The Power of Observation

Tonya Ward Singer
COURAGEOUS LEARNING
www.tonyasinger.com
mail@tonyasinger.com
Twitter: @TonyaWardSinger

Learning Forward Webinar
March 19th, 2015

Observation Inquiry at a Glance

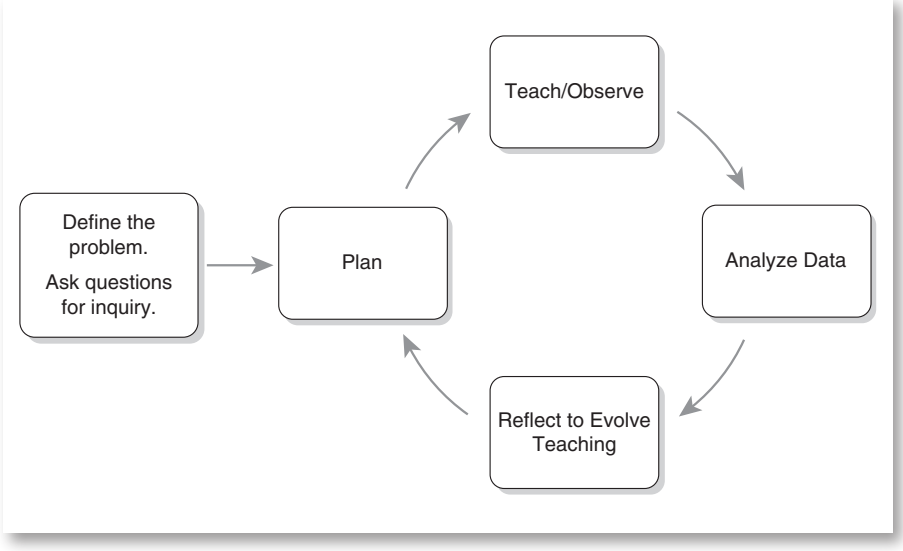
Teams: Three to eight colleagues that teach the same grade level, subject area, or share a common focus form a team.

Focus: Teams identify a problem of practice (POP) they are driven to address together to make significant impact on student engagement and learning.

Launch: Facilitators launch the process with 6 to 9 professional learning hours to help participants

- build buy-in and trust;
- identify a data-driven focus;
- plan pre/postassessment;
- learn and practice protocols;
- schedule logistics; and
- plan the first lesson.

Inquiry cycle: In a school year, teams engage in four or five half-days of inquiry around live lessons, each scheduled about one month apart and taught by a different member of the team. In each inquiry cycle, one teacher teaches a lesson the team has planned while observers take notes on student actions and speech relevant to the POP. Using a nonevaluative protocol, the team discusses and analyzes student learning. They build on insights to set individual and team goals and to plan the next lesson for inquiry.



Copyright © 2015 by Tonya Ward Singer. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Opening Doors to Equity: A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Leaning* by Tonya Ward Singer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com. Workshop participants may copy for non-commercial use.

Compare Observation Data

Compare the following descriptions of the same moment of time in a lesson. How are they similar or different? Which are the most formative about students? Which reveal the potential impact of instructional scaffolds?

Teacher used think-pair-share.	All students took turns talking to partners.
Students used academic language.	One student said, "Based on the illustration, I infer the dog will go with the policeman."
Using a sentence frame (underlined), one student said: "Based on the illustration, I infer the dog will go with the policeman."	Partners each said one idea using the sentence frame, then stopped talking.

Copyright © 2015 Tonya Ward Singer. All rights reserved.

APPENDIX B

Easy Protocol Reference

DEBRIEF A LESSON

Describe

1. Reread your notes, and choose five details relevant to the high-leverage challenge area and/or teacher's observation priorities.
2. Write each detail on a self-stick note.
3. Share your details with the team without adding any interpretation or judgment.

Tips

- The details are "talking chips." After sharing yours, listen until all others have shared.
- Avoid using adjectives that reflect positive or negative interpretation.
- If you hear a general or evaluative statement, ask, "What's the evidence?" "What student action did you see that lead to you that interpretation?"

Organize

1. Silently reread the different details on self-stick notes, and think of how to group similar data.
2. Collaborate to cluster the notes into groups or categories that illuminate trends.

Tips

- Group evidence in ways that help you answer team inquiry questions.
- Not all data clusters in trends. A piece of evidence may stand alone.
- Be open to diverse perspectives in how to organize the data. This is an open-ended task, and the actual organization is less important than the insights we gain from the data. Begin the next step of writing generalizations to capture all ideas.

Generalize

1. Make generalizations from the data about student actions, understandings, and abilities demonstrated in the lesson.

2. Choose a team member to write generalization statement on the board or chart paper.

   Few students . . . Some students . . . Most students . . . All students . . .

   2/20 students . . . No girls . . . When asked to _____, most students . . .

Tips

- Use qualifiers like "few," "some," or "all" to align generalizations to how many students participate in the lesson tasks.

Link Cause and Effect

1. Have each team member star up to three generalizations that are their top priorities to discuss as a team. Begin with the items that have stars, and address the others only if there is time and team interest.
2. For each generalization the team wants to repeat (e.g., student success), collaborate to identify instructional actions that directly lead to this outcome. The purpose is to articulate together how to replicate the success in other contexts.
3. For each generalization that represents a student challenge, brainstorm instructional actions the team can take to address that challenge in any classroom. Use copies of Note-Taking Template: Brainstorming Solutions to take notes.

Fifth, plan the next lesson

Tips

- For Step 2, think about actions observed in this lesson, actions that preceded this lesson, and actions any team member has seen achieve the same result.
- When addressing challenges, don't give feedback to the teacher who taught the lesson. Instead, talk about how to address the challenge when it comes up in any classroom. Ask, "What can *we* do to ensure students succeed with that challenge?"

Finally, set individual and team goals.

Copyright © 2015 by Tonya Ward Singer. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Opening Doors to Equity: A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Leaning* by Tonya Ward Singer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com.

Note-Taking Template: Brainstorming Solutions

Team: _____ Date: _____

1. Write one generalization that reflects a challenge the team wants to address together.

Challenge: _____

2. Brainstorm ways to address this challenge in classrooms:

3. Identify idea(s) to incorporate into the next team-planned lesson. Write a star next to these prioritized idea(s), and then use these notes as a reminder when planning the next lesson together.

Copyright © 2015 by Tonya Ward Singer. All rights reserved. Reprinted from *Opening Doors to Equity: A Practical Guide to Observation-Based Professional Leaning* by Tonya Ward Singer. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin, www.corwin.com.