



## Unit 2: Observation of Staff and Analysis

# Making Sense of Observation Data: Post-Observation Analysis

## MAKING SENSE OF OBSERVATION DATA: POST-OBSERVATION ANALYSIS

### CONTEXT

The third step of the Professional Conferencing Process is **post-observation analysis**. In this step, both the Mentor-Coach and the protégé have a chance to reflect on what happened during the observation and to prepare for the upcoming reflective conference. The insights that they both gain from this analysis will set the stage for rich conversations about the protégé's practice during the conference. It will also inform decisions that the Mentor-Coach and the protégé make about follow-up steps they can each take after the conference.

In this module, participants will learn new techniques to enhance their analysis skills. They also have an opportunity to practice these skills through case studies.

**TIME:** 1 hour 30 minutes

### OVERVIEW

- Introduction to the Module (5 minutes)
- Facilitator-Led Discussion on Making Sense of Information from Observations (15 minutes)
- Exercise 1: Case Study Analysis and Discussion (40 minutes)
- Exercise 2: Professional Development Plan (15 minutes)
- Wrap-Up (15 minutes)

## **LEARNING OUTCOMES**

By completing this module, Mentor-Coaches will:

- Understand the importance of reflecting on observation for both the Mentor-Coach and the protégé.
- Learn new techniques to review and reflect on observation data.
- Learn and practice how to use information collected from a formal observation tool.

## **FACILITATOR PREPARATION**

Prior to beginning this facilitated module, take these steps:

- Read through this entire module in the Facilitator Guide and the Mentor-Coach Manual.
- Prepare the presentation using the notes in the Facilitator Guide.
- Revisit the Professional Conferencing Guide and the information about the ELLCO that was presented in Unit 2, Module 2.
- Review the discussion questions and case study exercises.
- Develop exercises to meet the needs of your particular group: full group discussions, small group breakouts, pairs or triads, individual reflection.
- Review Module 4 of Unit 2 for the Wrap-Up segment at the end of this module.

## INTRODUCTION TO THE MODULE

Welcome the group and make necessary introductions.

Using the Overview, introduce the topics and time frames for this module. Refer to the Mentor-Coach Manual and explain how it is used in this session.

Review the previous facilitated session on the first two steps of the Professional Conferencing Process. Ask if the participants have any questions about the first two steps before beginning the discussion on the third step of the process, **post-observation analysis**.

Tell participants that, in today's session, they will be exploring ways to analyze or "make sense" of what they see and hear during a classroom observation.

Discuss **post-observation analysis** using these points:

- The thought of analyzing something may make Mentor-Coaches and protégés nervous. The word analysis reminds many people of anxiety-producing experiences, such as tests.
- In *Steps to Success*, analysis simply means thinking about what you heard, saw, and experienced, and breaking that information into understandable parts. Then a Mentor-Coach and protégé can begin a discussion.
- Mentor-Coaches need to analyze observation data whether they use a formal tool or conduct an open type of observation.

## FACILITATOR-LED DISCUSSION ON MAKING SENSE OF INFORMATION FROM OBSERVATIONS

### Allowing Time for Reflection

Follow an observation with reflection. Share these points:

- Both the Mentor-Coach and the protégé need time to reflect **separately** on what happened during the observation.
- Protégés are often eager to receive immediate feedback. However, this does not give Mentor-Coaches time to reflect on what they saw and heard during an observation. Mentor-Coaches need enough time to think deeply about ways to support protégés in changing their practice.
- Protégés also need time to reflect on how things went and the types of support that they may need to enhance their practice.
- Providing instant feedback may overwhelm protégés. It may also prompt protégés to make a quick fix they don't understand.
- Rather than provide instant feedback, Mentor-Coaches can tell protégés that they need time to organize their thoughts. They should encourage protégés to take time to think about their questions and insights.
- While guarding against giving instant feedback, Mentor-Coaches need to schedule the reflective conference soon, while the observation events are fresh in their minds.

### Discussion Questions

Engage participants in a discussion about reflection by posing the following questions:

1. How do you encourage protégés to reflect on their experience of being observed?
2. What strategies have you used to ease protégés' anxiety between the observation and the reflective conference?

