

Focused Observation Guide: Presentation or lecture

[Links to VI. Communication A. of the TN Framework for Evaluation and Professional Development]

Observe: *What behaviors contribute to effective presentations or lectures?* Make arrangements to observe a presentation or lecture class. Plan time to talk briefly with the teacher before the class. The following questions will help guide your discussion:

- What do you expect the students to learn from the information you will be giving today? What concepts do you plan to address?
- What sources did you use in preparing for today's class? How much of the information presented today will be new for the students?
- Why did you choose the lecture as an instructional format? How did student characteristics influence your decision?
- How does the information you will provide relate to the textbook?
- What other activities, if any, do you plan to include during today's class (e.g., reading from textbook, comprehension checks)?

Keep an anecdotal log of the lecture or presentation. Describe teacher behaviors briefly without making any value judgments. Be sure to report the main idea behind statements or organizers included in the overview or introduction. During the development part of the lecture describe the major ideas or concepts that are introduced. Note the use of examples, analogies, similes, or stories to elaborate a point. Record the time when the teacher changes to a new topic or makes a transition. If possible, keep a record of student questions and comments during the presentation of new content. Describe the conclusion of the presentation. Note key points made in summaries, postorganizers, or assessment question. Report any reteaching activity or additional examples.

Analyze/Apply: Review the observation data to highlight important features of effective presentations. A first step is to identify the topics, concepts, ideas covered during the lesson. Also examine the way the information was organized (hierarchical, contrast-compare, cause and effect, time order, problem-solution, argument pattern showing both sides of an issue, etc.). Identify how the teacher made the organization clear to the students (advance organizer questions, graphic organizers, structuring statements, etc.). It may be important to identify the amount of time spent on each topic in the presentation to determine the pacing. Look through your notes for the teacher's use of examples or stories to illustrate points and the ways the teacher attempted to relate this material to the students' lives.

Lectures can be extremely effective when teachers use specific structuring behaviors and clear organization to enhance student learning. Clear and energized presentations enhance student learning and retention of information. Additional examination may help determine the clarity of instruction (e.g., delivery rate; easily audible; clear and understandable; concise, but with adequate detail; no deviation from focus; accurate; proper grammar; complete sentences; well chosen terminology, vocabulary, and examples). It is interesting to look for indicators of teacher enthusiasm, such as nonverbal gestures, movement, body language, appropriate animation, making positive statements, communicating excitement.

Focused Observation Guide: Explanations

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Observe: *What elements are included in effective explanations?* Try to observe a class when a new concept or process is to be introduced. Focus your observation on the elements of the teacher's explanation. Since it is important to know how responsive teachers are to student thinking, you will need to describe the interactions. Try to keep a record of the main points teachers stress during the explanation. Note any instructional components, such as number lines or laboratory equipment, that are used. Describe examples, analogies, and stories used to illustrate a concept. Be especially careful to include statements that require explanation, restatement, or reasoning processes by students. Other important aspects of teacher behavior you may want to record are:

- Stating learning objectives
- Telling students why the concept or process is important
- Assessing to make sure prerequisite knowledge and subskills are available
- Dividing the process into smaller segments or steps
- Deviating from the focus or topic
- Explaining when to use the process and when not to
- Modeling the thinking process required
- Providing teacher-directed practice

Students may be actively involved in the explanation process as well. Note any student questions, explanations, descriptions of their thinking processes, or contributions that indicate confusion.

Analyze/Apply: An effective explanation is a highly interactive process of assessing current student thinking and helping students acquire conceptually accurate information. Interactive explanations help student understand new content and prevent student misconceptions. In productive explanations, students are guided in integrating new knowledge with prior understandings and in incorporating the restructured information into their personal knowledge bases. Explanations can lead to higher levels of understanding when students gain ownership of the information.

Effective teachers carefully incorporate elements in explanations that ensure enhanced student learning and engagement. Examine the observation notes to determine if the explanation was interactive and student-centered addressing relevant, useful information, if students' current understanding was assessed, if the teacher was aware of common student misconceptions, what additional examples or strategies were used to correct any student misunderstanding, and how the teacher guided the students in restructuring their knowledge base incorporating the new information.