CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL STUDENT OBSERVATIONS IN PREK-ELEMENTARY SETTINGS

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WARM UP

Take 30 seconds to look around the room

Now close your eyes

Answer the following questions

What color shirt are you wearing

What is the color of my pants

Is your neighbor left/right wearing glasses?

What color shirt is your neighbor wearing

What color is the room?

WARM UP

What resonated with you?

How do you currently conduct classroom observations (e.g., mostly short, unannounced; mostly longer, announced; using video; with a rubric)?

How do you determine what feedback to provide following an observation?

GOAL OF OUR SESSION

Observations are a critical source of evidence for educators to determine the most appropriate learning styles, needs, and strengths of all students.

In this session we will discuss the critical elements of conducting meaningful classroom observations

In this session we will learn essential components of an observation cycle

In this session we will discuss and identify how cultural considerations impact classroom observations

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF CONDUCTING MEANINGFUL CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

WHY AND HOW TO OBSERVE?

An observation is watching students with the clear goal of studying a specific behavior and abilities, in order to learn and support the student develop realistic curriculum and goals.

It is best to observe from a distance without the student knowing they are being observed.

-Is this always possible?

CRITICAL ELEMENTS OF A MEANINGFUL STUDENT OBSERVATION

Location/Setting

Duration

Frequency

Personal Social

Cognition

Communication

Fine Motor

Gross Motor

LOCATION/SETTING

- Keep in mind that observations are only snapshots of the setting and of the behavior
- Determine if the observation will be in a completely natural setting or if the classroom will be set for the student to complete specific tasks
- The educator must also decide how many locations/settings the observation will occur (classroom, cafeteria, library, gymnasium, hallway, bathroom, and/or playground.
- If possible, can you conduct an observation in a community/home setting

DURATION OF AN OBSERVATION

How long will an observation last?

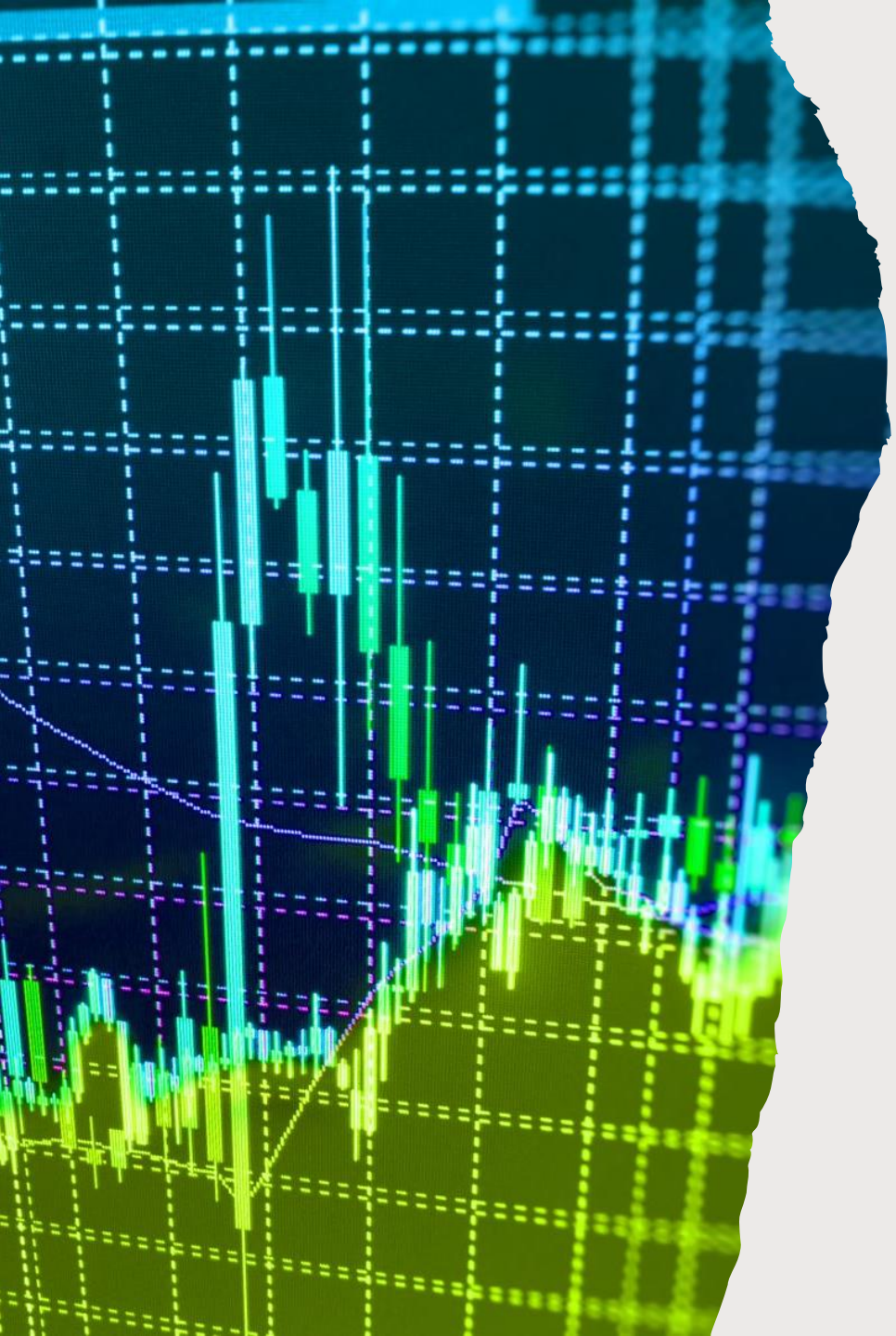
- For younger children you may want to observe in shorter timeframes

-For older children, your observations may take place over a longer period

How long does a particular behavior last?

