

Linda Warren: Welcome back. Earlier we learned that there are different types of observations and that each has distinct benefits and limitations. There are also different ways to record your observations: the open method, the closed method, and combined methods. The open method requires the observer to write down everything that is happening in the classroom or a specific area of the classroom. Observers use their own judgment as they decide what to include and leave out. This is sometimes called a narrative observation. Open methods allow an observer to record an entire interaction.

This level of detail can help the protégé and mentor-coach to reflect on the events together. When the observer uses the closed method, he or she is using a tool -- like a checklist to collect information. The advantage of the closed observation is that the narrower focus let's the observer collect information about a specific activity or interaction and tune out other events. The drawback is that with a narrower focus, the observer may miss factors that influence what are being observed.

When observers use the combined method, they are using both open and closed systems. We visited two mentor-coaches in Denver, Colorado to see how they use different methods of observation. Let's take a look.

[Video Starts] [Music] [Children and teacher talking]

Evonne Ellingson-Chase: I used the closed method of observation in Louisa's classroom today and I feel that it went very well. I was really focusing in on a particular activity with the children and looking at the conversation style between Louisa and focusing more on one of the children that she was talking to; although, there were a group of children there.

Teacher Louisa: What is that? Child: I don't know Teacher Louisa: That is...

Evonne Ellingson-Chase: We used a closed observation method to really focus in on her conversation skills with children. The checklist on quality conversation that I used with Louisa today, I was able to look at four areas that I think that she has a lot of strengths in. Louisa was very responsive to the child's talk. She was able to listen carefully to what the child was saying and respond appropriately to...you know and stay on task or stay on conversation with the child.

Teacher Louisa: And Z... we're missing the Z for zebra. Did you look under the table? [Children talking and making noises]

Evonne Ellingson-Chase: Looking at curriculums, she really talked about letter recognition and this letter sounds like [makes hard D sound] or D for dog. She was pointing out those as she was sitting at the table and she did not correct the child's language and that's one of the things that we looked at on our checklist too. She used...you know she would repeat what the child said and then expanded on what the child had said and added some new vocabulary.

The closed checklist that I used, really helped me focus on an area that she had asked for some attention in or for a special request from her. She wanted to take a look at how conversation works in our classroom and if she was... Actually she asked me after we were done with the conversations "Was I speaking, was I talking to the child?" You know, "Was I saying anything?" So, I was able to give her some feedback on that right away and that seemed to be an area that she had a really...a great interest in.

[Music] Cheryl Gardenas: I use this open observation to get a general idea of what goes on in the teachers classroom that implements literacy and language in their classroom. I think it's useful to have an open observation because you can go from area to area and find out what the activities are; what she has on the walls; how she's conducting literacy activities; how she's interacting with the children; where the language is. I also go from center to center and see what materials she has in the center; what she needs.

Teacher: Seven, two, zero... In dramatic play, they had a telephone book. They had markers and paper. They were writing phone numbers -- they were writing names of people. In the art area, they were identifying letters of the alphabet. They were gluing the letters on paper -- writing words and names.

[Teacher speaking to children in Spanish] Cheryl Gardenas: During the open observation, Juanita's doing a great job with literacy and language. And writing she almost every area

Cheryl Gardenas: First I can do the open observation, look around the class room see what materials are out. Watch the interaction between the student and the teacher I then could go in with a close observation and focus in on a specific activity.

Evonne Ellingson-Chase: I believe by using a combined method of open and combined observation probably be the most useful of all. Because you could really look individually and focus on an individual area and use a checklist to make sure you were looking for every thing you wanted to look at but yet you could write in detail what you saw so you could share that back with teachers. And I believe that for me personally that, would be the best method of all so I could be more inclusive.

Linda Warren: The mentor-coaches we just saw could explain the reporting methods they used and why they choose those methods. Dee and Brenda what us did you notice in the video?

Dee: Well I notice that Evonne choose a tool that both she and teacher where comfortable with. That was going to accomplish the goal that they had set together earlier on in there pre conference. Both the mentor coaches in the clip demonstrated their knowledge of what they were looking for and their background. Linda Warren: Good so a comfortable tool a good tool they were comfortable with and demonstrating knowledge.

Brenda: What stood out for me was how the mentor-coach, with the tools she used picked up on the strengths of that particular teacher and what she wanted and doing and talked about what the teacher did that really encouraged the children and good strategies that she used with the children. So the methods she was using was very positive for the teacher very rewarding and encouraging for the teacher to go on forward and take further steps to enhance her skills within the area so that was very very good to see in that clip.

Linda Warren: Let's, let's build on that Brenda and on let's why don't you share your experiences in using the open and close methods and what you have seen as the benefits to each.

Brenda: Within our program it's very important within those programs as a teacher as well as the mentor-coach. Know the tools, the tools they both have them and the way we use them the mentor-coach will go into the classroom and she will do a open observation using the tools and the teacher will also use the tools and they will come together in a conference session and share what they solve within both of there tools and they use that approach to develop goals and objectives for working together within a classroom in terms of improving the classroom.

We've also used their approach to focus in on Specific children or specific daily routines or specific curriculum topics though out the program year so both methods have been very benefitaul for the teacher and for honing in on specific skills that she would like to improve on. The mentor-coach that given that teacher what she needs and what she really, what will really help her enhance her skills that relationship out of that mentor-coach relationship very helpful.

Dee: I found that the close observation also can help you look at different areas in when you want to enhance and when your looking at this it opens doors to talk to the teacher about some different strategies that she might what to be using in her classroom. So you can use that close observation especially when it's when your in agreement with what your doing to help that teacher built on her strengths and web out and introduce some new strategies in that classroom.

Brenda: It's very very important for the mentor-coach to give specific examples from her close observation to teacher. When you were doing that language activity with the children, one of the children said and gives the quote and another children said and you responded. Those specific examples are really helpful to the teacher in-terms of making changes or adjustments to her practice.

Linda Warren: And based on what you're saying it's really important for the mentor-coach to have a good understanding of literacy practices. Brenda: Absolutely. Linda Warren: And bring this understanding to their observationist

Brenda: Absolutely training that are mentor-coaches receive our master teachers receive are some of the same training our teachers receive and in a addition to that they receive training on how you can go back and help the teacher implement those strategies that they receive in a workshop or a on going session around language literacy development. So that is very important to the relationship.

Linda Warren: One method that we haven't touched upon yet but we will discuss for later is videotaping. So videotaping is another method for recording observations and we have addressed it in many places in Steps to Success. Alright now you're going to take some time with your facilitator to think more about observation and tools. Stop the tape now and hit play when you have finished your discussions.

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