



## Five-minute Observations Rationale and Procedures

### Who uses the Five-minute Observation Form?

- Principals—to survey the overall status of the implementation
- Coordinators—to develop inservice topics based on shared needs of teachers
- Coaches—to determine which teachers need assistance, and in what areas

### Why Use the Five-minute Observation Form? How often? When?

The Five-minute Observation Form provides a broad overview of how a classroom is functioning. It focuses the observer on required fundamental elements. Without the basics established, assignments intended to refine a teacher's presentation skills would be premature.

- ideally conducted during the first five minutes of a lesson
- allows quick screening across the building of how well the classrooms are running (or of any critical problems) at the start of the year
- helps monitor if basics of implementation (grouping, data, etc...) are established
- helps guide a brief classroom visit for maintenance anytime during school year
- provides a structure for follow-up interaction with teachers
- helps monitor that basics remain in place through the end of the school year

### What happens next?

Five-minute Observations must be followed by some form of verbal or written feedback. An observer may choose to use any or all of the following as appropriate.

#### *After observation, leave:*

- brief note about two or three positive things observed
- brief reminder about time and place for follow-up conference
- copy of the Five-minute Observation Form

#### *Location:*

- teacher's classroom
- teacher's mailbox
- other prearranged location

#### *Form of follow-up:*

- brief follow-up meeting
- in-depth conference
- written instructions

(Five-minute Observation Form can be used to guide verbal or written feedback, indicate if old assignment was met, and indicate new assignment to be completed.)



## A. Conducting Five-minute Observations

Sometimes problems are not identified from written records or teacher reports. Instead they are identified by observing in a classroom while the teacher is working with students. Generally, an observer can identify critical problems within a 5-minute observation. Especially for teachers new to DI, problems tend to occur at the beginning of the lesson, are often associated with transitions, management of activities, or a structural factor, and do not tend to improve during the lesson.

An observer should initially see teachers at the beginning of an activity. If teachers are not positive with students, do not have materials ready, have seating arrangement problems, or do not have established routines for those working at their seats and so cannot concentrate on the small group, you will see these problems during the first five-minutes of group.

## B. Preparing for Observations

Before entering a teacher's classroom, several preparation steps may be helpful. If the observation is planned in advance, you and the teacher have already talked about when you are going to that teacher's classroom. You have obtained the following information about the group to be observed: time for group, program and level, lesson number, and number of students in the group. You have a Five-minute Observation form with you. If you have not planned in advance, be sure you and the teacher have already discussed the possibility that you will visit without preplanning.

## C. Entering and being in the teacher's classroom: The observer's demeanor

Be on time. If you told the teacher a certain time you would be there, then arrive a couple minutes before that time. When you enter a classroom, your demeanor should be as low-key as possible; you do not want to draw students' attention away from the teacher or their work and onto you.

If a student does look up from his/her work, smile, look away, and keep moving, or indicate by pointing that she/he should keep working. Move in a direction away from students who attended to you. Do not move toward those students who were distracted by your entering. Behave in a way that emphasizes how important it is to attend to the teacher or to keep working. It is not important to have students attending to the observer. Instead, walk around and attend to students who are working hard. Reinforce them, attend to what they are doing, and prompt them to re-examine items they are doing wrong. However, stay away from students who are completing timed tasks.

## Five-Minute Observation Form: Directions for Use

### I. Complete short information section at top of form.

1. Write instructor's name, student grade level(s), and beginning and ending times of observation. Circle T for teacher or TA for Teaching Assistant.
2. Write Program, Level and Lesson Number.
  - Program, or title of series, may be expressed as an abbreviation.
  - Level within a series may be expressed as a number or letter.
  - Examples: Reading Mastery Level II = RM II. Connecting Math Concepts Level D = CMC D. Reasoning & Writing Level B = R&W B. Spelling Mastery A = SM A.

### II. Complete items in box. Place a ✓ or a + sign on the line next to each item you observe.

1. *The subject and lesson you were expecting to see is being taught.*
  - What you observe matches building schedule, teacher's group schedule, and/or teacher's lesson plan.
2. *Number of students in group is appropriate.*
  - Small groups for Distar Arithmetic, CMC K, and Reading Mastery Levels I and II (or the Signature Edition equivalent). General guideline: High = 10-12, Medium = 8-10, and Low = up to 6.
  - Small groups for lower performing or remedial students who require more individual practice.
  - Large groups for upper levels of Reading Mastery, all levels of R&W, CMC, and SM.
3. *Physical arrangement allows students and teachers to hear all parts of the lesson.*
  - Small groups in curved row and able to see teacher's presentation book. Teacher within arm's reach from children and able to see over group to rest of children in room.
  - Large groups at desks facing teacher and able to see visual presentations and hear teacher's voice. Teacher able to see students' faces, hear responses, and move among desks to check independent work.
4. *Students receiving group instruction are attentive and engaged.*
  - Students watch teacher or presentation book.
  - Students respond on signal.
  - Students make appropriate and timely written responses.
5. *Teacher follows the script as written.*
  - Extraneous teacher talk is minimal.
  - Individual turns are implemented as scripted.
  - Students make appropriate and timely written responses.
6. *Teacher corrects when students make errors.*
  - Specified error corrections are implemented as scripted (e.g. the final ✓ rule correction procedure).
7. *Teacher is relying on positive techniques to manage student behavior.*
  - Expectations clearly communicated to students.

