

NEW TEACHER INDUCTION PROGRAM

MAKING CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS MEANINGFUL

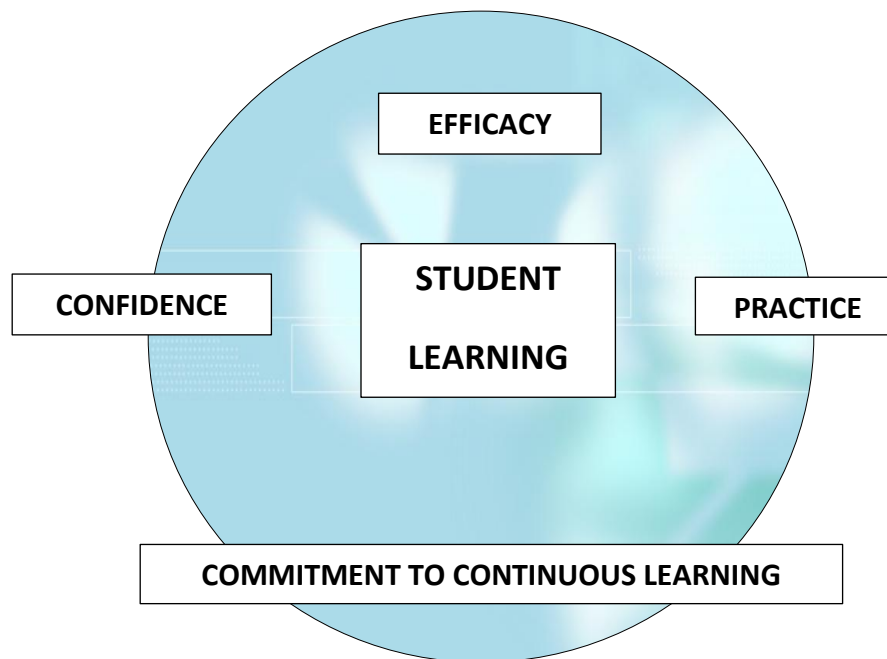
Teacher effectiveness is the single biggest influence on student learning! Impacting Student Learning is the ultimate outcome of the New Teacher Induction Program.

Guiding Principles of the NTIP

- **Support all new teachers - shift from surviving as a new teacher to learning as a new teacher.**
- **Better prepared, more confident teachers.**
- **Retain new teachers and help improve instruction.**

4 Key NTIP Goals:

IMPROVED TEACHER



Confidence – “I can do it...I have the supports to be a successful teacher”

Efficacy – “My teaching makes a difference in the lives and learning of every single student”

Teacher Practice – “By using evidence based instructional strategies I am able to respond to the diverse learning needs of my students and ensure student success”

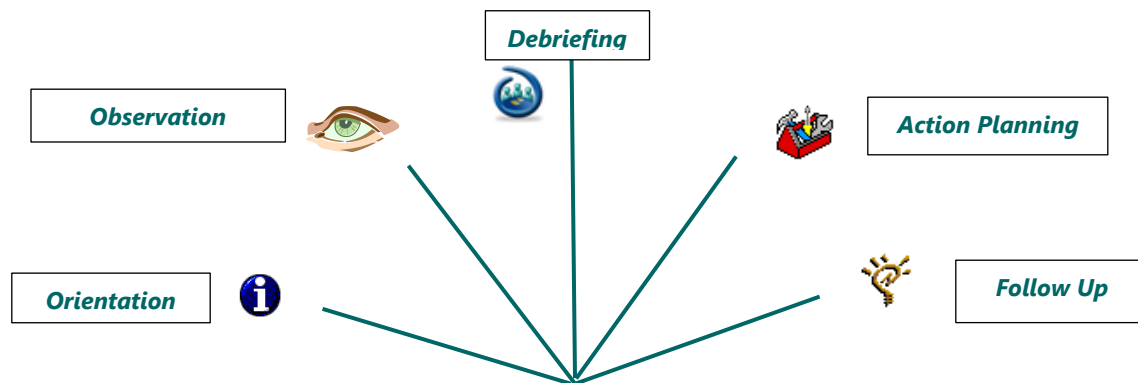
Commitment to Continuous Learning – “I want to keep learning and growing as a professional in collaboration with my students, colleagues, administration, parents/guardians, and school community”

Classroom Observation and Debriefing, whether it be informal observation of a Mentor’s classroom by a Beginning Teacher or a more formal demonstration classroom process, represents a **powerful tool** for personalized and authentic professional learning.

