



# Instructional Development & Evaluation Toolkit 2012-13

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# Introduction and Overview

## Introduction

This packet contains explanations and tools for ongoing instructional development including Peer Observations and Instructional Portfolios. Both components support professional development throughout the year, and support the instructional/job knowledge component of annual performance reviews.

## Objectives

The objectives of the Peer Observations process are:

- to meaningfully connect instruction to work plans and performance evaluations
- to support ongoing instructional development through collegial inquiry, critical reflection and leadership

The objectives of the Instructional Portfolio are:

- to harness and share instructional knowledge and initiatives in direct services
- to support new MLC instructors
- to contribute to a bank of both general activities and CASAS prep activities that will be accessible by all MLC instructors and volunteers
- to support instructional professional development

## Overview of Evaluation, Observations and Portfolios

Observations, portfolio review, and evaluation follow a cycle.

## Observation schedule

### Summer:

Instructor completes general work plan and instructional plan. Goals on the instructional plan may relate to building on strengths, working on areas the instructor would like to become stronger in, or responding to new challenges in the classroom. *At least one goal should be aligned with best teaching practices.*

### Fall

Instructor updates self assessment (if applicable), pre-observation communication, observation visit, and post-observation reflective debrief with peer observer. Instructional plan is updated as needed. All documentation goes into an Instructional Development file.

**Note:** *If you are the observer in your peer observation partnership Fall quarter, schedule an additional observation with St. Paul Literacy Consortium instructional support consultant Suzanne McCurdy.*

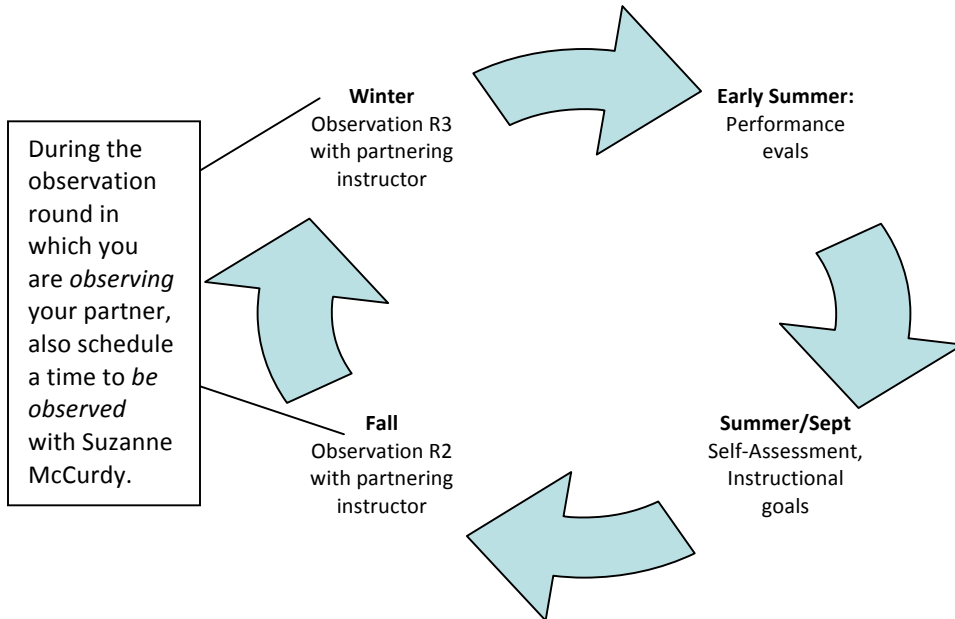
### Winter

Instructor updates self assessment (if applicable), pre-observation communication, observation visit, and post-observation reflective debrief with peer observer. Instructor updates Instructional plan as needed. All documentation goes into an Instructional Development file.

**Note:** If you are the observing Winter quarter, schedule a time to also be observed with St. Paul Literacy Consortium instructional support consultant Suzanne McCurdy.

### Spring

Instructor completes final self-assessment in relationship to instructional plan.  
Instructor and supervisor complete annual performance reviews.



