

Facilitation Difficulty:



As available, starting with 10 min.



One observer + one observed



No preconference

Purpose – The primary “learner” in this protocol is the observer. The observer’s only purpose is to learn more about improving their own practice by observing someone else. Take care not to misuse this protocol in an attempt to improve the practice of the observed. This activity was developed to use within a school-based Critical Friends Group® community as an introduction to peer observation.

Preparation – Plan by considering a question about teaching and learning that’s important to you, that keeps you awake at night, a question about which you feel passion. Write your own focusing question, and talk about it with the teacher you hope to observe. Be clear that you’re not expecting the observed teacher to craft a lesson around your particular interest. Your question should be broad and deep enough that any class will give you opportunities to observe and learn about it. Schedule the observation event and plan for a few minutes to talk, afterward. The first visit(-s) may be very brief.

Tips – Remind participants about conducting the observation in silence, and documenting evidence, not judgments.

Observation – Bring a journal or notetaking technology with an open page and your focusing question written at the top, with the date. Alternately, print the First Visits Worksheet and create binder pages. During the observation, maintain an open field of vision, noting anything that strikes you as particularly interesting – anything that may lead to “deep” questions.

Report – After the observation, thank the teacher being observed and briefly note things you learned as a result of the observation.

Reflect – Ask yourself:

- *What evidence do I see in this classroom that might address my focusing question in full or in part?*
- *What particular content or strategies were striking to me? Why?*
- *As I leave this class, what have I learned about myself as a teacher, about our students here at this school, or about teaching? What new questions or insights do I have?*
- *Do I want to schedule another visit to this classroom with the same focusing question, to learn more? Might I want to change my focusing question, or change who I observe, or both, or neither?*

Debrief and Reflect –

- *Did you notice anything surprising/interesting while using this protocol?*
- *Did you notice any tendencies or patterns in what was observed, or in your response to what was observed? If so, what can you learn from those tendencies or patterns?*

If you decided to share your further reflections with your partner, do so. Consider together whether you want to share out in your next Critical Friends Group® meeting. If you’re considering sharing out in the meeting, remember and discuss any previously made agreements about confidentiality.