- For instance, how long does a student take to start a task?

- How long does a temper tantrum last?



FREQUENCY OF AN OBSERVATION

- How often will the observation occur?
  - Will the student be observed a minimum or maximum number of times before a report is drafted?
  - Will the frequency of behaviors be noted (how often is a behavior occurring)?
  - Will data be collected from another student to compare frequency of behavior?
  - How does frequency of a behavior impact student engagement/participation?

PERSONAL-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR OF A STUDENT

- Self-Regulation & Responsibility
- Interpersonal Skills
- Self Concept
- Self-Help Eating
- Self-Help Dressing
- Self-Help Grooming
- Self-Help Toileting

COGNITION

- Attention & Memory (Visual/ Spatial)
- Visual Perception (Blocks & Puzzles)
- Visual Perception (Matching & Sorting)
- Functional Use of Objects & Symbolic Play
- Problem Solving/Reasoning
- Number Concepts

COMMUNICATION

- Concepts/ Vocabulary: Receptive
- Concepts/Vocabulary: Expressive
- Attention & Memory: Auditory
- Verbal Comprehension
- Conversation Skills
- Grammatical Structure
- Imitation Vocal

FINE MOTOR

- Imitation Motor
- Grasp & Manipulation
- Bilateral Skills
- Tool Use
- Visual – Motor Skills

GROSS MOTOR

- Upright: Posture & Locomotion
- Upright Balance
- Upright: Ball Play
- Upright: Outdoor Play

SUBJECTIVE VS OBJECTIVE

BE OBJECTIVE!

- Objective observations simply state the facts.
- It is important but difficult to remain objective at all time.
- The first thing to record when observing is an objective list of behavior patterns.

TRY NOT TO BE SUBJECTIVE

- Subjective observations state an **opinion** of the observer.
- Observations must be **solid facts** - objective.

AVOID MAKING ASSUMPTIONS

- Which statement would you agree with?

  -Annie has difficulty sharing.

  -Annie never shares.

AVOID LABELS

- Which statement would you agree with?

  -Tommy often acts out his aggressive feelings.

  - Tommy is mean.

AVOID CONCLUSIONS WITHOUT INFORMATION

- Which statement would you agree with?

–Billie can't do anything by himself because he is the youngest in a large family and they do everything for him.

– Billie needs to develop the ability to do things for himself.

SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE

- Mark looks away when the teacher showed him a snake. He said, "I don't like snakes, they feel funny."
- Mark was afraid of snakes because he looked away.

SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE

- Tyler is a good boy and gets along well with the other children.

Tyler was playing with the music blocks. When Carly & Josh asked to play, Tyler agreed and showed them how.

SUBJECTIVE OR OBJECTIVE

- Maddie wanted to swing but two others were already there. She picked up a rock and threw it at them.
- Maddie got mad and threw a rock because she does not share well.

CONFIDENTIALITY

- All observations are confidential, should be filed and any problems should only be reported to the director.

WE USE OBSERVATIONS TO IDENTIFY DIVERSITY

Observations help us identify supports for students to access the curriculum and participate in all school activities

Observations help us identify learning styles and implement the most appropriate teaching strategies

Observations also help us develop meaningful relationships and interactions with students and families

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF THE OBSERVATION CYCLE

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Active Evidence Collection

Educator documents what is happening (teacher and student actions/behaviors)

- No judgement is made about performance during the observation

Analysis and synthesis of evidence following the observation

- Connect evidence collected to the essential elements of conducting meaningful observations

Self- reflection by the observer (educator)

Critical and targeted feedback to all stakeholders and determining next steps

ACTIVE EVIDENCE COLLECTION

- Actively collect evidence without making judgments

  -Options: scripting, videotaping, audio-recording

- Evidence collected during an observation is to support educators in identifying trends and selecting illustrative examples of students' behavior.

  - The observer should be as specific as possible including (how often, how long, and the type of behavior being documented).

ANALYSIS AND SYNTHESIS OF EVIDENCE

Review evidence and sort using the evidence chart included on the Critical Elements Observation Form.

-Not every piece of evidence collected needs to be sorted.