By learning from and with each other Beginning Teachers, Mentors, and their colleagues begin to build meaningful communities of collaboration focused on the “real world” of teaching and learning in practice. NOTE: The mentor could also go into the protege’s class and teach while the protégé observes.

ELEMENTS OF MEANINGFUL CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS EXPERIENCES

Classroom Observations provides for intentional sharing of knowledge and practise. Meaningful professional learning is coherent, sustainable, goal – oriented, evidence – informed and attentive to adult learning styles. For the participating teacher, each classroom observation experience includes the following core elements:



ORIENTATION- “the what”

- An opportunity for participating teachers to **share/discuss** specific **learning goals** for the observation with the mentor or demonstration classroom teacher

OBSERVATION- “the how”

- Focused observation of teaching and authentic professional learning in the actual classroom (more powerful if over a sustained period of time such as several hours)

DEBRIEFING- “making sense of what I saw”

- Soon after the observation, an opportunity to reflect on the classroom experience, ask questions, and share ideas with mentor, the demonstration teacher, and colleagues in order to make sense of the observation

ACTION PLANNING- “what can I do with what I saw?”

- A collaborative and structured ‘so what / now what’ action planning process for applying the learning to participants’ specific teaching contexts

FOLLOW UP – “what next for sustainability?”

- Direct assistance from a mentor or the classroom teacher or other colleagues to support the implementation of new ideas and strategies back in their classrooms (a return visit, a visit from mentor to protégé class, co-teaching, further discussion)

Authentic Context for meeting multiple Learning Goals

Classroom observation is an approach to **professional learning that is personal**. There must be a focus for what the teacher is viewing. One person may be focused on classroom management, another be interested in how the demonstration teacher structures their guided reading program, and still another may want to learn more about how the teacher fosters inclusion with the students. Others might want to know how a teacher focusses student listening or how to group students. Demonstration classroom learning provides a venue for each participant to observe authentic teacher practice and student learning that aligns with his or her unique learning goals. A teacher should construct no more than 2-3 goals based on the identification of 1-3 inquiry questions, grounded in theory, to guide their observation experience. Goals that relate to the school or board improvement plan will be very valuable. An **observation focus template** with guided questions and look-fors is available to assist the protégé and mentor in the orientation phase. NOTE: a small group of new teachers could observe one experienced teacher at the same time (each teacher might have similar or different goals from the others).

The Importance of Collaborative Debriefing and Action Planning

Classroom observation without collaborative debriefing can have the “orange wallpaper” effect. Participants may like the day, enjoy being in someone else’s classroom, but leave with their next step being to use the same lovely orange wallpaper the demonstration teacher has on their bulletin board.

Immediately following up the classroom observation with a collaborative debriefing and action planning process involving the Classroom Teacher, Mentors, Visit Guide and other visiting teachers allows the focus of the participating teachers to shift away from what they saw to how they can apply their learning to their own teaching context. Focusing on the “so what / now what” provides visiting teachers opportunities to construct the practical next steps they will implement with their own students while simultaneously expanding their web of networking supports. **Reflection forms** are also available. CO_PLAN

Learning for Mentors / Demonstration Teachers

One of the most powerful potential outcomes of this “intentional sharing of knowledge and practice” is the learning of mentors themselves. It allows for reciprocal learning.

