample Peer Observation Schedule

Teacher Being Observed	Observer	Pre-Meeting Time & Date	Observation Time & Date	Post Meeting Time & Date	Completed (Signature of both teachers)

Observer Considerations

➤ **Things to look for while you observe:**

- What are the major lesson stages and the associated timing and interaction patterns?

➤ **Things to consider as you review your records and prepare for the post-observation meeting:**

- What has the teacher done especially well?
- Were the students engaged? How did you know?
- Were there a variety of activities?
- Was there a lot of STT (student talk time)?
- What activities do you enjoy the most / find the most interesting?
- What questions do you need to ask about unobservable information?
- Do you have suggestions for improvement or alternative?
- What have you learned about your own teaching practices, beliefs, and assumptions based on this observation?

Observer: Observation Form

Teacher: _____

Observer: _____

Date _____ Time _____ Class/Level _____

Lesson focus / objectives _____

Observation focus areas _____

Time	Stage / Activity	What I saw – interactions, classroom environment	Questions, comments, reflections, suggestions

Overall Comments:

Reflection notes:

Observed Teacher: Reflection Form

After your lesson, use the prompts below to make notes about the positive aspects and areas for improvement or desired changes. Complete this form before the post-observation meeting with your colleague. Be sure to bring these notes to the meeting.

Lesson Plan and Activities:

- Did your lesson go as planned?
- Did you meet the lesson's objectives?
- Were your activities effective and appropriate for this learner group?
- How was your time-management?

Personal Qualities and Communication

- Did you enjoy teaching and did you convey this to your students?
- How was your classroom management?
- Did the lesson include STT opportunities and varied interaction patterns?
- Where did you position yourself in the classroom?
- How did you react to students' responses, non-responses, and errors?

Materials:

- How well did your materials work in the lesson?
- Did you encounter any problems?
- How could you have improved the materials themselves or the way you used them?

Observation Focus Areas

- Make notes about your performance in relation to the areas you asked your colleague to observe

Summary:

- How will you apply what you learned today to improve your planning and teaching of future lessons?