

Equity Toolkit: Inclusive Teaching and Learning

CREATING AND MAINTAINING A CULTURALLY
RELEVANT CLASSROOM COMMUNITY



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

<http://masterplan.highered.colorado.gov/equitytoolkit>



OBSERVATION FOCUSING ON LANGUAGE/INTERACTIONS

This protocol should only be conducted with at least two or more people participating in order to document language used in each other's class.

The goal of this observation is to practice being attentive to language and interactions seen/heard in the classroom using a race-conscious lens.

Step 1: Arrive at your colleague's class at least 15 minutes early so that you may start the observation before the class begins. Bring a lot of scratch paper or an electronic device, such as a laptop, to take notes. (Note that a laptop may be more convenient since we'll be using this language later)

Step 2: Write down as much of the language that you hear as you can. This includes language you hear from your colleague and from the students in the class. You may also write down descriptions of the interactions you see, but be sure to use descriptive (not interpretive) language. For example, "the teacher sat down next to the student" rather than "the teacher made the student feel comfortable". Be sure to take notes social identities of the participants where possible.

Step 3: That's It! Refer below for the instructions for coding next.

OBSERVATION FOCUSING ON LANGUAGE/INTERACTIONS

The goals of this observation protocol are:

1. To make visible the interactions/language that occur in our classes
2. To practice paying attention to interactions/language
3. To reflect upon the potential for our interactions/language to impact the experience students have in our classes.

Step 1: Descriptive Coding

Code the interactions/language you recorded using the descriptive words listed below. The purpose of this step is to make visible the language used during common experiences in the class, such as how directions are given or questions responded to. Note that more than one word may apply. You may also create a new descriptive category if you notice a pattern that does not fit within the given list.

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CODE WORD	WHEN TO USE
Directions	<p>Interactions/Language in which students are asked/told to do something. Examples of this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Let’s get out our textbooks and turn to page 57.” • “We’ll take a break now. Be back in 10 minutes.” • “Take a moment to share with your neighbor.”
Support	<p>Interactions/Language in which an offer of support is made, or the resources available to students are discussed. Examples of this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Does anyone have any questions?” • “If you need help, I’ll be here after class.” • “Remember that I always upload the class slides into D2L.”
Response	<p>Interactions/Language that directly follows a question or comment from a student. Note that this may come from the teacher or another student. Examples of this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Yes, you’ve got it,” or “Not quite right.” • “So what I hear you saying is…”
Student Knowledge	<p>Interactions/Language when students are given the opportunity to share their knowledge. Examples of this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How should I approach the next part of this problem?” • Conducting a brainstorming session in which students identify the ways in which the topic impacts their lives.
Teacher Knowledge	<p>Interactions/Language when the teacher shares their knowledge, the knowledge in the text or other source. Examples of this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presenting notes using PowerPoint while students take notes. • “This method that I’m about to show you is very helpful.”
Interpersonal	<p>Interactions/Language that is interpersonal (not related to the subject matter of the class). Examples may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How was your weekend?” • Learning about students and their families
Other	

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Step 2: Interpretive Coding

Review the interactions/language you recorded a second time using the code words listed below. The purpose of this step is to reflect upon the potential for our interactions/language to impact the experience students have in our classes. More than one word may apply. You may also create a new descriptive category if you notice a pattern that does not fit within the given list.

CODE WORD	WHEN TO USE
Validation	Interactions/Language that communicate(s) whether there is value in the knowledge/skills students have. Examples of this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “Great question!”• “We’ve gone over this already and need to move on.”
Expectations	Interactions/Language that communicate(s) the practices and behaviors students should adopt. Examples of this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “For every hour you spend in class, it is customary to spend an additional two hours studying outside of class.”• “When I grade the exam, I’m going to be looking for how you handled this step, in particular.”
Transparency	Interactions/Language that make(s) visible the rules/norms of the class, or the underlying rationale why students are asked to do what they do. Example of this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Explaining why students are asked to analyze a primary source.• “It is not just my job to teach you history, I also consider it my job to teach how to think critically about the present.”
Positionality	Interactions/Language that say(s) something about the roles students/teachers play. Examples of this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• “I’m here to help you guys. It’s my job.”• “If you have any questions, send me an email. I’ll reply within 24 hours, unless it is over the weekend.”
Belonging	Interactions/Language that communicate(s) whether students are invited to bring their authentic selves into the class. Examples of this may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Greeting students as they enter the class• Showing a concern for the well-being of students

Step 3: Reflection Questions

The purpose of this step is to reflect upon the potential for our interactions/language to impact the experience students have in our classes. Find a time to meet with the person you observed and, after reviewing your coding of the observation, discuss the prompts below. Note that we will discuss these prompts at the next session of EILA, so be sure to write some notes.

- Whose knowledge was most valued during the observation, and how was that communicated?
- What practices and behaviors were the students asked to adopt? What were students told was the reason those practices and behavior should be adopted?
- How were student/teacher roles defined? Were students positioned as a critical part of the learning process, or were they positioned more as receptacles of information?
- Who were the students asked to become during their time in class?

This protocol is inspired by the inquiry tools developed by the Center for Urban Education at USC's Rossier School of Education