

Assessing Environments with the Environmental Rating Scales

Group Leader Guidelines

Each group leader will have 2 – 4 institute participants in a small group to complete a practice observation followed by a debriefing session. The group leader's role is to help make the observation a successful experience for each participant while protecting the teacher(s) and children from disruption. Following are some suggestions for making the observation and debriefing run smoothly.

Before you go out to observe

1. Check to make sure that someone in your group has been assigned to drive and has the directions for getting to the observation site.
2. Make sure each participant has the appropriate scale, a scoresheet, and a sharp #2 pencil with an eraser. A pad to take notes is also helpful.
3. Carry some spare pencils and scoresheets with you in case they are needed.
4. Briefly review the classroom observation guidelines with the group. Make sure you stress that everything they see must be kept confidential. They may not mention anything they observe or hear discussed later in the debriefing to anyone else.
5. Remind the group that each person must observe independently and not compare scores with anyone else before the debriefing session.
6. Ask the group to stay together so you will all see relatively the same things (e.g., all stay indoors or go outdoors together).
7. Whenever possible, questions should be avoided during the observation. However, if anyone has an urgent question during the observation you should go out of the room to talk.
8. Remind everyone to wear her/his nametag.
9. Explain to your group that they have been authorized only to observe in the particular classroom assigned to them. They may not tour the facility or observe in other classrooms.

During the observation

1. Greet the director, introduce yourself and the group members, and identify the training program you are coming from.
2. When you enter the room, greet the teacher and explain that you will be observing and will try not to disrupt her or the children. Tell her that this is part of a course and that all of you are there to learn how to use an observation instrument, not to evaluate her classroom.
3. While you are observing, remain aware of the other members of your group assuring that everyone is practicing good observer etiquette.

4. Make sure your group has completed the observation by the appointed time.
5. Prior to departing the room, be sure to thank the teacher for allowing you to visit. If feasible, thank the director, also.
6. Since any discussion before the debriefing may influence an individual's independent scores, do not discuss what you have observed, while in the car or during lunch.
7. Before debriefing, some of the participants in your group may need additional time to complete their preliminary scoring. If so, allow those individuals time to complete their scoring before you start the debriefing session.

The Debriefing Session

1. After lunch, return to your training room and find a table for your observation group.
2. The first part of the debriefing session should provide an opportunity for participants to question you as you pretend to be the lead teacher of the group you have observed.
3. Have the participants ask questions in a systematic way in numerical order. Everyone needs to hear the answers in order to have the same information as a basis for scoring.
4. Debriefing, or comparing and discussing your scores can occur only after all the items have been assigned a score by each participant
5. Complete the heading on the Interrater Reliability Summary Sheet.
6. Put the initials of each participant at the head of one column, with your initials last.
7. When all items are scored, have each person fill in her/his scores, either by saying the scores out loud in succession for each item or by having each person write down his/her scores in the proper column.
8. Discuss first those items with scores that are more than 1 point apart. In your discussion try to get consensus on the correct score by reading the item and notes and reviewing what each person saw. Remember, the group leader does not always have to be right. Try to keep a non-confrontational, open feeling in the group.
9. There will be a chance to ask questions of the authors in a general session in case of particular problems that cannot be resolved.

Confidentiality

1. Because confidentiality is of utmost importance, we repeat that everything you see or hear must not be shared with anyone outside the group.
2. If you or any of the participants have concerns about what was observed, please tell one of the institute staff.

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