

Identify: PART 1

GETTING A CLEAR PICTURE OF REALITY

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CHAPTER



2

“The juxtaposition of vision (what we want) and a clear picture of current reality (where we are relative to what we want) generates what we call creative tension: a force to bring them together, caused by the natural tendency of tension to seek resolution. The essence of personal mastery is learning how to generate and sustain creative tension in our lives.”



PETER SENGE

Summarizing Robert Fritz’s theory of creative tension in *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organization*, 1990

The Impact Cycle is a deceptively simple process involving three stages: Identify, Learn, and Improve.

The Cycle positions collaborating teachers as the ultimate decision makers in a process leading to

powerful improvements in student learning and wellbeing. With a coach’s help, teachers analyze video and student data, set powerful goals for the coaching cycle, identify what teaching strategies to implement to hit the goals, and problem solve with their coach until goals are met.

Instructional coaches who use the Impact Cycle understand that their main task within that cycle is to help teachers achieve their goals. Teachers, because they make the important decisions about what happens in their classrooms, see the Impact Cycle as a process designed to help them achieve their goals for their students.

Step 1

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Get a clear/shared picture of current reality to create a baseline for measuring growth and movement toward goals.

“To confront reality is to recognize the world as it is, not as you wish it to be, and have the courage to do what must be done, not what you’d like to do.”

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BOSSIDY AND CHARAN
Confronting Reality, 2004

Gaining a clear picture of reality is important because:

- » It gives a shared, objective understanding of what is happening in a teacher’s classroom.
- » The focus that arises from having a clear picture of reality (and, ultimately, a goal) saves teachers and coaches time.
- » It shifts teacher and coach out of talk and into action.

After viewing the video recorded in the classroom, ask yourself ...

What is going well?

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Where is there room for improvement?

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What is the ideal situation you’d like to see in your classroom and/or students?

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The Illusion of Objectivity

Because of perceptual errors, we tend to view the world through an illusion of objectivity. We think we see ourselves and the world around us accurately but, in reality, we usually see and understand things through many filters that color our perceptions.

COMMON PERCEPTUAL ERRORS

Confirmation bias: Our natural tendency to color our perceptions of reality by consciously or unconsciously seeking data that support our assumptions about the world around us.

Habituation: Our tendency to become desensitized to any experience, positive or negative, that we experience repeatedly.

Primacy effect: Our tendency for our first experiences with someone or something to bias us in favor of a particular impression of that person or thing.

Recency effect: Our tendency for our last experiences with someone or something to bias us in favor of a particular impression of that person or thing.

Stereotypes: Prejudging people as having the characteristics of a group (often negative), which blinds us to the unique characteristics of individuals.

“It’s hard for people to watch themselves. It’s hard for me to watch myself, but video has transformed everything. Sometimes teachers will come to me and say, I think I really need to work on this, and then they watch their video and change [their minds] completely based on what they watched. When teachers stand in front of a classroom, they don’t always have that perspective of what’s really happening in their classroom. But, when I set that video up in the back of their classroom, they can watch themselves, or look at a lesson through the kids’ eyes, and can see what I see. You can’t give them that picture without the video. I don’t think I could coach without video, now.”

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JACKIE JEWELL

*Instructional Coach
Othello, Washington*

To help us cut through our illusions, we need safe, nonjudgmental tools. There are three options to consider:

1. Video recording (the easiest and most powerful!)
2. Learning from students
3. Gathering observation data

Overcoming the Illusion of Objectivity

Part 1: Video Recording the Lesson

There are several issues to consider before making video a part of your coaching practice: trust, choice, ownership, filming, kind of camera, where to point the camera, the length of the recording, and how to watch the video.

"If teachers don't want to do the video, the problem isn't the video—the problem is trust."

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INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

Beaverton, Oregon

Team consensus on why teachers won't use video recordings.

TRUST.

A culture of trust needs to be in place for video to be embraced. In order for people to trust individuals or organizations, the following five factors must be in place.

The Five Factors of Trust

1. Honesty
2. Reliability
3. Competency
4. Warmth
5. Genuine concern for the good of others (charity)

CHOICE.

Invite, don't force; use the teacher's camera, begin with audio if that is what the teacher prefers.

OWNERSHIP.

Create psychological safety by giving the teacher total control over the video and how it will be used.

FILMING.

The instructional coach can operate and control what the camera is to focus on, or the camera can simply be set up in the back of the room.

KIND OF CAMERA.

