Adult Education and Literacy

Classroom Observation\*

*(adopted to include Instructor Standards)*

Classroom observations are a hallmark of standards-based instructional leadership. They are a prime method program administrators can use to monitor the consistency of instructional practices and their fidelity to standards. *Observing is different and separate from formal summative evaluations of personnel*. One of its most powerful features is a reliance on the aggregation of data across instructors and specific teaching and learning practices. The purpose of classroom observations is to reveal effective and ineffective teaching practices and curriculum choices recurring across multiple classrooms within a program and across the state—not to judge the merit or performance of a specific instructor. Observations of a single instructor cannot provide an accurate portrait of instructional quality within an entire program. But when findings from visits to every classroom within a program are analyzed, a clear picture of standards-based instruction emerges. Program coordinators can then address the professional development needs of an entire faculty more effectively, by investigating common instructional choices made by multiple instructors.

Observing is designed to be formative, non-threatening, and forward-looking—a system in which the observer is clearly invested in instructors’ success.

The toolkit includes, the observational tool, the aggregation of observation data form and the summary of observation data form. Follow these guidelines when observing:

1. Support the natural atmosphere of the classroom.
2. Arrive early and remain in the classroom during the entire lesson to capture how the lesson is set up, its flow and conclusion.
3. Minimize your interaction with students, although contact is permitted if done discreetly and with the purpose of understanding what students are thinking and working on. Otherwise, asking questions or participating in activities can detract from your observations.
4. Circulate freely when students are working individually or in groups (if you cannot hear students or need to see their work); otherwise, move to the side or back of the room during whole-class discussion.
5. Assume the role of researcher—collecting data on teaching practices—not evaluator.
6. Come to the lessons fresh—just as students do—without the benefit of any advance meeting or detailed information about what to expect.
7. Pay attention to student responses, including the level of student engagement, how students are constructing their understanding, strategies they use to solve problems, and patterns of student errors.
8. Pay attention to instructor-student interactions, including the type of student engagement and how the instructor encourages engagement.
9. Pay attention to what the instructor says and does, as well as what he or she asks students to do.

**Classroom Observation Tool**

With the adoption of the College and Career Readiness Standards in Iowa, this tool was introduced to help instructors with the implementation of content standards in their instruction. This same tool can and should be used to measure four out of six instructor standards and is an effective self-assessment, as well as a critical friends group, and monitoring tool.

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| **Effective Teaching and Learning Practices** | E=Evident  NFE=Not Fully Evident | |
| 1. Curriculum content of the lesson is aligned to the demands of the standards1. (Standards 2 and 5) | E/NFE | Evidence |
| a. Instructor presents lesson clearly reflecting the concepts/skills of one or more of the standards. |  |  |
| b. Instructor outlines a well-defined standards-based lesson objective stated in terms of the desired student learning outcomes. |  |  |
| c. Students use resources directly related to the targeted standards. |  |  |
| 2. Cognitive level of learning activities are aligned to the demands of the standards. (Standards 2 and 5) | E/NFE | Evidence |
| a. Instructor poses questions that stimulate student thinking beyond recall. |  |  |
| b. Instructor allows appropriate wait-time (3 or more seconds) after posing questions. |  |  |
| c. Instructor asks students to elaborate on and justify their answers. |  |  |
| d. Instructor activates students’ metacognitive skills (e.g. models strategies, inquires about students’ strategies). |  |  |
| e. Students wok on assignments reflecting the highest demands posed by the standards targeted by the lesson. |  |  |
| 3. Standards are translated into lesson content relevant to adult students. (Standards 2, 5 and 6) | E/NFE | Evidence |
| a. Instructor ties standards-based lesson to students’ goals, interests, or needs. |  |  |
| b. Students actively participate in the lesson through class discussions, group projects, etc., instead of doing solitary seatwork or listening to extended lectures. |  |  |
| c. Students have varied opportunities (beyond worksheets) to apply new learning in authentic or practical adult-oriented contexts. |  |  |
| d. Students have access to technology in learning or for use in application in adult-oriented contexts. |  |  |

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| **Effective Teaching and Learning Practices** | E=Evident  NFE=Not Fully Evident | |
| 4. Standards are addressed by a coherent progression of learning. (Standard 5) | E/NFE | Evidence |
| a. Instructor explicitly links lesson content to previous lessons or what students already know. |  |  |
| b. Students have prerequisite knowledge/skills to understand lesson content. |  |  |
| c. Instructor incorporates standards in a lesson in a manner that builds on their natural connections. |  |  |
| d. Instructor closes lesson by:   Reviewing lesson objectives;   Summarizing student learning; and   Previewing how the next lesson builds on that learning. |  |  |
| 5. Students’ level of understanding is assessed during the lesson and instruction is adjusted accordingly. (Standard 3) | E/NFE | Evidence |
| a. Instructor regularly checks whether students are mastering standards-based lesson content (e.g., circulates to check on students’ work, monitors verbal responses). |  |  |
| b. Instructor provided students with prompt, specific feedback to correct misunderstanding and reinforce learning. |  |  |
| c. Students signal understanding of lesson content before instructor introduces new idea. |  |  |
| d. Instructor provides supplemental instructions for students who show that they need it (e.g., individualized or peer tutoring, re-teaching, review of basic skills). |  |  |
| e. Instructor provides extension activities for students who complete classwork, instead of leaving them idle or unchallenged. |  |  |
| f. Students evaluate and reflect on their own learning. |  |  |