### **Documentation checklists for annual performance evaluations**

Instructional Portfolio – (detailed list on page 4)

- Two months of curriculum (with weekly goals and objectives)  
*Only one month for first-year teachers.*
- Three corresponding annotated activities per curriculum unit (annotation should explain how the activity is used; rationale for activities can be explained during performance evaluation)
- Four routine activities, including **at least two warm-up activities**
- One piece of learner feedback

### Peer Observation Portfolios

- Instructional self-assessment
- Instructional goal-setting sheet, incl. one or more areas of best practice
- Peer observation tools for each observation received
- Peer observation tools for each observation conducted

# Instructional Portfolios 2012-13

## Portfolio process

Over the course of the year, instructors compile portfolios with curriculum, activities, and any additional components desired to demonstrate instructional endeavors and accomplishments.

## Required portfolio components

Curriculum: Each portfolio should include at least two months of curriculum. The primary purpose of this curriculum is to serve primarily as a resource for paid instructors, current and future. Therefore, it is not necessary to include objectives for each day of the month. Each month of curriculum should include:

- Duration
- Learner description (e.g., CASAS range)
- Unit topic or theme
- Unit objectives
- Materials (those featured in your portfolio, and any additional published materials used)
- Alignment with Curriculum Framework: Assessment (required); Instructional Values (Optional); Transitions (Optional)

## Curriculum Activities

- Three annotated <sup>1</sup> activities that correspond to your goals and objectives

## Routine Activities

- Four total routine activities, including at least two that can be used as warm-ups. These activities will become available to coordinators to use in volunteer-led classes, and to the training department for their Tutor Tips.

## Learner Feedback

- Some sort of level-appropriate piece of learner feedback. This can be as simple as having learners circle a happy or sad face at the end of a lesson, or a more complex feedback form or activity. Sample feedback forms (p.14 of the instructional portfolio) are provided.

## **Curriculum standards requirements:**

- Curriculum and activities demonstrate alignment with assessment (minimally through separate test practice activities – ideally through objectives and activities).
- Curriculum and activities demonstrate alignment with one or more *Instructional Values*

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<sup>1</sup> Please annotate your activities with approximately 1-paragraph that explains how you teach the activity. Rationale for including specific steps do not need to be explicit in annotations, but be prepared to explain the purpose of activity steps during performance evaluations.

# Instructor Peer Observations

## Introduction

Reflecting on instruction leads to continued refinement of practice, and the process of inviting an observer into our classrooms allows us to bring more focused attention to a specific area of practice. Serving as a peer observer also sharpens critical reflection, offers us new insights or ideas for our own practice, and supports leadership development.<sup>2</sup>

## Purpose and philosophy

MLC's observation process is designed to support instructional reflection and growth.<sup>3</sup> The documents from your observation process will serve as a talking point in your performance evaluation, and will offer a structure for setting and reviewing goals in collaboration with a supervisor. However constructive feedback given in peer observations will not negatively impact evaluation of instructional performance.

## Peer observation process and features

The peer observation process originates with instructor goals that are set as part of the annual work plan. During fall and in the winter, instructors follow up on and revise/refine instructional goals as desired via three rounds of peer observations and reflective debriefs. The documentation from this process is included in a Peer Observation file, and becomes a central component of documentation for annual performance evaluations.

## Peer observation choices

Option 1: Complete the observation process as laid out in this packet.

Option 2: If desired, complete the more extensive ATLAS peer mentoring program which includes online training, four observation hours, and pre- and post-reflections and five CEUs. See instructional manager with questions.

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<sup>2</sup> Jack Richards, *Reflective Teaching in Second Language Classrooms* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Thomas Farrell, *Reflective Practice in Action* (CA: Corwin Press, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid

## Guidelines for Observations

### 1. **Instructor self-assessment:**

Instructional self assessment supports the spirit of this review process being an instructor-driven, collaborative inquiry between instructors, administrators, and peer observers. Before the observations and pre-observation communication, the instructor reviews the *Best Practices Benchmarks (page 9)*. Instructors may also want to set additional best practice benchmarks in the space provided based on teaching philosophy, or areas of best practices in a more specified area such as low literacy instruction, pre-occupational training or GED instruction. There is also a place for instructors to define any additional indicators desired in areas of research-based best practices not included on the form.

From this self-assessment, instructors should set two goals using *Instructional Goal-Setting Tool (page 11)*. At least one goal should be instructional in nature and be based on either improving or refining a dimension of teaching practice, or reflect a response to new classroom challenges (e.g., level changes, vision impaired learners, etc).