The simplest cameras to use are the ones in smartphones and tablets. However, you could also use a Go Pro camera or a Swivl to support the camera. Keep in mind the camera needs to have enough memory to capture the video, and the microphone needs to be sensitive enough to record the sounds in the classroom.

WHERE TO POINT THE CAMERA.

The teacher can decide based on what he or she wishes to observe more closely.

THE LENGTH OF THE RECORDING.

Twenty minutes is a good start. Less than 20 minutes typically is not enough time to see the arc of what is going on in the classroom. If the lesson is less than 50 minutes, recording the whole class is ideal. After a goal has been set, record the part of the class specifically related to the goal.

A Review of How to Use Video

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A thorough study of how to use video to enhance professional learning was offered in *Focus on Teaching: Using Video for High Impact Instruction* (Knight 2014), but it may be helpful to quickly revisit the most critical behaviors for using video when entering the coaching cycle at the first stage, Identify.

- 1. Establish trust.** For the use of video to flourish, teachers need to feel psychologically safe. They need to know they won't be penalized for mistakes and that the video itself is in their control at all times.
- 2. Make participation a choice.** As suggested by the partnership principles of autonomy and choice, teachers should not be forced to use video. Instead, they should be invited to use a powerful tool for learning and improving. Learning is unlikely if teachers are forced to do a video recording against their will.
- 3. Focus on intrinsic motivation and safety.** Instructional coaches encourage, empower, inspire, and invite others to set goals that help them achieve a personal best while improving student engagement and learning. The self-awareness produced by video can spur us to want to improve to be the best version of ourselves. However, when coaching is tied to extrinsic rewards, the intrinsic motivation for getting better is decreased and sometimes erased.
- 4. Establish clear boundaries.** Boundaries increase psychological safety and focus. Some important boundaries to consider include (a) focusing on data, (b) being nonjudgmental, (c) respecting the complex nature of teaching, (d) being positive, (e) being respectful, (f) being supportive, and, (g) offering suggestions for improvement only after being asked, and then only provisionally.
- 5. Walk the talk.** If administrators (in addition to coaches) want others to take the brave step of watching themselves on video, they need to walk the talk by being willing to watch their own practice on video as well. Thus, administrators might record and view workshops they provide, meetings they lead, and conversations they engage in.

6. **Go slow to go fast.** When coaches enroll collaborating teachers into the Impact Cycle, they should begin with the teachers who are the informal leaders within the school. Coaches should start work quietly, simply, and effectively with a small number of people who are interested and inspired to keep improving their practice. Coaches should emphasize that video-based professional development is always the collaborating teacher's choice and point out that it's okay to start with a simple audio recording if that is what the teacher is the most comfortable with. Audio is not as powerful as video. However, although it is a small beginning, it is a very worthwhile one.
7. **Use a simple camera on a tablet or smartphone.** Simple is good. Initially, setting the camera up in the back of the room for a birds-eye view is best. Later, depending on the goal and what you're trying to learn, you can adjust the position of the camera.
8. **Consider district policy around the use of video.** Consent may not be an issue if the video will never be made public. Generally speaking, this should never be the case for video used in the coaching cycle anyway.

REFLECT

Are you willing to watch yourself conducting your professional practice on video, reflect on your current reality, set goals for improvement, and, as needed, be willing to secure a coach for yourself?

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What quarterly or monthly goals can you set for yourself around your own practices?

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Are you willing to follow up with other video recordings to monitor your progress on the way toward your goal?

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Are you up for continuing to make and work to achieve new goals?

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Is it fair to ask your teachers (or coaches) to do something you are unwilling to do yourself?

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NOTES

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**WORKSHEET:**

Getting the Most Out of Watching Your Video

**GOAL:**

Identify two sections of the video that you like and one or two sections of video you'd like to further explore

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GETTING READY:

Watching yourself on video is one of the most powerful strategies professionals can use to improve. However, it can be a challenge. It takes a little time to get used to seeing yourself on screen, so be prepared for a bit of a shock. After a little time you will become more comfortable with the process.

- Find a place to watch where you won't be distracted.
- Review the Watch Yourself and Watch Your Student forms to remind yourself of things to keep in mind while watching.
- Set aside a block of time so you can watch the video uninterrupted.
- Make sure you've got a pen and paper ready to take notes.

WATCHING THE VIDEO:

- Plan to watch the entire video at one sitting.
- Take notes on anything that catches your attention.
- Be certain to write the time from the video beside any note you make so that you can return to it should you wish to.
- People have a tendency to be too hard on themselves, so be sure to really watch for things you like.
- After watching the video, review your notes, and circle the items you will discuss with your coach (2 you like, and 1 or 2 you would like to further explore).
- Sit back, relax, and enjoy the experience.

