Purposeful Scribing of an Observation

Evidence from classroom observation may be collected by coaches in any format, regardless of format, it must be comprehensive and objective. The evidence should paint an accurate picture of what is happening in the classroom, while being factual and judgement-free. There should be objective statements that tell the story of the lesson without reflecting what the observer thought of the lesson.

LOW- INFERENCE NOTETAKING

Low-inference note-taking is a straightforward method of recording classroom observations. By focusing solely on the observable and measurable, it reduces the potential for bias and interpretation.

The following are essential questions to consider when low-inference note-taking:

- Are all students engaged in the work of the lesson from start to finish?
- Are students working with content aligned to the appropriate standards for their grade and subject area?
- Are all students responsible for doing the thinking in this classroom?
- Do all students demonstrate that they are learning?

RUNNING RECORDS

One strategy for taking low-inference notes is to create a running record of what you are observing in the classroom. The goal of a running record is to take objective notes that describe exactly what actions teachers and students are taking. Running records can be formatted like the example below:

T = teacher S = student Ss = students

Time	Teacher	Student
1:23	T: claps out a rhythm to get students' attention.	Eighteen out of 24 students clap the same rhythm, stop talking in their groups, and turn to track the teacher.
1:25	T: [add description of the transition procedure] to collect student packets; procedure takes less than 30 seconds to complete.	Ss: pass their packets down the row and the student at the end of the row hands packets to the teacher.
1:26	T: [add description of what the teacher says/does]	Ss: silently track the PPT
1:27	T: "Please answer the question on your Exit Ticket and put it in my basket as you leave."	Ss: Students record answers to the question: "Which events precipitated the Fall of

Time	Teacher	Student
		Rome?" on exit ticket and each student walks to the basket and submits exit ticket

The notes above paint a clear and objective picture of what occurred in this classroom. Because the observer tracked the time and used specific details, such as quotes from the teacher, a reader can get a clear sense of what is happening. It is also important to note that observers examine student work and listen to students talk which may result in small gaps in the running record.

AVOIDING THE PITFALLS OF RUNNING RECORDS

Considerations to avoid common pitfalls that occur when collecting running records:

Pitfall	Solution
Using opinion statements instead of objective statements.	**Distinguish between low-inference statements and opinions:** Identify key words that give away subjectivity: i.e., "I think," or "I feel."
Using vague quantifying statements.	**Replace vague quantifiers by capturing more specific evidence:** i.e., "a lot of students raised their hands" vs. "17 of 20 students raised their hands."
Using "jargon" or "edu-speak".	**Pair evidence with edu-speak:** Rather than say, "You differentiated by scaffolding questions during the mini-lesson," identify the actual questions that the teacher asked. "*What is the name of this shape? How is it different from a square or rectangle? Where in real life have you seen this shape?* Then, ask how these questions are examples of scaffolding during the mini lesson."

EXPECTATIONS FOR SCRIBING

1. Capture and label *actions* and *verbatim quotes* from the teacher and students
2. Note each instructional *activity* and *transition*
3. Include *timestamps* in your notes, so you can reconstruct the *flow* of the lesson
4. Note the students who *are not* talking or getting the teacher's attention are doing too
5. Save questions for face-to-face discussion (Actions and dialogue can be overlooked or not captured when a coach is spending time detailing questions)
6. Defer from giving ratings or evaluating what you saw and heard during the lesson

SCRIBING WITH EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES IN MIND

Time	Observation	Tags/Exemplar EBP/Area to build
12:47pm	The teacher prompts the students to enter the classroom and follow the entry procedure. T: "Put your items at your desk. Come directly to the carpet. Sit quietly and wait for the first direction. All of you are capable and have done a great job of this at one point so let's do it today." All students entered the classroom and began going to their desks. Some students began to unpack their items, while others put their backpacks at their desk and immediately transitioned to the carpet by the teacher.	Identity and Agency - A recognition of one's strengths.
12:48pm	T: "I appreciate "Student" for putting their backpack at their desk and coming to the carpet." 1 student remained at their desk instead of coming to the carpet.	Identity and Agency - A recognition of one's strengths.
12:52pm	T: Begins Number Talk and states the problem 37+50. "Show me a thumb's up when you have an answer." T: Puts her thumb up. T: calls on a S for the answer. T: acknowledges the answer and calls on another S. S: Replies with the same answer of 87. T: laughs and says, "It's the same answer." T: "Can someone share what strategy they used to solve the problem?" T: Calls on a S and the S shares their strategy with the class.	Representation – Acquiring knowledge and skills to teach students how to use a variety of concrete and pictorial representations to model mathematical ideas
12:58pm	T: Asks the class to solve the next problem which is 87-13. The teacher calls on two separate students and both give the same incorrect answer. T: "There is a time for silliness and a time for focus." T: Models deep breathing and tells student to copy the deep breathing while she counts. T: "5-4-3-2-1 This is how we return to calm." T: "Everyone remain calm, so you don't lose a marble." T: Can S share their strategy with the class? I will write it on the board while you	Cognitive Regulation – Modeling of deep breathing - Recognizes when problems occur and takes effective steps toward a solution. Social Skills - Contributes to a team to reach a common goal or outcome. Representation – Students have access to a variety of representations based on peer examples

	explain." T: Can someone show me a different strategy that they used?" S: "I will. I used 80+10 and then added 7+3. Then I added 90+10. That equals 100." T: Recorded the answer on the board as the S talked. T: "I love when S shared, but I want everyone to be quiet and show me and your classmates respect during the lesson."	