**Student-Focused Coaching**

**Observation Guide**

**What is student-focused coaching?**

Student-focused coaching is centered on collecting data that reflects students’ responses to teaching behaviors. The difference between student-focused and teacher-focused coaching is that in the former, students’ oral and written responses during instruction are at the cornerstone of the coaching process. The coach’s field notes provide evidence of students’ understanding and misunderstanding of the lesson’s content. Specifically, these notes document students’ reactions to the instruction by recording what the teacher is saying, what the students are saying, and how the students perform on written assignments.

**Enter identifying data**

1. Enter the teacher’s name.
2. Enter the school and district name.
3. Enter the coach’s name.
4. Enter the observation date.

**Observation Notes Section**

Before you observe, prepare for writing field notes in the Observations Notes section by thinking whether your observation is answering these following questions. (Not all are always applicable, but themes to keep in mind.)

Did the teacher provide instruction or provide/assign an activity and just walk around?

How did the teacher monitor students?

What type of feedback was provided to students – immediate, incorrect/correct, prompts to support students to think more deeply?

How was the material being presented to students - on a board/screen, in a small group, computer?

How explicit was the instruction?

Was the teacher explaining/modeling/demonstrating?

Was the teacher thinking aloud the procedural steps as well the reasoning behind procedures?

Did the teacher demonstrate solution strategies? Was the teacher’s work organized?

Did the teacher utilize worked examples?

What was expected of the students?

Were the students listening or on task? Were they off-task?

What did students’ work look like? Was it organized?

Did it look like students understood and knew what they were doing?

Did students provide answers with an explanation? If so, what was their explanation like? Were concepts and procedures used in their explanation?

Was the class time used well?

**Summary Ratings**

**( ratings are acceptable)**

The items in this section will be rated on the 5-point Likert scale listed at the top of the page.

1 2 3 4 5

**Low Medium High**

1. Refer to your observation notes to complete the summary rating of items. Items 1-7 (adherence, clarity, explanations, manipulatives and visual representations, rapport, students’ grasp of content, mathematical language) based on these notes:
   1. Provide a justification for your ratings by copying and pasting the appropriate evidence from your observations notes into the Notes section for each item.
   2. Provide an overall rating for the lesson by completing item 8.

1. Guidelines for determining summary ratings
2. **Adherence to the steps of the lesson outlined in the Teacher Guide**.
3. To what degree does the teacher follow the instructional approaches in the Teacher Guide.
4. The teacher should not be penalized for paraphrasing the instructional language in the guide as long as it conveys the same meaning.
5. The teachers were instructed to use their professional judgement to determine if there are any portions of the lesson that should not be addressed or if there are portions of the lesson that need to be repeated. When rating this item, consider whether the teacher’s decision to delete portions of the lesson hindered students’ grasp the of the material.
6. Note whether there was evidence that the students understood the mathematical concept before the teacher proceeded to the next portion of the lesson.
7. **Clarity in conveying the lesson goals.**
8. To what degree does the teacher use clear, concise and student friendly language to convey the lesson’s goals.
9. **Supports students’ explanations.**

To what degree does the teacher do any of the following (these are examples where teachers can support student explanations):

1. provide opportunities for students to explain their solutions,
2. ask questions and provide probes to enhance their explanations,
3. build on students’ explanations to foster a deeper understanding of the concept, and/or
4. uses students’ explanations as examples for other students in the class to promote understanding.
5. **Uses manipulatives (e.g., C-Rods) and visual representations (e.g., number lines) correctly**.
6. To what degree does the teacher correctly use manipulatives and visual representations to convey mathematical concepts.
7. Rate this item N/A if manipulatives and visual representations were not included in the Teacher Guide.
8. Also note whether the use of manipulatives and visual representations were featured in the lesson but were not used, which would result in a low score.
9. **Maintains a positive rapport with the students.**
10. To what degree does the teacher demonstrate behaviors that promote positive interactions and mutual respect between teacher and students.
11. **Perception of students’ grasp of the content.**
12. To what degree do the students understand the mathematical concepts presented in the lesson and to what degree is the teacher aware of the students’ understanding.
13. Consider students’ accuracy in using manipulatives and visual representations to solve problems, their ability to explain how a problem was solved, the accuracy of their responses to teacher queries, etc.
14. **Uses clear mathematically correct language.**
15. To what degree does the teacher use mathematically correct language. For example, using the terms numerator and denominator rather than top number and bottom number.
16. **Overall rating of the lesson.**
17. Provide an overall rating of the lesson by considering the ratings on the previous items.

