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READING WITHIN REACH

Classroom Observation Toolkit for Early Grade Reading Improvement

—

Webinar presented by Reading within REACH
in collaboration with the Global Reading Network

November 19, 2019

9:00 – 10:30 EST

Welcome!

- This webinar was developed by the Reading within Reach (REACH) initiative, which is funded by USAID and implemented by URC
- REACH supports the Global Reading Network community of practice
- While REACH ends at the end of November, GRN's resources will migrate to USAID's Education Links website (www.edu-links.org)

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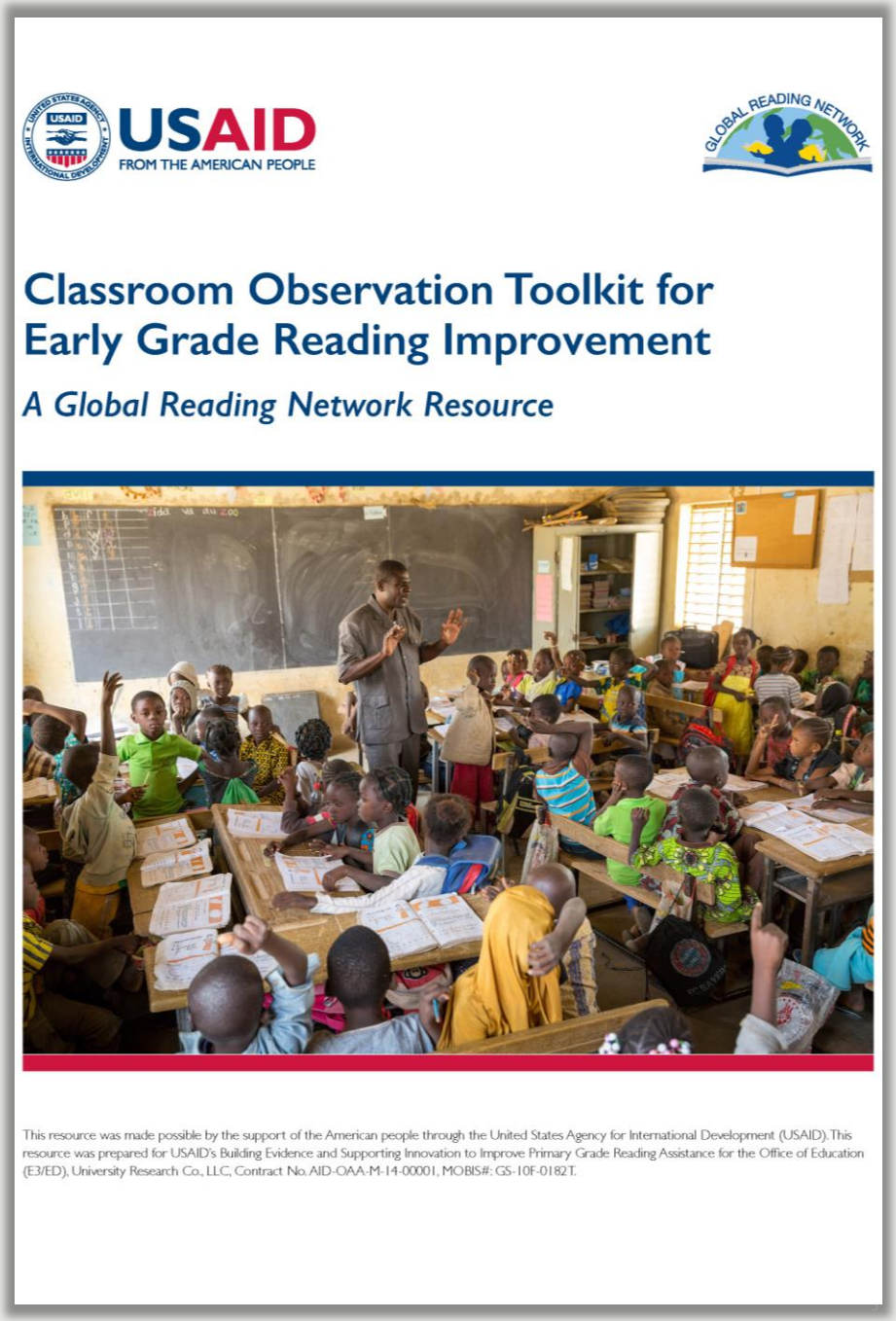
About the Webinar

