



Teachers are better informed and affirmed when the coach can point to specific instances of instruction rather than to generalizations.

Gather **artifacts** of instruction not descriptions of instruction.

When observing instruction and gathering information in your *LCS Observation Field Book*, remember to collect actual artifacts from the observation, not descriptions of the action.

For example, if the teacher is posing questions to the class...

Write... TQ: "Who can give me one example of a simple machine found in your home?"

Rather than writing... "Teacher asks questions about simple machines."

Or, if students are solving math problems at their seat...

Write... $2 + 7 + 6 + 11 = 26$

Rather than writing... "Students are solving addition problems at their seat"

Or, if there is a goal statement written on the white board, simply record what is written...

Write... Goal: Students will describe and compare the three geographical regions of North Carolina. Rather than writing... "Teacher has a clear learning goal."

There are compelling reasons why gathering actual artifacts of instruction is preferable to gathering descriptions of instruction.

First, all observers have inherent bias, are limited by their current knowledge base, and are influenced by prior observations. Descriptions are more susceptible to this kind of observer error and so do not produce as accurate an account of the observation.

Second, it is difficult to pay full attention to both collecting data and interpreting it simultaneously. By collecting only artifacts and delaying interpretation and analysis until later, the observer is able to do a better job of both collecting and then interpreting the data.

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These notes are supplements to "The Skillful Observation and Coaching Laboratory." The SOCL is a job-embedded professional development experience that grows expertise in classroom observation and teacher coaching.



From Dictionary.com

ar·ti·fact (noun)

1. *An object produced or shaped by human craft, especially a tool, weapon, or ornament of archaeological or historical interest.*
2. *Something viewed as a product of human conception or agency rather than an inherent element.*

Last, a coaching session, based on the observation, is much more compelling when the teacher is presented with actual artifacts of the instruction. Teachers are better informed and affirmed when the coach can point to specific instances of instruction rather than to generalizations.

The coach should say... "Nancy, when you said 'a molecule in the liquid phase is a lot like a student in a crowded hallway during class change', you really helped Jonathan grasp that concept."

Rather than saying... "Nancy, giving students an example of a science concept from their daily lives really helps them grasp the concept."

The first example is much more interesting and instructive than the second. This type of specific feedback would be impossible if, during the observation, the coach did not focus on collecting artifacts rather than descriptions of the instruction.

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