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Observation Protocol #3 Interesting Moments

Adapted for observing students in ATLAS Communities from Peer Observation Protocols created by the National School Reform Faculty.

The underlying assumption for this protocol is that the observer and the observed will work together to create some new knowledge — they are in it together. The observation is a shared experience, and so is the debriefing. One outsider, after listening to such a debriefing, stated that it was a seamless conversation. “The two of you were discovering something about the events you had seen.”

Pre-Observation Conference

Because this form of observation is more open-ended, it is not strictly necessary to have a pre-conference, although it may help to orient the observer as to what will be happening.

Observation

The observer maintains an open field of vision, noting anything that strikes her as particularly interesting — anything that may lead to ‘deep’ questions.

Debriefing

Either participant begins by raising a point of interest, stating as clearly and as fully as possible what occurred. A conversation develops around the incident with both observer and observed attempting to sort out, “What was going on there?” As the ideas build, both are responsible for keeping the conversation on track while maintaining the flexibility necessary to create new understandings.

Note: Prerequisite for this protocol is a high level of trust between the two participants: trust that the debriefing is not about evaluation; trust that each will be thoughtful, will listen and respond to the other; trust that whatever knowledge is created will be shared knowledge.