Webinar purpose

- Introduce participants to the structure and content of the *Classroom Observation Toolkit for EGR improvement* and provide practical guidance to support the development and use of classroom observation instruments in EGR initiatives for different purposes.



Activity 1:
K-W-L Chart: Classroom Observation

K What do you Know?	W What do you Want to know?	L What have you Learned?

Webinar outcomes

- **By the end of this webinar, participants will be able to:**
  - Explain classroom observation, its purposes, and use
  - Identify features to consider when selecting instruments
  - Reflect on and share experiences
  - Apply guidance to improve efforts on the following:
    - Instrument development and adaptation
    - Preparation of observers on instrument use
    - Instrument administration
    - Dissemination and use of results
    - Other planning considerations

To share your questions and comments

- We will provide time throughout the webinar to address your questions and comments
- Please submit them via the chat box in Zoom
- Send them to "all panelists and attendees"

Warm-up

Activity 2:
Group Poll

Raise your hand in the Zoom chat window if you can answer yes to the following questions:

1. Have you ever been observed while teaching a lesson?
2. Have you ever observed a teacher in the classroom where you documented what you observed using a tool or instrument?
3. Have you have ever helped develop or use an observation instrument as part of an EGR initiative?

Activity 3:
Group share

Reflect and use the Zoom chat window to share your answers to the following questions:

1. What are your experiences with developing or using observation instruments for different purposes?
2. What did you find most successful?
3. What did you find most challenging?

Overview of the Toolkit

Background

- Rationale
- Purpose of Toolkit
- Audience
- Content

Photo: RTI International, Indonesia PRIORITAS (USAID)

Methodology

reports and
instruments

To the participating organizations:
THANK YOU!

Columbia University
Creative Associates International
Education Development Center (EDC)
EnCompass
FHI 360
International Rescue Committee (IRC)
Juarez & Associates
Mathematica
Room to Read
RTI International
Social Impact
South Africa Department of Basic Education
World Bank
World Vision

What we learned from the survey that guided Toolkit development

- **Classroom observation is commonly conducted** as part of EGR initiatives—with significant variations in purposes, processes, tools and data use
- **Need to improve quality of classroom observation instruments** – Guidance needed on identifying content and item formats appropriate for the purpose, observer capacity and context
- **Need to improve instrument reliability and validity** so data can confidently be used for appropriate purposes
- **To achieve the above,** need for better planning and observer training