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WORKSHEET:

Watch Your Students



After watching the video of today's class, please rate how close the behavior of your students is to your goal for an ideal class in the following areas:

DATE

Students were engaged in learning
(at least 90% engagement is recommended)

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students interacted respectfully

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students talked about learning an appropriate amount of time

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students rarely interrupted each other

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students engaged in high-level conversation

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students clearly understand how well they are progressing (or not)

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

Students are interested in learning activities in the class

Not Close Right On
1 2 3 4 5 6 7

COMMENTS

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WORKSHEET:

Watch Yourself



After watching the video of today's class, please rate how close your instruction is to your ideal in the following areas:

DATE

"To record a lesson and not record what the teacher does is like recording a batter during a baseball game and not recording the pitcher. We learn more by seeing more, and the best way to learn about how we teach is to watch how we teach."



The Impact Cycle, 2017

My praise to correction ratio is at least a 3 to 1 ratio

Not Close Right On

I clearly explained expectations prior to each activity

Not Close Right On

My corrections are calm, consistent, immediate, and planned in advance

Not Close Right On

There was very little wasted time during the lesson

Not Close Right On

My questions at the appropriate level (know, understand, do)

Not Close Right On

My learning structures (stories, cooperative learning, thinking devices, experiential learning) were effective

Not Close Right On

I used a variety of learning structures effectively

Not Close Right On

I clearly understand what my students know and don't know.

Not Close Right On

COMMENTS

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Overcoming the Illusion of Objectivity

Part 2: Learning From Students

“One of the most powerful ways to get a clear picture of reality in a classroom is to ask students for their opinions about what they are experiencing.”

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The Impact Cycle, 2017

“All human beings want their voices to matter. We like giving our opinions and offering ideas. We want to be the subject for our own activities, not the objects of someone else’s.”

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QUAGLIA AND CORSO

Student Voice, 2014

Students are the consumers of education, so their voices should be listened to most carefully. Sadly, too often their voices are not heard.

Asking students about how learning is proceeding in a class has several advantages:

- » Students are the only people with first-hand knowledge of how learning is proceeding.
- » The most effective goals are student-focused goals, so it only makes sense to seek out students’ opinions about their learning goals.
- » Involving students communicates deep respect for them.
- » When students have a say in their learning, they are more likely to own the process of learning.
- » Just like adults, students want to have a voice and choice over their learning.

There are many ways teachers and coaches can listen to students:

1. informal conversation
2. interviews
3. writing prompts and exit tickets
4. listening to them
5. reviewing their work.

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS, PART A:

Informal Conversations

(a) Outside of class, strike up a conversation with a student about his or her experiences in the class; and (b) Make it a goal to talk to two students in every class every day about their experiences inside and outside of school.

Questions to Initiate Daily Conversations With Students

- » What’s the best thing about coming to this class?
- » What’s the worst thing about coming to this class?
- » What are you most excited about these days?
- » How comfortable do you feel saying what you think in this class?
- » What could make this class more interesting for you?
- » Is this class too easy, too hard, or just right for you?
- » What should be changed in this school to make this a better school for you?
- » What do your friends say about our school?

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS, PART C:***Writing Prompts and Exit Tickets***

Another way to get feedback from students is through writing prompts and exit tickets. Students should be encouraged to share what they think without any fear of retribution or being graded on their comments. Here are some ideas.

- » Have students journal or write a paragraph about what it feels like to be in this class.
- » Consider having a Conversation Journal where students and teachers write back and forth about how things are going every week (no judgment, no grades—this is a safe place to communicate).
- » Educators love the word engagement, but it can be a bit abstract for some students. To get a sense of student engagement, consider this question instead: How could today's lesson be changed to be more interesting to you?
- » In order to quickly gauge how the students are feeling about the class, have several sets of emoji cards ready to go. Students can choose the emoji that best suits how they feel their learning is going, and drop it into a basket.
- » Use one of the Student Attitude Surveys in the Impact Cycle Data Toolkit at the end of *The Impact Cycle*.

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS, PART 4:***Listening to Students***

The three steps to assuring students they have been heard:

ASK → LISTEN → RESPOND

Giving students a voice does not mean anything if it stops there. The way you prove that you care about what students are saying is to ask them what they think and then listen and respond.