Increases Reflection on Current Practice

- *Develop a greater awareness of one’s personal teaching philosophy; a stronger desire to incorporate more varied learning strategies to reach own students.*
- *Working with protégé can open one up to possibility of growth and to the potential new ideas and can help the mentor become more reflective about own practice.*

Fosters Inspirational Connections with Colleagues

- *A valuable opportunity to make new connections with other teachers, improve relationships, become more aware of the value of other teachers on staff, and more encouraged to share.*

Impacts Teaching Practice and Learning of Students

- *One result of being a classroom observation /demonstration teacher is the opportunity to share effective practices and reflect on the one’s use of high yield strategies in order to improve student learning in own classroom.*

EFFECTIVE TEACHING

The following chart reflects the collated ideas of central staff and demonstration teachers and highlights some of the key elements observable in Toronto District School Board demonstration classrooms.

EFFECTIVE TEACHING IS INCLUSIVE, INSTRUCTIONALLY PRECISE, ATTRIBUTES-BASED, AND LEARNING-FOCUSED.

Big idea

Inclusive

What the teacher does

Fosters authentic connections with all students.

What it looks like

Welcoming, safe, and caring environment where students feel free to take risks.

A sense of joy in the classroom.

Students feel cared for and valued.

Strong relationships are evident among teachers, students, community, colleagues, parents, and caregivers.

Mutual respect is a defining characteristic of the teacher-student relationship and student-student relationships.

Instructionally precise

Differentiates instructional practices.

Relentless, intentional, high-yield strategies are used to reach all students.

Effective assessment practices for learning (ongoing teacher reflection, frequent monitoring of student progress, adjusting teaching and learning structures and content based on student input and data).

Open-ended learning tasks that require critical thinking are evident.

Flexibility of instructional strategies and structures based on student needs.

Students reflect about their abilities and learning and set goals for improvement.

Teachers collaborate and engage in ongoing, job-embedded professional learning to refine instructional practice.

Attributes-based

Purposefully seeks out of the strengths and attributes of all students.

Culturally relevant and responsive pedagogy using practices that reflect the social realities of students.

Focus is on the learner and understanding the learning strengths and needs of each student.

High expectations for all students.

Purposeful student collaboration.

Students make choices about their learning.

Learning is meaningful — connected to the students' real world.

Learning-focused environment

Uses classroom environment as a “second teacher.”

Anchor charts, student work samples, and other cuing and reinforcing strategies to scaffold and support student learning.

Responsibility for classroom

environment and learning is shared
between the teacher and students.

Students actively engaged in
constructing knowledge and learning
from and with each other in addition to
the teacher.

Students use each other as resources
to support their learning.

Information communications
technologies are used as a learning
tool to engage, support, extend and
deepen learning.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS PREPARATION

ESTABLISHING LEARNING GOALS:

A core element of observation of classroom teaching is the opportunity for each participant to connect with the staff member guiding the visit and share their specific learning goals for the day.

Elements of a Goal Setting Conversation

ESTABLISHING TRUST & RAPPORT:

Trust and rapport is foundational to any mentoring relationship and as a Guide there are some simple yet powerful things you can do for build trust during the initial goal setting conversation.

- Be “present” - Turn off your Blackberry or better yet don't bring it
- Apply the elements of effective listening - Attending Fully / Non-Verbal Encouragement /
- Pausing & Paraphrasing / Reflecting Feelings
- Position yourself as a Learner - Share your own learning goals for the classroom visit

GOAL SETTING QUESTIONS:

The questions below are not meant to be a check list but are intended to provide a framework for the conversation you facilitate prior to entering the classroom.

- What specific learning goals do you have for this day?
- What specific areas would you like to focus on during the morning observation?
- What do you anticipate potentially learning from the students themselves?
- How do you think conducting a classroom observation will impact your teaching practice
- and the learning of your students?

Preparation for Classroom Observation

Before Visit:

Some topics I would like to discuss are....

My goals for the day are..

Once this has been established, please ensure that you make personal contact by email or phone to the teacher to identify your goals for the day.