The participants may wish to record points from the discussion in their manuals.

### Using Critical Incidents

Use these points to introduce participants to two techniques that observers frequently use when analyzing data: identifying **critical incidents** and **missed opportunities** and noting **patterns of behavior**.

- During analysis, Mentor-Coaches can use their notes, questions, and comments from the observation. In reviewing data, Mentor-Coaches need to ask themselves what they learned about their protégés' teaching and the children's learning, related to the observation goal.
- By focusing on the interactions between the protégés and children, and not on children alone, Mentor-Coaches can learn about their protégés' strengths and areas needing improvement.

Introduce the concept of **critical incidents** with the following points:

- Important moments in the protégé's teaching, called **critical incidents**, often give a Mentor-Coach insight about the protégé's work.
- By exploring key events or critical incidents, a Mentor-Coach learns about the protégé's knowledge and understanding of effective practice.
- Critical incidents can illustrate major improvement in a protégé's practice or represent a challenge that she or he should work on.

Read this example to the group to illustrate the concept of critical incidents:

A Mentor-Coach observes a protégé helping a child write a letter (an example of this protégé's growth) and concludes that the protégé understands how to support children's writing. But later on, the Mentor-Coach observes the same protégé giving children worksheets to practice repeatedly forming the letter "d" (a challenge for the protégé).

Ask the group what the Mentor-Coach may conclude after observing these two critical incidents. Possible responses could be:

- The protégé does not fully understand how to support children's writing.
- The protégé may not understand that giving children a purpose for their writing is more effective than drilling them on letter formation.

Explain that by noting these critical incidents, the Mentor-Coach is able to identify a starting point for a conversation on supporting children's writing.

Continue the discussion by telling the group that critical incidents frequently take the form of **missed opportunities**.

Use this example:

A protégé whose teaching goal is to extend conversations with children by asking open-ended questions may use such questions effectively during a book-reading activity but may fail to engage children in a similar way in the block area or at the lunch table.

Ask the group for their comments. Explain that in this example, the protégé is engaged in appropriate practice, but on a limited or narrow basis.

### Discussion Questions

Tell the group that they can identify critical incidents in their observations by asking themselves the following questions:

1. Is this incident consistent with other events I observed? If not, are there factors that may have contributed to this particular incident?
2. What did I see that makes me think that the protégé understands an aspect of language and literacy?
3. What did I see that makes me think that the protégé is struggling with an aspect of language and literacy?
4. Did one incident stand out? If yes, what did it tell me?
5. What did I *not* see that makes me think the protégé is struggling?

Have participants share their experiences with critical incidents by posing the following questions:

1. What examples of critical incidents have you observed?
2. How did these important moments shape your feedback to your protégé?

### Looking at Patterns of Behavior

Mentor-Coaches often look for patterns of protégé behavior when analyzing data.

- Patterns in protégés' behavior can provide clues about their understanding of effective practice.
- Looking for notes from the observation that detail related or similar actions can help Mentor-Coaches gather clues about what protégés think is important or what is a challenge.
- Organizing information from the observation notes into broad categories often helps Mentor-Coaches to identify protégés' patterns of behavior.

Use this example:

A Mentor-Coach could create one list from all of the notes about the protégé's conversations with children. A formal tool may list only some categories, such as "approaches to book reading" and "children's writing," but considering other practices that apply to all sections of the tool and to conversations with children can also be helpful.

### Discussion Questions

Begin a discussion about patterns of behavior by asking:

1. What examples of behavior patterns have you observed?
2. How did these practices shape your feedback to your protégés?

Expand the conversation to general issues in post-observation analysis by adding the following questions (not in Mentor-Coach Manual):

3. What has been your experience in making sense of information from a classroom observation?
4. What steps have you taken to collect, think about, and use that information with a staff member or protégé?

They may wish to record points from the discussion in their manuals.

## EXERCISE 1: CASE STUDY ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Have participants read one of two case studies found in their manuals. They will analyze the case study, applying the strategies they have learned.

The first case study provides information about a toddler teacher, Keesha. This case study includes background information and results from a classroom observation using the *Infant-Toddler Environment Rating Scale, Revised Edition (ITERS)*.