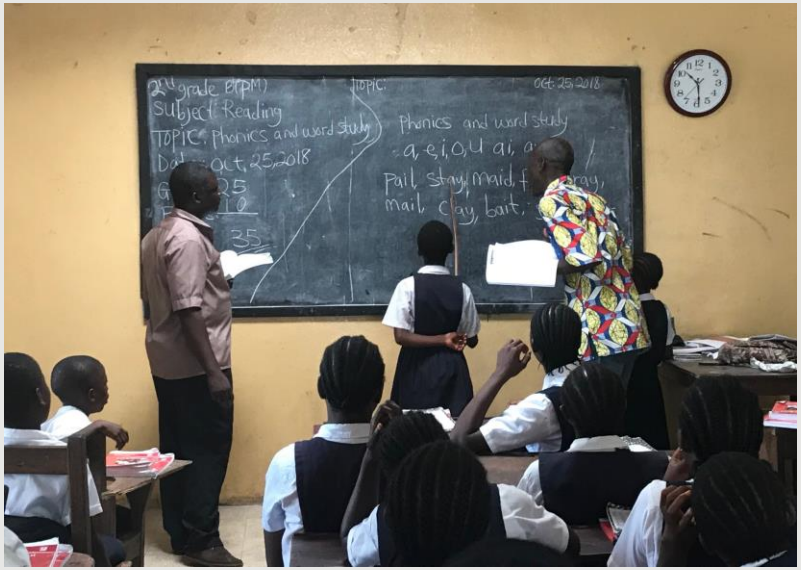


Photo: Read Liberia, RTI International

Activity 4:
Getting to know the Classroom Observation Toolkit

Download and open the toolkit so we can explore the contents.

- Table of contents
- Main sections of the Toolkit and their page numbers
- Key differences in content between each main section
- What catches your eye?

Structure of the Toolkit

1. **Understanding Classroom Observation:** This section defines classroom observation, its importance, different purposes, and key features of instrument content and structure.
2. **EGR Program Experiences and Guidance:** This section discusses EGR program experiences, highlights examples from practice and provides guidance on the following:

    - purpose and use;
    - instrument features;
    - instrument development and adaptation;
    - preparation and training of observers;
    - instrument administration; and
    - dissemination and use.

3. **Summary and Future Directions:** This section summarizes key takeaways based on review of EGR experiences and instruments.
4. **Instrument Templates:** Illustrative examples of format and content to be adapted.

Example from practice

EXAMPLE FROM PRACTICE 6

Classroom Observation for Impact Evaluation

To evaluate the **Ghana Partnership for Education: Learning**, a reading initiative implemented by FHI 360 and partners from 2014-2019, two different observation instruments are being used: (1) a reading program-specific observation instrument referred to as the Structured Observation Protocol and (2) the Stallings Classroom Snapshot instrument, a standardized observation instrument that has been verified as a reliable and valid instrument that can be used across contexts to collect comparable data concerning classroom instruction. The Structured Protocol uses a rating scale of 1-3 to measure the impact of the program on teachers' use of program-specific reading strategies. The Stallings instrument uses a time-interval sampling format to measure teachers' use of instructional time, use of different teaching and learning activities, and ability to keep students engaged. The use of the Stallings instrument was important to be able to collect credible data that could be compared between treatment and comparison schools to measure changes in classroom instruction that could be directly attributed to the initiative (Social Impact, 2018).