**Observation Reflection Section**

1. Synthesize all your notes and Likert scale ratings to characterize the lesson.
2. Include what you consider strengths and weaknesses.
3. Consider what you would recommend the teacher work on.
4. At the end of the lesson if time permits, ask the teacher if they have any reflective feedback on what went well or not so well during the lesson; feel free to use the teacher’s reflection as part of your observer’s reflection.
5. Make sure to mention something you would have liked to see, if that applies, this will help guide coaches in making recommendations in the next session.
6. Think about the observer/coaching training and the project related PD sessions teachers have attended as you frame your reflections.

**Student Focused Coaching Session**

***Logistics***

Teachers are not given a copy of your notes or recommendations

Audiotape the post observation session

Each session should be approximately 15 minutes, or less

Upload completed audio files to dropbox

**To prepare each coaching session**

1. Review strengths and weaknesses from the reflection you wrote and come up with 1-3 potential recommendations.
2. When focusing on instructional changes in your recommendations, to the extent possible, present issues as they relate to student understanding and behavior. This is not always possible.
3. Have the recommendations prepared before each coaching session. Make sure they are relevant to what you saw during the observation or are grounded in an observation of another teacher doing something successfully that might benefit this teacher. Consider key tenets of this project when you are making recommendations:
   1. Number line as a key representation.
   2. Appropriate use of manipulatives (not all are good for every skill).
   3. Was vocabulary or math language problematic?
   4. Did teachers explain the concept well with direct and correct language, was a think-aloud included?
   5. Did students explain their thinking or understanding of a concept or procedure and did the teacher support the student in her explanation?
   6. Was logistics part of the issue?

**Coaching Session Agenda**

1. Start the session by asking the teacher what they thought went well during the lesson. Continue the discussion by expanding on the strengths identified by the teacher with what you observed during the lesson. Refer to the strengths you noted during the observation.
2. Next, ask the teacher where they see room for improvement or what may not have gone as well as they thought it would. Use the same approach you used when discussing the lesson’s strengths by expanding on the teacher’s identified weaknesses or places to improve by offering potential suggestions for addressing the problem. Frame any critique in a student-focused way.
3. Finally, present recommendations and next steps based on the identified strengths and weaknesses noted on the observation/reflection. Recommendations should be student- focused. So as not to overwhelm the teacher, do not make more than three recommendations for improving the lesson.

The initial discussion, where the teacher reflects on the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson and the coach offers insights, should take between 5-7 minutes. If teachers have a lot to say, let them continue talking. The goal is that the post-observation conferences be conversational and discussion oriented.

Recommendations should also be conversational. You might prepare 3 or more recommendations and then only choose to discuss 1 or 2 depending on the initial discussion. Each recommendation should be actionable for the teacher to try to implement in an upcoming lesson.

**Examples of Student Focused Coaching Sessions**

**Example 1**

***Lesson Objective*:** Students will add fractions with different denominators with 80% accuracy.

The coach’s field notes indicated that when students were asked to solve a problem such as some of the students calculated the answer as . Clearly, these students added the numerators and the denominators without finding a common denominator. In this case, it appears that the students did not understand the concept that fractions with different denominators cannot be added without finding a common denominator because the wholes are divided differently. In the whole is divided into 4 parts and in the whole is divided into 3 parts. In order to add these two fractions, students need to find a whole that is divided into the same amount of parts.

During the post-observation conference, the coach told the teacher that there were students who made this error either verbally during whole class instruction or while completing problems during guided practice. Based on these field data, the coach recommended that to clear up students’ confusion, it would be effective if the concept of finding common denominators was reviewed using manipulatives such as C-rods to illustrate why the denominators have to be the same. Further, the coach recommended that the teacher moves to a semi-concrete illustration by using the number line before students move to the abstract level, where they solve the problems without these aids.

**Example 2**

***Lesson Objective*:** The students will solve equations with 90% accuracy.

In this scenario, the teacher continued with a lesson on solving equations involving the order of operations and operations with negative numbers. The students were having trouble with operations involving negative numbers. The coach mentioned that the biggest hang-up was the students' lack of fluency with math facts. The teacher made it clear that math fact fluency was an issue from years and years ago when they should have learned them. The coach mentioned that the teacher made a good instructional decision by reteaching negative numbers and that students still seem to need more practice. The coach recommended using a number line to solve the problems. The coach reasoned that the students would be able to see in which direction the numbers are moving, thus, indicating the number's magnitude, which would make the concept more concrete. During the lesson, some students did not seem to understand why they were to change the sign from a minus to a plus. Using the number line will make sense of the procedure for changing signs. The coach asked if the teacher had a number line that could be projected onto the whiteboard. The teacher stated that she could provide a number line on the back of each student's multiplication facts sheet. The coach recommended first providing a few demonstrations of how to solve the problems using the number line. Then, students can use the number line to solve problems. The teacher thought that was a great idea.