Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Peer Coaching
Observer as Coach

Developed in the field by educators.

Receiving real feedback can be threatening to the receiver, therefore **an important principle in this process is that at all times the person who is being observed is the one who is in control of the situation.**

Guidelines

1. Each person should choose the person with whom they will work. They should agree to take turns being the observer and the observed.

2. The pair should establish ground rules for giving and receiving feedback. For example: “Our observation data will remain confidential”; “We will meet to follow up on the observation within 24 hours of the observation.”

3. The person asking for feedback specifies the areas in which they want feedback. For example: “Track the kinds of questions I ask (are they memory questions, or do they require evaluation)”; “Do I give enough time for students to answer?”; “Does student gender impact how many questions I ask them?”

4. The observer, armed with a short list of what to look for from the person being observed, comes and watches the class or meeting for a short time (15-20 minutes at first, longer as the pair becomes more comfortable with both observation and feedback).

5. The two people meet afterwards — *undisturbed*. During this meeting:
   - the partners should sit with the data between them.
   - the observed should refocus on the questions they asked. That is, reflect on the questions in light of the data brought back by the observer.
   - **the observer should share the things they saw, heard, and tracked rather than what they thought about them.** Allowing the observer to evaluate or judge the observed will poison the process quickly.
   - there should be some talk of what did and didn’t happen and how the observed could make it happen next time.
   - the observed should encourage the observer to reflect on the relevance of the data to the questions.
   - both observer and observed should watch for defensive behavior.
   - the observer should check for signals to see if the other has had enough.

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