-Consult the Critical Elements Observation Rubric when sorting evidence

Evidence statements should say what happened in the observation that shows/does not show that a skill has been demonstrated

SELF-REFLECTION BY THE OBSERVER

Complete self- reflection rubric for conducting meaningful observations

Identify 1-2 areas of **reinforcement** (“ what is the student doing well”)

- Should identify students’ instructional/social-emotional/ and behavior strength in a way that encourages continuation and acknowledgement of positive interactions.

Identify 1-2 areas of **refinement** (“ what we will work on, or create a plan for”)

- Should identify areas in need of promoting positive behavior interactions and the integration of strong instructional strategies.

CRITICAL AND TARGETED FEEDBACK TO ALL STAKEHOLDERS AND DETERMINING NEXT STEPS

- Post-conferences should occur after the observer (educator) has had an opportunity to synthesize the evidence.
  - -Provide concrete suggestions for improvement and share resources/supports.
  - -Share observation form.
  - -Answer questions and confirm next steps.

CALIBRATION OF EVIDENCE

OBSERVER CALIBRATION

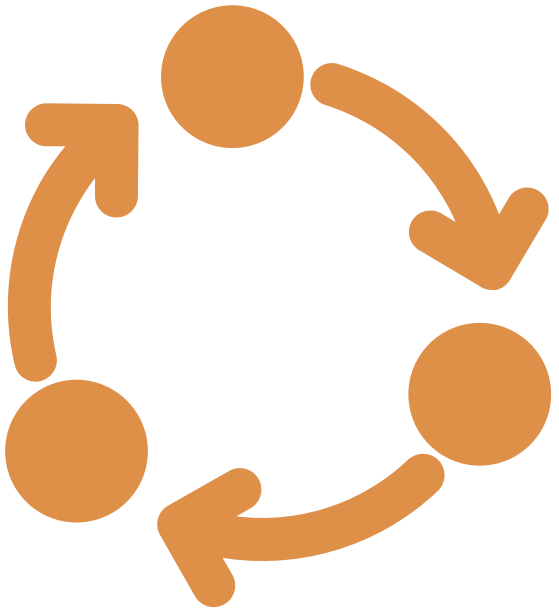
- Calibration is the result of ongoing, frequent collaboration of groups of educators to:

-Come to a common, shared understanding of what practice looks like at different performance levels and

-Establish and maintain consistency in aspects of the evaluation process including analyzing evidence, providing feedback, and using professional judgment to determine ratings

OBSERVER CALIBRATION

- Calibration between grade levels and subject areas, is essential to providing all stakeholders with consistent feedback.
- Calibration across all educators is also important to establishing a common set of expectations for educators and students at varying grade levels. Let's practice that now as a group.



OBSERVER CALIBRATION SIMULATION

- In a moment we will watch a second video of classroom instruction. This one features a 3rd grade classroom.
- Again, "observe" the lesson using your current knowledge of observations.

  Remember, engage in active evidence collection by recording teacher and student actions and behaviors without judgment.

  The focus element for this lesson is: **adjustments to practice**.
- After the video we will simulate a calibration activity that programs can use to build common expectations.

OBSERVER CALIBRATION SIMULATION

https://youtu.be/ITU0OXmefyg

OBSERVER CALIBRATION SIMULATION

On your own, use the guiding questions to identify:

- 1-2 areas of **reinforcement** ("keep doing what you're doing"); and
- 1-2 areas of **refinement** ("instead, try this…").

OBSERVER CALIBRATION SIMULATION

- In teams of 3-4, conduct a peer review of a group member's feedback to the teacher:

  -Choose 1 person to be the "subject."

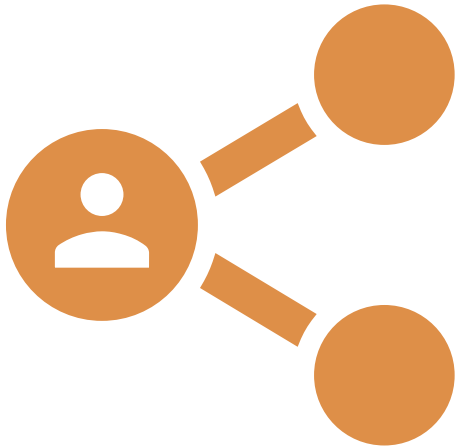
  -The subject will read aloud his/her feedback to the teacher

  -The remaining team members discuss their assessments of the feedback and make suggestions to improve the feedback. The subject listens silently.

  -The subject then responds to the team members' assessment. The group listens silently.

  -Together the team brainstorms specific ways to make the subject's feedback stronger.

OBSERVER CALIBRATION SIMULATION



- As a whole group:

  Each team shares the following with the full group:

  - Exemplars of feedback to the teacher and why they felt they were exemplars.
  - One new common understanding or practice the team will adopt.

SUMMARY OF OUR LEARNING

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- Evidence collected during observations should document teacher and student actions and behaviors without judgment.
- After the observation, educators should analyze the evidence to identify trends and develop a plan for addressing students learning styles and social-emotional supports .
- Feedback must be focused and actionable and be accompanied by specific strategies or supports available to the educator.
- Calibration establish and maintain consistency in aspects of the evaluation process including analyzing evidence, providing feedback, and using professional judgment to determine ratings

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