

Observation Tip Sheet

Observers can see what teachers or others actually do, not what they say they do.

Observation Protocol

- Arrive before the start of the activity, if possible
- Be unobtrusive
- Keep observation results confidential
- Use time wisely
- Focus on listening and looking
- Take notes on highlights
- Adhere to time schedule
- If introduced or called upon by teacher, smile and say hello, but keep it short.
- When class is finished, thank teacher

Improving observation skills and looking for evidence

- Suspend judgment – do not evaluate positively or negatively
- Make a conscious effort to listen and observe all interactions
- Observe neutrally, objectively, non-critically
- Note the interactions between teacher and students
- Note the interactions of students with each other
- Document examples of information on the walls and on other classroom props. In particular, look for rubrics, class rules, criteria for assignments, examples of a system to support assertive discipline.
- Are there clear expectations for both work and behavior?
- Ask questions of students provided that students are working in such a way that the questioning is not a distraction
- Are the students engaged? At what level and in what ways? Is the engagement sustained?
- Is the teacher on task?
- What is the climate or tone of the room?
- How are behavior issues addressed?
- What tools does the teacher use in the lesson? Note: Tools include humor, visuals, small group work, writing exercises, guided class discussion, clear lecture, blackboard listings as a focal point, etc.
- What evidence shows that students clearly understand the content and context for what is learned by the end of class?