Most importantly, after asking the students to give you feedback, follow up by responding to their feedback. When students hear a thoughtful and genuine response to what they said, they know they've been heard and that their voice matters. Unless they feel like they've been heard and taken seriously, they'll stop offering meaningful information.

If you think about it, a class is a presentation of material with the teacher doing the presenting to an audience—the students. You ask them to fill out evaluation forms at the end of class, much like you would evaluate a presenter of a professional development training after his or her session. The next day, you can read a few of the exit

tickets out loud or note themes from interviews conducted by the coach. But always, always, always protect students' anonymity. This lets the students know you hear them and you are taking their voice seriously by responding to their comments with good will and humility. Finally, asking students for their opinions and ideas is only helpful as long as you communicate to the students how you will act on what you hear.

LEARNING FROM STUDENTS, PART 5:

Reviewing Student Work

Another way to gain a clear picture of current reality in the classroom is to review the work being done by the students. There are a few ways to do this.

The coach and teacher together can look at recent work turned in by the students and identify major strengths and weaknesses.

Coaches can review recent student work for the teacher and summarize strengths and weaknesses by (a) applying criteria the teacher identifies as important, and (b) operating from a shared understanding of the elements of the criteria used to analyze the work.

Other ways to gather data include:

- » Using the chart paper method
- » Assessing reading skills by sitting beside the student and asking him to read a passage out loud.
- » Speaking quietly with students at their desks and asking questions like, "What are you learning right now?" or "Why is this learning valuable?"

Overcoming the Illusion of Objectivity

Part 3: Observation (Gathering Data)

When we talk about data with teachers, we ground the conversation in the partnership principles, which position the teacher as the person who will make the decisions about what data to gather. This does not mean that coaches silence themselves, but they share ideas provisionally and clearly. Coaches work with teachers for teachers and students, not for themselves.

Coaches should clarify how the observation will proceed before they observe to gather data.



CHECKLIST:

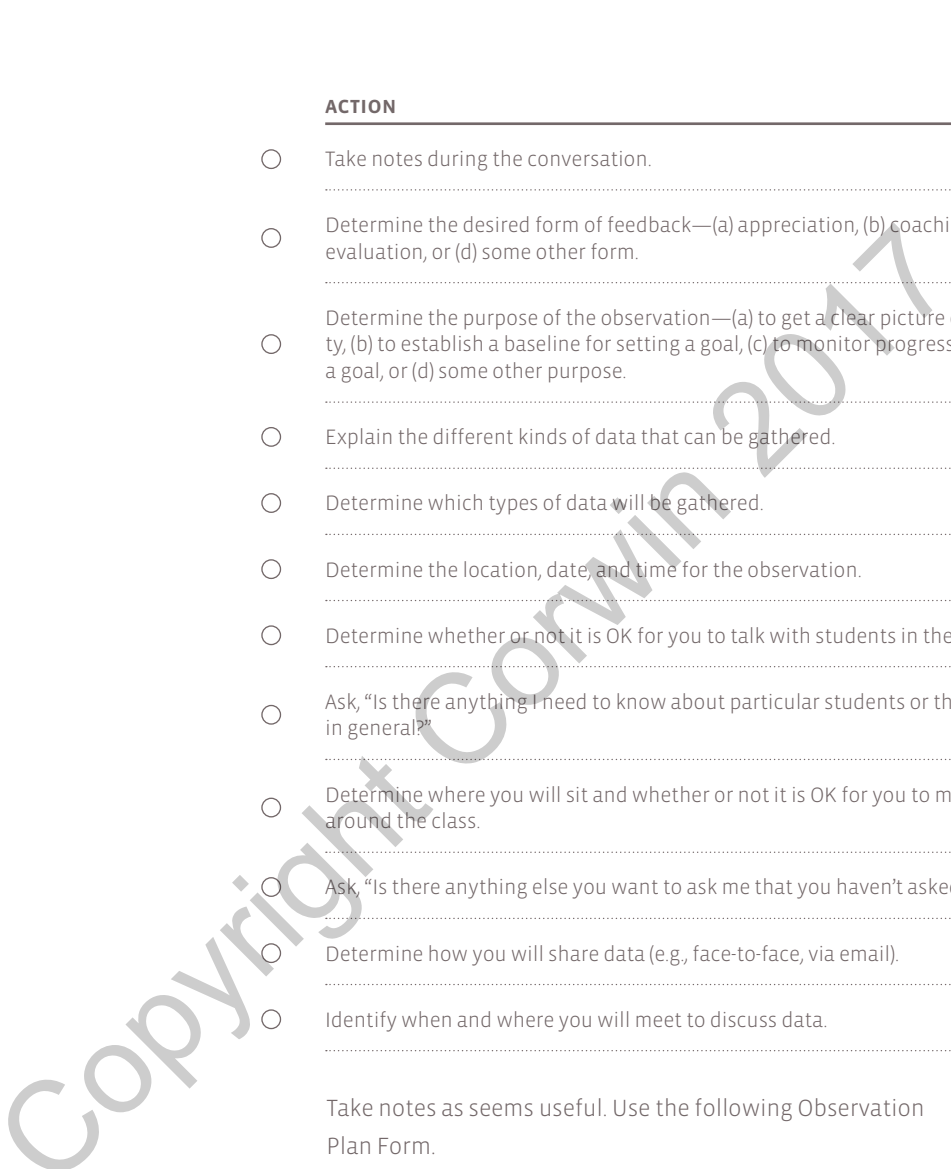
Pre-Observation Conversation



ACTION

- Take notes during the conversation.
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- Determine the desired form of feedback—(a) appreciation, (b) coaching, (c) evaluation, or (d) some other form.
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- Determine the purpose of the observation—(a) to get a clear picture of reality, (b) to establish a baseline for setting a goal, (c) to monitor progress toward a goal, or (d) some other purpose.
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- Explain the different kinds of data that can be gathered.
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- Determine which types of data will be gathered.
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- Determine the location, date, and time for the observation.
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- Determine whether or not it is OK for you to talk with students in the class.
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- Ask, “Is there anything I need to know about particular students or this class in general?”
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- Determine where you will sit and whether or not it is OK for you to move around the class.
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- Ask, “Is there anything else you want to ask me that you haven’t asked yet?”
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- Determine how you will share data (e.g., face-to-face, via email).
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- Identify when and where you will meet to discuss data.
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Take notes as seems useful. Use the following Observation Plan Form.





NOTES:

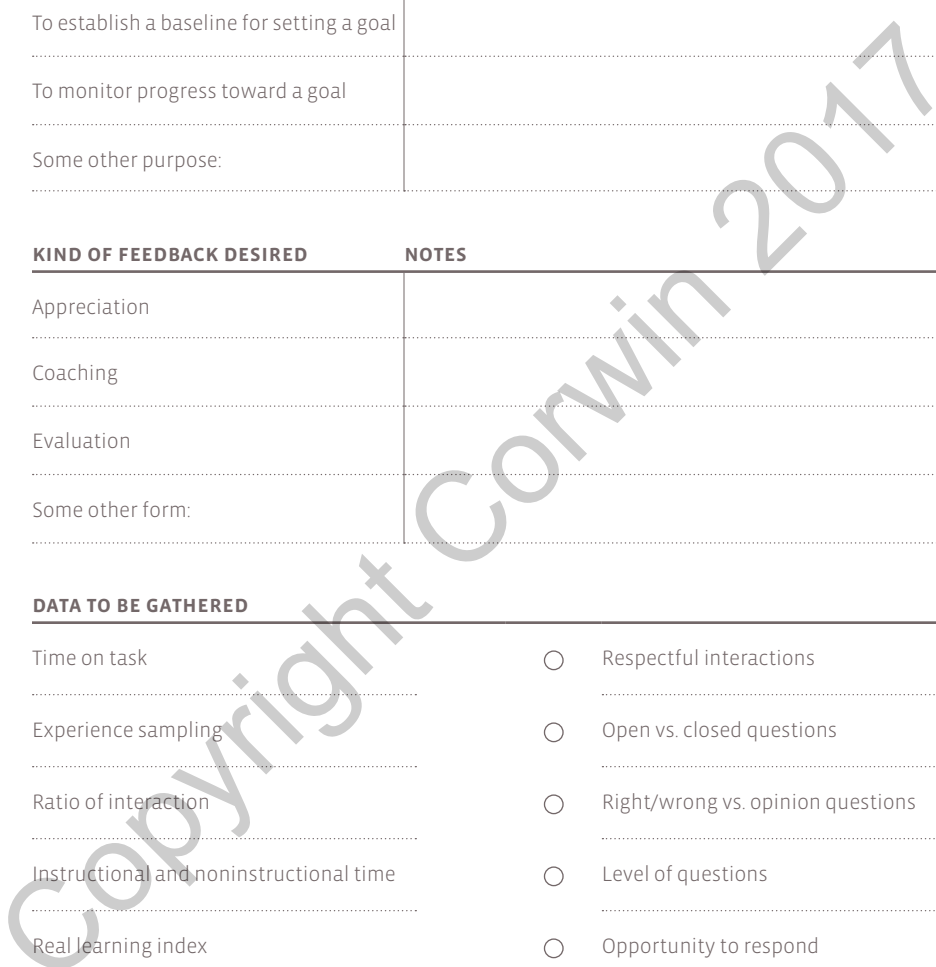
Observation Plan



PURPOSE OF THE VISIT	NOTES
<input type="radio"/> To get a clear picture of reality	
<input type="radio"/> To establish a baseline for setting a goal	
<input type="radio"/> To monitor progress toward a goal	
<input type="radio"/> Some other purpose:	

KIND OF FEEDBACK DESIRED	NOTES
<input type="radio"/> Appreciation	
<input type="radio"/> Coaching	
<input type="radio"/> Evaluation	
<input type="radio"/> Some other form:	

DATA TO BE GATHERED	
<input type="radio"/> Time on task	<input type="radio"/> Respectful interactions
<input type="radio"/> Experience sampling	<input type="radio"/> Open vs. closed questions
<input type="radio"/> Ratio of interaction	<input type="radio"/> Right/wrong vs. opinion questions
<input type="radio"/> Instructional and noninstructional time	<input type="radio"/> Level of questions
<input type="radio"/> Real learning index	<input type="radio"/> Opportunity to respond
<input type="radio"/> Ratio of interaction	<input type="radio"/> Correct academic responses
<input type="radio"/> Corrections	<input type="radio"/> Different students responding
<input type="radio"/> Disruptions	<input type="radio"/> Teacher vs. student talk
<input type="radio"/> Other:	



WHEN WILL I VISIT THE CLASS

LOCATION

DATE

TIME

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Should I talk with students:

- Yes No

SPECIAL INFORMATION ABOUT STUDENTS OR THE CLASS:

Where should I sit?

Is it OK for me to walk around the classroom during the lesson?

- Yes No

Is it OK for me to talk with students during the lesson?

- Yes No

OTHER INFORMATION I SHOULD KNOW:

How will I share data?

- Face-to-face Via email Other:

NEXT MEETING

LOCATION

DATE

TIME

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Stone and Heen (*Thanks for the Feedback: The Science and Art of Receiving Feedback Well*, 2014) write about three types of feedback, and it's important to clarify what kind of feedback the teacher would like:

- » Appreciation—feedback on our successes
- » Coaching—feedback that helps us get better (but coaches should not evaluate)
- » Evaluation—feedback that tells us how we are doing in comparison to others or a standard

Confirm what the purpose of the observation will be:

- » To get a clearer picture of reality?
- » To establish a baseline for setting a goal?
- » To monitor progress toward the goal?
- » Some other purpose?

Explain the different kinds of data generally used in situations like this (time on task, experience sampling, instructional vs. non-instructional time, real learning index, ratio of interaction, corrections, disruptions, respectful interaction, types and kinds of questions, level of questions, opportunities to respond, correct academic responses, different students responding, teacher vs. student talk time):

- » The coach provides an overview of the types of data
- » The teacher decides what type to focus on

Determine when the observation will take place:

- » What class could teach us the most?
- » The teacher chooses!

Ask for specific information about the class or the students:

- » Which parts of the class should observation be focused upon?
- » Are there any particular students on which to focus?

Clarify what the teacher is comfortable with you doing while observing:

- » Where is the observer supposed to sit or stand?
- » Is it OK to walk around?
- » Is it OK to talk with the students?

Remember, as a coach, you are a guest, so don't interfere with the learning process!

Determine how data will be gathered:

- » How data will be gathered depends on the focus of the observation
- » Use forms included in *The Impact Cycle* to help focus your observation (e.g., The 20-Minute Survey)
- » Use seating charts to help keep track of data

Finalize other details:

- » Confirm how data will be shared with the collaborating teacher—Will the teacher wish to see the data before the coaching conversation, or will she be OK having that conversation in the coaching session?
- » Where and when will the coach and teacher discuss the data?
- » Before closing the conversation, ask if there is anything the teacher would like to ask that hasn't been asked to this point.

MAKING IT REAL

Have you recorded any of your own presentations or yourself modeling strategies for use in your own professional coaching sessions?

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Would you consider recording a conversation with your spouse or child?

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As a coach, have you set up a time to video record yourself coaching so you can coach yourself or be coached by another coach or group of coaches?

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