- Teacher implements techniques such as effective praise, scanning, and movement around room.
  - Instructional tone is inviting, even, and adjusted to the age and grade levels of students.
  - Teacher responds with enthusiasm to correct responses and appropriate behavior. No nagging, sarcasm.
  - Physical evidence of motivational programs in place (e.g. student/teacher game).
8. *Students doing independent work are on task.*
- Students stay on the job at designated work areas (rather than exhibit out of seat behavior).
  - Students work only on assigned lesson items.
9. *Independent work is corrected and students have done fix-ups.*
- Students have marked red C's and X's (or other symbols) in workbooks.
  - Items originally marked as incorrect redone in red.
  - No uncorrected lesson pages prior to the most recent lesson taught.
10. *Student work is neat and well organized.*
- Students have out on desks only materials needed for lesson currently being taught.
  - Responses in student workbooks have neat handwriting (consistent with students' ability), and pages are without scribbles, drawings, or unnecessary marks in margins or other spaces.
  - Students have and use system for turning in completed work to teacher.
11. *Teacher and student materials are organized and accessible.*
- Students use colored folders, bins, or some other method of quickly accessing and retrieving materials.
  - Teacher and student materials are placed in area where group is taught.
12. *Written records of student performance are posted or accessible.*
- Lesson Progress Chart
  - Mastery Test data
  - Data from daily independent work in each group taught
13. *Thermometer charts are posted and implemented correctly.*
- One thermometer chart for each major subject area: Reading, Math, Language.
  - Charts in use as indicated by strips of colored paper (with cells that are initialed or stamped).
  - Benchmarks for rewards visually indicated with arrows, dates, labels, or other markers.

### **III. Complete follow-up information at bottom of form.**

1. *Write time and date of conference.*
  - Indicate when you will meet with teacher regarding this five-minute observation.
2. *Write follow-up from last visit.*
  - Indicate target skill or assignment teacher was to work on since your last observation, if any.
  - Example: "Last assignment: data and written records. Good follow up on organizing your mastery test data and LPCs. Documents are now up-to-date."

3. *Write date and procedure for follow-up.*

- Indicate new assignment, if any, and specify target date and method of completion, if any.
- Examples of assignments: “grouping,” “positive management techniques,” “thermometer charts.”
- Examples of methods: “Meet with DI coordinator to regroup math students,” or “5-Minute Observation next Tuesday at 1:00.”

4. *Write specific structural or training solutions.*

- Structural solutions are efficient, non-training remedies that permit the teacher to avoid the problem, such as a new setting, alternate procedure, or a different teacher for group.
- Example: “Let’s move this group back ten lessons and use more part firming.”
- Training solutions involve working with teachers to progressively improve their skills. They may take place in the classroom, in individual training sessions, or at inservice.
- Example: “Observe Mr. Roberts’s reading group for three days this week. List the positive techniques you see him use to manage student behavior. Incorporate two or more into your teaching before I observe again.”

5. *Sign the form.*

# Five-Minute Observation

School: \_\_\_\_\_ Name: \_\_\_\_\_ T TA  
Grade: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
Start Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Program/Level: \_\_\_\_\_  
End time: \_\_\_\_\_ Lesson: \_\_\_\_\_

## During a five-minute observation, watch for the following:

_____	The subject and lesson you were expecting to see is being taught.
_____	Number of students in group is appropriate.
_____	Physical arrangement allows students and teachers to see and hear all parts of the lesson.
_____	Students receiving group instruction are attentive and engaged.
_____	Teacher follows the script as written.
_____	Teacher corrects when students make errors.
_____	Teacher relies on positive techniques to manage student behavior.
_____	Students doing independent work are on-task.
_____	Independent work is corrected and students have done fix-ups.
_____	Student work is neat and well organized.
_____	Teacher and student materials are organized and accessible.
_____	Written records of student performance are posted or accessible.
_____	Thermometer charts are posted and implemented correctly.

Time and date of  
Conference:

Follow-up from last visit:

Date and procedure for  
Follow-up:

Specific structural or training solutions:

Signature