The second case study has information and a partial set of ELLCO results from a classroom observation of Ann Marie, a preschool teacher. Classroom observation information is provided only for ELLCO items discussed in Module 2 and for book-reading practices discussed in Unit 1.

In both case studies, the protégés are classroom teachers; both the ELLCO and the ITERS are classroom observation tools.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Divide participants into small groups by the age-group they are interested in (toddler or preschooler). Ask each group to select one case study to analyze. Instruct the groups to:

- Read the teacher's case study contained in the Mentor-Coach Manual.
- Review the packet of ELLCO or ITERS score sheets that appear in STEP-Docs at the end of the module.
- Begin to analyze the information using the Observation Data Analysis Guide provided in the STEP-Docs.

After 15 minutes, reconvene the group and ask each small group to share its analyses. Allow for disagreement.

Use the points for discussion on the following page.

**Points for Discussion of Case Study****Teacher 1: KEESHA**

The score for Keesha's classroom for fine motor activities approached the "good" range. The scores for group play activities and displays for children, however, were minimal. The classroom contains materials appropriate for the development of toddlers' fine motor activities.

However, many events raise questions about whether Keesha understands how to introduce print to toddlers. These observations include: the heavy emphasis on classroom print, including the alphabet chart with upper and lower case letters; her discussion with the toddler about the spelling of the word *truck*; the large amount of labeling. Keesha's planned activities, including the full group circle time and the structured art activities, raise additional questions about her understanding of toddlers' development. The Mentor-Coach might engage Keesha in a discussion about appropriate curriculum goals for toddlers and use the *Picturing Development* chart in Head Start's *21<sup>st</sup> Century Exploring Parenting Curriculum* to inform the discussion.

**Teacher 2: ANN MARIE**

These ELLCO results suggest that Ann Marie's classroom is below a "basic" level on items related to literacy practices. There is limited evidence of activities that support children's writing. Writing materials and activities are not available throughout the classroom.

This ELLCO profile is an interesting one. It raises questions about what impact a teacher's belief system has on her practice. It also raises questions about how a Mentor-Coach can use a teacher's strengths to address obvious weaknesses. The Mentor-Coach might want to engage Ann Marie in a discussion about what children in her classroom are capable of learning and ways that she can better support children's writing.

**Discussion Questions**

After the groups have shared their analyses, engage the entire group in a discussion, using these questions:

1. Were these two data analysis exercises difficult? If so, what aspect did you find most challenging?
2. Did your conclusions differ from those of others in your group? How?
3. Analyzing case study information can be considerably different from analyzing information from classroom observations. What factors will you think about as you make sense of information from your own observations?

Participants may wish to jot down their thoughts in their Mentor-Coach Manual.

**EXERCISE 2: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

Give participants time to reflect on what they learned from this module. Refer them to the questions in the Mentor-Coach Manual to guide their reflection.

Ask them to review their Professional Development Plan to check on their progress, make any necessary changes, and decide on next steps.

Take a few minutes for any questions or comments.

## WRAP-UP

Ask the participants to revisit the quote from the beginning of the module and discuss how their beliefs about post-observation analysis have changed.

...it is tempting to provide immediate feedback at the conclusion of the observation; however, taking the time to analyze observational data and to think about the conference that is to follow increases the success and the power of the...cycle.

—Caruso and Fawcett (1999)

Conclude the discussion by making the following points:

- Mentor-Coaches always need to analyze data from an observation before having a post-observation reflective conference with protégés.
- Although the examples in the activity involve the use of a formal observation tool, Mentor-Coaches can use the same analytical methods when they are conducting a more open type of observation.
- To analyze data, Mentor-Coaches need to identify patterns of behavior, critical incidents, and missed opportunities.
- The Mentor-Coach's analysis is only one view of what happened during the observation session. The protégé's insights about the session are critical. In planning for the reflective conference, allow time for the protégé to analyze her own thoughts about the observation. Unit 3 provides guidance on preparing for a reflective conference.
- Review Module 4 of Unit 2 with the group.
- Schedule a time for the next facilitated session (Unit 3, Module 2). Remind participants to complete Module 1 of Unit 3, including the self-assessment, prior to the session.