### 2. **Pre-observation communication:**

Instructors and observers communicate to identify areas to focus on in the observation based on instructors' goals. Instructors should inform observers about the goal area(s) s/he would like the observer to focus on, as well as at least one guiding question that s/he would like the observer to consider for the debrief .

**Questions for instructors to consider at this point:** *What kind of feedback would be valuable to me? Concrete ideas about strategies that could support my goals? Another "set of eyes" to offer perspective and/or brainstorm with me on my teaching approach and methods, strengths and challenges? Another perspective to evaluate/integrate into my current goals, practices, and/or teaching philosophy?*

### 3. **Observation visit:**

Observation visits are usually one hour. During the observation, the observer fills out the *Peer Observation Tool (page 12)*. Observers should focus on documenting concrete observations relevant to the instructor's goal(s). Instructor observers are invited to use a question format wherever possible (see *Observation Example, page 13*). Note: Even in the case of an extraordinary lesson, observers should be prepared to offer two concrete suggestions in the instructor's goal area.

### 4. **Post-observation debrief:**

After the observation, the instructor and the observer discuss the observation, using the *Post-Observation Debrief Guidelines and Steps (page 7)*.

### 5. **Refining the Goal-setting document:**

If the observation process the instructional goal changes as a result of the observation or over the course of the year, note this on the *Instructor Goal-Setting Tool (page 11)*.

# Post-Observation Debrief Guidelines and Steps

## Guidelines

### Debrief Process

Observer and instructor discuss observation, assessment, and self-assessment. This is an opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate successes and to collaboratively innovate around areas of challenge.

The debrief conversation is key to making this process reflective. Please consider this discussion an invitation to brainstorm on strategies for building on current successes and responding to challenges. Quality is more important than quantity – this conversation may be brief.

**A note to Observers:** Instructor involvement is critical in a collaborative reflection process. General evaluative statements (*nice, needs work*) alone are not specific enough to engage reflection. Using concrete actions and a question format to express observations invites instructors to engage in the brainstorming around possibilities and innovating around challenges.

Mentor feedback suggestions to keep in mind<sup>4</sup>

- Focus feedback on the behavior
- Cite specific examples
- Describe rather than judge
- Point out specific causes and effects
- Explore alternatives rather than give solutions

**General guiding questions:** What went well in the class? Where did we see learning happening? What were the challenges? What would it look like if the goal area was fully met or exceeded? What strategies might build on the instructor's strengths? What strategies might support the instructor in addressing challenges?

**Instructor-identified guiding questions (pertaining directly to goal areas and/or serving general reflection)**

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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<sup>4</sup> Kathleen Feeny Johnson, *Being an Effective Mentor*, CA: Corwin Press, 2008.

# Best Practice Benchmarks

## General Instructional Benchmarks

Benchmarks Area	Indicators
<b>General: Clear activity instructions, modeling</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Instructor gives clear, level-appropriate instructions; effectively models</li> <li>-Visual presentations are clear (boards, charts, overheads, flip charts, pictures, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>General: Checking understanding and providing feedback</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learners demonstrate understanding of instructions</li> <li>-Instructor provides adequate repetition or review of material</li> <li>-Instructor attends to learner understanding and modifies/scaffolds accordingly</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>General: Multi-level instruction</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Materials, activities, are leveled for differences in language and academic skills</li> <li>-Learners are strategically grouped with like or differently skilled partners</li> <li>-Instruction demonstrates attn. to varying levels of learner motivation, experience</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>General: Attention to Adult Learning</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Instructor uses authentic language and relates to learners as adults</li> <li>-Activities promote critical thinking skills appropriate to educational background</li> <li>-Instructor attends to different learning styles and abilities</li> <li>-Learners are consistently held to high expectations</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>Learner-centered instruction<sup>5</sup></b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Content of instruction is relevant to learners' needs/interests; draws off their experience/knowledge</li> <li>-Learners have active roles in the classroom; teacher talk is minimal</li> <li>-Learners make choices about content and direction of activities</li> <li>-Instructor assesses lesson in relation to learner needs; adapts accordingly</li> <li>-Learners acquire strategies that help them learn inside and outside the classroom</li> <li>-Activities appeal to a variety of learning styles and needs</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>Instruction is aligned with assessment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learners practice vocabulary and language structures required in assessment</li> <li>-Learners practice content-related skills on assessments</li> <li>-Learners practice assessment-appropriate critical thinking skills</li> <li>-Learners practice level-appropriate test-taking strategies (e.g., process of elimination, identifying key words)</li> </ul> <p>→</p>
<b>Optional instructor-identified benchmark:</b>	<p>→</p>

<sup>5</sup> Betsy Parrish, *Teaching Adult ESL* (New York: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT, 2004).