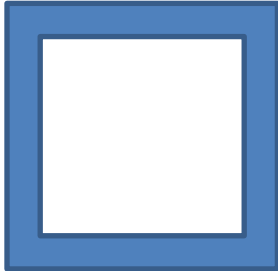
After Visit:

During the session I observed....

As a result of the observation experience I intend to...

OBSERVATION TOOL - SHAPE REFLECTION

The shapes below are provided as a framework to record personal thoughts and insights and as prompts for further discussion, sharing, collaboration and action planning.



What is “squaring” with me (i.e. validating my prior understanding)?



What questions are still “circling” around in my mind at this point?



What am I observing that could form the “base” of future action?

ACTION PLANNING - HERE'S WHAT / SO WHAT / NOW WHAT

Thinking about your learning goals and what you've experienced today, what concrete ideas and strategies can you apply to your teaching context? Record your ideas below.

HERE'S WHAT? <i>What I noticed in the classroom?</i>	SO WHAT? <i>Implications for my teaching practice and the learning of my students?</i>	NOW WHAT? <i>What are my next steps? Next Day / Next Week / Next Month</i>

Evaluating the Impact of Professional Learning

Reactions

- Did you like it?

Learning

- What did you learn?

Organizational Support

- What structures exist that will support systemic implementation?
(importance of Principal, Mentorship, Coaching support)

Application of Knowledge and Skill

- Evidence of implementation, need for follow up

Impact on Student Learning

- Multiple Indicators

Nice



Critical

Adapted from Guskey, T. (2000), Evaluating professional development. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press

ACTION PLANNING - FOLLOWUP

POWERFUL DESIGNS FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

Below are brief summaries of powerful designs that may be of assistance as you collaboratively plan and implement your action plan.

Action Research

A process through which educators examine their own practice, systematically and carefully, using the techniques of research. (a cycle of posing questions, gathering data, reflection, and deciding on a course of action)

Co-planning / Co-teaching (Lesson Study)

A cycle of instructional improvement focused on collaborative planning, teaching, observation, debriefing, reflection and revision of actual lessons.

Demonstration Classroom Learning

Small groups of teachers experience intentional, guided and focused observation of teaching and learning in an actual classroom, followed by de-briefing, action planning, and support for implementation from a program team member.

Mentoring

Developing the internal capacity for learning and growth of a protégé via consulting (offering support and providing resources); collaborating (creating challenge and encouraging growth); and coaching (facilitating professional vision).

Moderated Marking

Collaborative assessment of student work based on predetermined criteria with the explicit purpose developing consistent understanding of the standards of achievement. Participants then use this understanding to inform their instructional practices in order to improve student learning.

SCALING QUESTIONS

- On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being the worst morning you've had and 10 being the best, how was this morning for you?
- Oh a <e.g. 6> - What made it a 6?
- How might you bump it up a notch to a 7? (specific ideas)
- Continue with Coaching stance or shift to Consultant or Collaborator based on needs

Using Scaling Questions to Debrief

To begin the afternoon debriefing / action planning I consistently use Scaling Questions to process the Demonstration Teacher's impression of the morning. The slide above is the basic map I use for the conversation before opening things up to the questions and observations of the visiting teachers. What I find powerful about this tool are the underlying assumptions described below:

Attributes Based Approach

A purposeful seeking out of strengths is at the heart of this idea. The Demonstration Teacher will have given their challenges and successes considerable thought prior to speaking with you and the conversation is very informative and revealing to the visiting teachers.

Islands of Competence

By asking about what were the positive things you ensure the debriefing conversation begins with a success.

Even a 1 is better than a 0!

Ownership resides with the Demonstration Teacher

Your impressions and those of the visiting teachers are set aside, allowing the reflections and insights of the Demonstration Teacher to shine through.

Flexibility of Stance & Role

As a skilled Guide / Mentor you may choose to continue in the coaching stance or shift to consultant or collaborator, based on the direction of the conversation and the needs of the group.

Adapted from: McConkey, N (2002). Solving School Problems: Solution-Focused Strategies for Principals, Teachers and Counsellors. Alberta: Solution Talk Press