Classroom Observation in the Context of EGR Initiatives

Understanding classroom observation

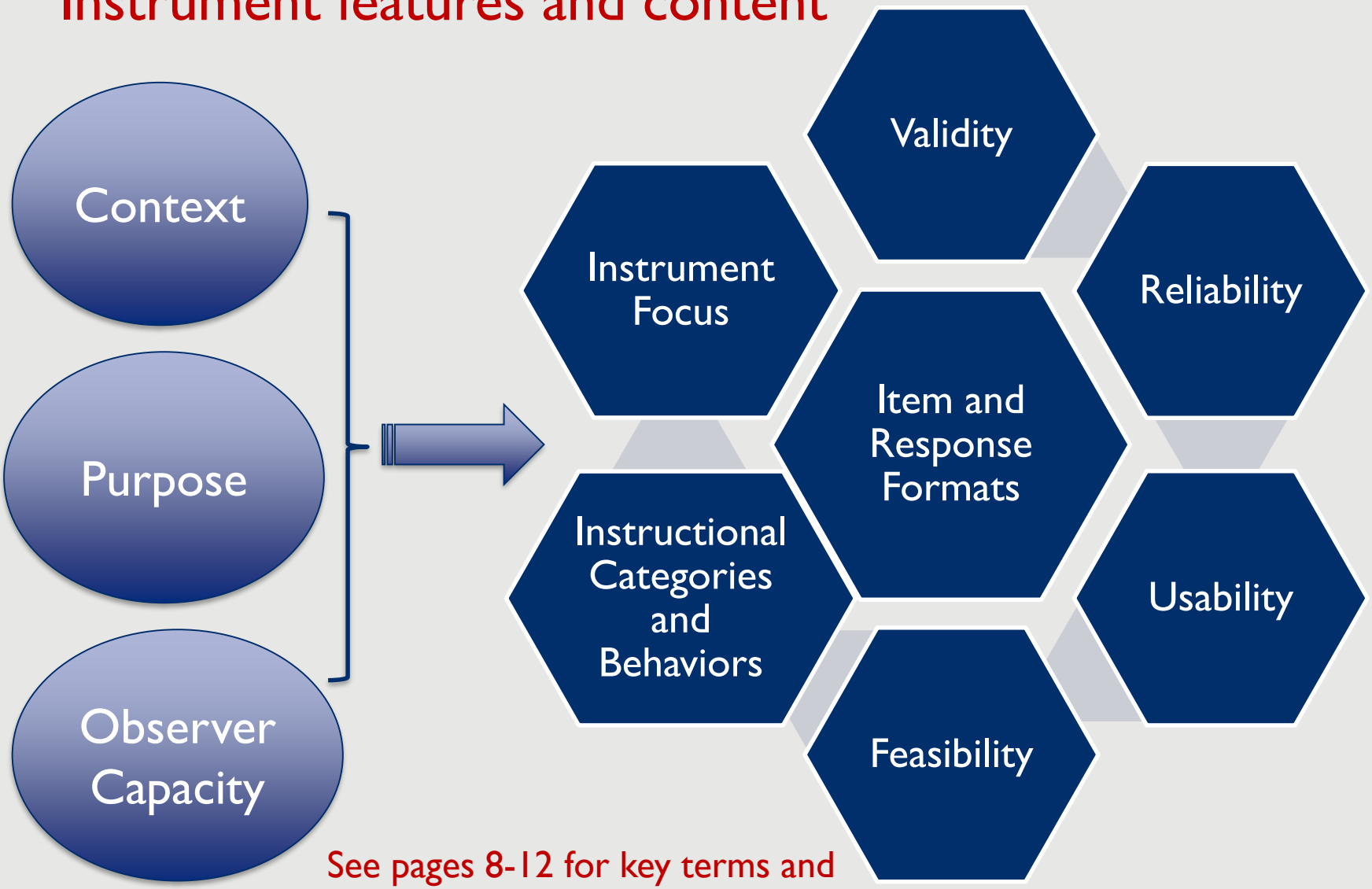
- Definitions
- Goal
- Purposes and use
- Observation instrument features and content

See pages 4-13 for key terms about Classroom Observation and pages 14-18 for EGR Experiences and Guidance on Purpose and Use

Purposes

- Identify teacher professional development needs
- Support teacher growth
- Monitor implementation
- Evaluate the impact of professional development
- Generate new knowledge about teaching-learning processes
- Measure/improve quality of teaching at system level
- Evaluate teacher performance

Instrument features and content



See pages 8-12 for key terms and pages 19-29 for experiences and guidance

Instrument validity and reliability

Validity is the extent to which an instrument measures what it aims to measure (accuracy). A valid instrument consists of evidence-based instructional practices and behaviors lead to improved student achievement.

- Instrument validity is most important when collecting data that will be compared across programs or groups.
- Determining an instrument's validity requires rigorous, statistical testing conducted by measurement and subject-matter experts who compare results with theories.
- Verification of an instrument's validity are typically provided in documentation that accompanies the instrument.

See page 8 in section
Understanding Classroom Observation

Instrument validity and reliability

Reliability is the extent to which an instrument consistently measures what it aims to measure.

- Determining an instrument's reliability also requires rigorous review, statistical assessments and piloting to verify reliability (e.g., inter-rater reliability (IRR) testing).
  - **Inter-rater reliability (IRR) is** the extent to which a group of observers score a given item the same.
- Preparing observers to record reliably requires extensive training on the instrument, multiple opportunities for practice, and an observer assessment for IRR.

