



Getting Started with Peer Observation

What is Peer Observation?

Interviewee

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Teaching School Director

What did your peer observation cycle look like?

From beginning, the very beginning, is that it needs to be set up in a way that's non-threatening, in a supportive way, as a professional development package that's truly supportive, as a given. I mean I'd say a gift, because this is something that is going to help your own professional development and that you're part of it. And I think that needs to be sold in the sense that you really are at the beginning of all of these conversations and part of that setup process so that you feel that this belongs to you. It's not being done to you, you're part of the actual peer observation process, so that's the beginning of the peer observation process.


I think the next stage is to have a group of people who've agreed to do this, a group of teachers, and I think a mixture in this, so varied different subjects. I think to have the same subjects sometime can be narrow. I think to broaden this out it's very good to look at other subjects. For instance, a Maths or Science teacher to be observing a Drama or a Creative Arts teacher, and vice versa, because there's so many ways that these subjects ... you could bring each other's practice into your subject, so that's just the subject side of it.

I think that it's really important that then you're matched up with who you would like to be matched up with, or you identify your need. So, this needs to be on a needs analysis basis. So, a practical example of that was I was teaching good lessons, consistently good. A colleague of mine was consistently excellent, in fact exceptional, and I wanted to see what that looked like, what was the difference between consistently good and consistently excellent. So, therefore I requested to observe that particular teacher's lessons.

And the way that we worked was we had conversations first, that this was not going to be judged in a ... using the systems that we used in any grading way, that it was purely conversational, that it could be written down for support of professional development, but it was purely a support mechanism. I went to observe that particular teacher's lesson and saw the excellence. That teacher came back and observed my lesson and just made notes and then went away to reflect on those notes. And then we met and just reflected and gave me the feedback before they observed me again which gave me the opportunity and the agency to think and reflect about the conversation that we'd just had, and then they came back for another observation and again, discussions were had around what went well and the even better ifs.

What area of development was highlighted by a peer observing your practice?

So, the action that I took away was target questioning. So, I ... a student I would be teaching, I would ask them questions about certain key terms about the subject that I was teaching which was Drama/English, and then they would give me the answer of ... of what I wanted, but it was a surface answer. And so, what was observed in the peer observation was how I was going to get in-depth, you know, to delve into deeper ... that deeper understanding, so to then recount the answer that I'd heard and then, with an open question, try and get further knowledge and understanding from the students that I was working with. And that was the difference between good and outstand- ... and excellent in this particular observation that I



was getting lots of surface answers but needed to delve into more target questioning so that we could develop and take that through and then get other students involved in those conversations.