

Lesson Study Protocol

The following protocol guidelines are meant to facilitate the lesson observation and debriefing process. Although these guidelines are meant to make these activities more constructive and efficiently organized, they are not meant to minimize the critical or reflective nature of the feedback session¹.

❖ Observing the lesson:

1. The observers, including the teachers who helped plan the lesson, should NOT interfere with the natural process of the lesson (e.g., by helping students with a problem). However, observers are permitted to circulate around the classroom during seatwork, as well as communicate with students for clarifying purposes only (e.g., if they could not clearly hear what a student was saying). Otherwise, observers should stand to the back and sides of the classroom.
2. It is a good idea for observers to note their observations on the lesson plan itself. This procedure will not only help observers focus on the goals and activities of the lesson, but also help them organize their feedback for later.
3. It is also a good idea for observers to distribute observations among themselves. For example, a few clusters of observers could watch assigned groups of students, another observer (usually one of the planning teachers) could keep time, etc. The teacher should also prepare for this observation by distributing seating charts among the observers (if seating charts are not available, s/he could place nametags on each student), so that observers can conveniently refer to the children by name when discussing their observations and sharing their feedback.

❖ Preparing for the feedback session:

1. Instead of discussing the lesson immediately after it has been taught, the entire group should take a break to relax and gather their thoughts.
2. The group who planned the lesson should assign roles among themselves in order to help keep the discussion focused and on track. These roles include: moderator/ facilitator (usually a member of the planning group besides the teacher who taught the lesson), timekeeper, and recorder(s).
3. The teachers who planned the lesson should sit together at the front of the room in panel formation during the feedback session. The purpose of this setup is to emphasize the idea that the entire group (not just the teacher who taught the lesson) is receiving the feedback.

¹ Some of the suggestions described in this document were modeled by Japanese teachers at the Greenwich Japanese School, CT, and are also based on our work with U.S. teachers at Public School #2 in Paterson, NJ and at Community School District #2 in New York City.

❖ **Suggestions for sharing feedback about the lessons:**

1. The moderator/ facilitator should begin the feedback session by (1) outlining the agenda for the discussion (e.g., “first we will hear from the teachers who planned the lesson, and then...”); and by (2) *briefly* introducing the goals of the planning group.
2. The teacher who taught the lesson should have the first opportunity to comment on his/ her reactions to the lesson, followed by the other planning group members. S/he should address what actually occurred during the lesson (e.g., what worked, what did not work, what could be changed about the lesson, etc.).
3. The planning teachers should also raise questions/ issues that were raised during the planning sessions, and describe how these concerns were addressed by the instructional decisions they made for the study lesson. If the feedback session is after the second implementation of a study lesson, the planning members should clarify what changes were made between the two lessons, and how these changes related to the goals of the lesson.
4. The planning teachers should direct the observers to give them feedback that is related to the goals of the lesson. The observers can then share feedback about the lesson that helps the planning teachers address these goals. For example, observers could share their suggestions about how they might have done something differently in their own classes. Or, they could ask the planning teachers about their rationales for making certain decisions about the lesson (e.g., “Why did you choose those numbers for that problem?”).
5. When observers share their feedback, they should begin on a positive note by thanking the teacher who taught the lesson and discussing what they liked about the lesson. Observers should then share critical feedback by supporting their statements with concrete evidence. For example, they could comment on specific observations from this particular lesson (e.g., “I saw student X do this...”), or make suggestions that draw upon their own experiences (e.g., “When I taught a similar lesson, I did (blank) differently because...”).
6. Each observer should comment on a specific aspect of the lesson, and then give other observers the opportunity to comment on this point or related aspects of the lesson. This procedure prevents the feedback session from becoming dominated by one observer, and allows others to share their insights. If an observer would like to share something that is not being discussed at that point, s/he can write it down for later.
7. Similarly, the teacher(s) who planned/ taught the lesson should wait until a few comments about a particular aspect of a lesson have been received before responding to the observers. This waiting etiquette prevents the discussion from becoming a point-volleying session, and allows all participants to voice and absorb the feedback in a reflective manner. In addition, the moderator should be responsible for proactively keeping the debriefing session on track.
8. The timekeeper should remind the group when time is running short, so that the group can meaningfully wrap up their debriefing session. If an outside advisor is present, the feedback session should end with general comments from that person.