



Observation Protocol #6 Person Observed as Coach

Developed in the field by educators affiliated with NSRF.

This model is similar to #5, Observer as Learner, and as such is intended primarily to increase the learning of the person doing the observing. The debriefing is intended to help the observer learn more about the reasoning, strategies, and results of the work designed by the person observed.

Coaching Steps

- Each person should choose the person with whom they will work. This choice should be based on a sincere desire to learn something in particular from that person. (For example: “I have a hard time getting the kids to talk to each other rather than running everything through me. I know that you have a lot of success doing that, and I want to find out how.”)
- Observer and coach (the person who is observed) should have a pre-conference, in which the coach helps the observer specify what s/he wants to learn more about. It may be helpful for the coach to give the observer relevant materials to review before the observation.
- The observer comes to the observation with a clear idea of what to look for, watches the session, and takes careful notes. It is important to remember where to focus — if you are looking for participant behaviors, you have to watch the participants, not the person leading the session. (For example, an observer interested in how an administrator manages a meeting to maximize faculty participation in decision-making will look closely at the points where interaction is highest, and note the administrator-generated activities and presentations that seem to trigger that behavior.)
- After the observation, the observer and the coach meet for a few minutes (15-30, depending on how many questions the observer has). During this meeting:
 - The observer should lead the discussion, so as to gain the maximum amount of learning from it.
 - The observer should refocus on the original purpose of the observation, noting what s/he wanted to learn in the first place.
 - The observer should share the things s/he saw, heard, and tracked that were relevant to his or her learning area.
 - The observer should avoid evaluation or judgment, focusing on what s/he learned, not on what worked better or not as well.
 - The observer should ask questions about things that s/he wants to know more about – for instance, strategies that s/he found especially interesting or puzzling, or incidents where more seemed to be going on than met the eye.
 - The coach should add any relevant explanation of decisions, share other strategies that have worked in the past, or offer any materials or ideas that might help the observer.

Note: All questioning needs to be done carefully, with an eye to enhanced observer learning. It should not be allowed to turn into an unprepared peer supervision session, where the focus is on improving the practice of the observed.