## Instructor Self-Assessment

Instructors are asked to complete self-evaluations in relation to best-practice areas because a) the instructor’s perspective is a critical piece of the larger picture and b) instructors who self-assess are more successful.<sup>6</sup> Instructors are invited to include additional benchmark areas and indicators in alignment with best practice areas of particular interest.

**In each benchmark area, where do you believe your instruction falls right now?**

### Instructor Self-Evaluation Key

- 5 - Expert)** Mastery level achieved; little room to develop further strengths
- 4 - Strong)** Many strengths present
- 3 – Sound)** Strengths outweigh weaknesses
- 2 - Emerging)** Isolated moments of teaching reflecting intentions
- 1 – Not yet)** Instruction does not yet reflect intentions

Instructional Benchmarks	Instructor Self-Evaluation				
Clear activity instructions, modeling	5	4	3	2	1
Checking understanding and providing feedback	5	4	3	2	1
Multi-level instruction	5	4	3	2	1
Attention to Adult Learning	5	4	3	2	1
Learner-centered instruction	5	4	3	2	1
Instruction is aligned with assessment	5	4	3	2	1
Optional instructor-defined benchmark	5	4	3	2	1
<b>Successes</b>					
<b>Challenges or needs for support:</b>					

<sup>6</sup> Adapted from Center for Excellence in Teaching, Learning and Assessment, “Self-Assessment,” accessed 4 May 2011, [http://www.cetla.howard.edu/teaching\\_resources/SelfAssessment.html](http://www.cetla.howard.edu/teaching_resources/SelfAssessment.html).

## Instructor Goal-Setting Tool<sup>7</sup>

**Creating SMART<sup>8</sup> goals:** What specific strategies might support this area? How can those goals be measured? Are these goals attainable and realistic in the time period of the next quarter? **Note:** General best practice areas are usually too broad; benchmark indicators provide a more specific focus.

<b><i>Instructional Goal Area #1:</i></b>
Specific goal:
How am I doing? How am I measuring that?
Have there been changes in challenges, needs for support?
Additional comments

<b><i>Instructional Goal Area #2:</i></b>
Specific goal:
How am I doing? How am I measuring that?
Have there been changes in challenges, needs for support?
Additional comments

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<sup>7</sup> This tool is inspired in part by Eleanor Drago-Severson, *Leading Adult Learning* (CA:Corwin, 2009)

<sup>8</sup> “SMART Goals” accessed 18 May 2011, <http://www.smart-goals.org/>

## Peer Observation Tool

***Instructional Goal Area:***

Successes, challenges (especially in relation to goals area)

Concrete ideas and/or general approaches I can offer in relation to instructor goals

Other

## Observation Example

Comments: Arley and Edokese engaged during the big writing time. She had linked to those that best they were. Our class time and seemed unable to read and give questions; how could they be asked to read up with multiple cheating separate set of materials for her?

more attention to low-level learners.  
**Unhelpful**  
**Comments:** Good overall, still some room for improvement.

**Instructional Goal Area: Systematically checking comprehension with low-level learners in a multi-level class**

Observations

Successes, challenges

Concrete ideas and/or general approaches I can offer in relation to instructor goals

Additional comments

**Instructional Goal Area: Integrate assessment-appropriate critical thinking skills into instruction**

Observations

Successes, challenges

Concrete ideas and/or general approaches I can offer in relation to instructor goals

Additional comments

## Sample Learner Feedback Tools<sup>9</sup>

Low Beginning

**How do you feel about school today?**



Happy



confused

...



sad



bored..

High Beginning +

This month, I liked doing \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I didn't like \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I want learn more about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I want learn less about \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

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High Beginning +

Today I understood \_\_\_\_\_ %

In class, I felt \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

<sup>9</sup>Adapted in part from Betsy Parrish, *Teaching Adult ESL* (New York: McGraw-Hill ESL/ELT, 2004).