See page 8 in section
Understanding Classroom Observation

Instrument validity and reliability

EXAMPLE FROM PRACTICE 5

Achieving Validity and Reliability

As part of the Education in Emergencies: Evidence for Action initiative (2015-2020), the International Rescue Committee (IRC) has been adapting and testing an instrument for Teacher Classroom Observations (TCO) used in program evaluations across several IRC programs to show progress on indicators. The Teacher Classroom Observation instrument measures the quality of teaching practices (specifically, general pedagogy and classroom management), as well as the quality of implementation. Currently, the instrument is used in six different IRC countries and has been revised several times. IRC has assessed the instrument's inter-rater reliability across countries and found it to vary across contexts. The instrument was used to support evaluation of the Pakistan Reading Project (2013-2020), where it was found to have good reliability and evidence of validity (GRN survey response, 2018).

Item and response formats

Items on an instrument are questions or statements about the specific actions, behaviors or processes being observed. They can be categorized as **low- or high-inference**.

	Low-inference items	High-inference items
Statements or questions about behaviors are….	Distinct, observable, and objective, requiring no evaluative judgement.	Subjective and require observer to make an evaluative judgement.
Examples	Teacher has a poster with behavioral expectations displayed on the wall.	Behavioral expectations are clear for students.

See Table 1 on page 13 for more examples of low- and high-inference items

Item and response formats

Response formats: How information for each question or item is recorded or documented.

- Checklists (e.g. yes/no) for low-inference items

Lesson Preparation	Yes	No
The teacher has a lesson plan.		

- Rating scales for low-inference or high-inference items
  - Numerical (e.g. 1-4)
  - Descriptive (e.g. never, rarely, sometimes, frequently, always

Lesson Preparation	1	2	3	4
The teacher followed the lesson plan.				

Item and response formats

Time-interval sampling format with low-inference items

Criteria	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Orientation to Print															
Teacher models with a finger or a pointer which direction to read, how to move from top to bottom, and to the next line															

See pages 20-21 in section *Understanding Classroom Observation* and Annexes B,C,D, F and E for examples.

Focus of instrument

The overall focus of an observation instrument varies depending on the context, purpose of the observation, and what it aims to measure.

Teacher and Student Behaviors	• Presence of behaviors (yes/no) • Frequency of behavior (how often) • Use of instructional time (e.g., estimated allocation of time to specific strategies or content) • Interactions with students • Student responsiveness • Time on task (ability to keep students on task and engaged) • Quality (how well)
Materials	• Availability of materials • Teacher use of materials • Student use of materials
Classroom Conditions	• Print-rich environment • Safe learning environment • Equitable and inclusive environment

Instructional categories and behaviors

- High-quality instruments are organized into evidence-based categories or competencies proven to lead to student achievement.
- Examples of evidence-based categories that have been proven as predictors to student learning across different contexts and are included in well-known standardized observation instruments include the following:
  - **Lesson structure, content, and facilitation**
  - **Classroom management**
  - **Physical/classroom environment**
  - **Classroom culture/supportive learning environment**
  - **Student participation/engagement**
  - **Checking for understanding/assessment**
  - **Feedback**
- Each instructional category comprises several sub-categories of behaviors that define the overarching category or serve as indicators of success for that measure. See Table 1, page 13 for categories and sub-categories.

Feasibility and usability

Feasibility refers to the potential of a classroom observation instrument to be used appropriately and effectively given the purpose, scope of the instrument, context, observer capacity, and time and period in which the observation will be conducted.

Usability refers to both the degree of "user-friendliness" of the observation instrument. This includes the: organizational structure, length, language, sentence structure, and font, as well as the processes involved for data management and analysis.

See pages 12 and 25 for more information

Activity 5:
Checking for understanding

Thinking about the key terms and content we just covered:

1. What is something new that you learned about classroom observation in this section of today's webinar?
2. What is something you have a question about or did not understand concerning this content?

Key Considerations and Guidance

Key considerations and guidance

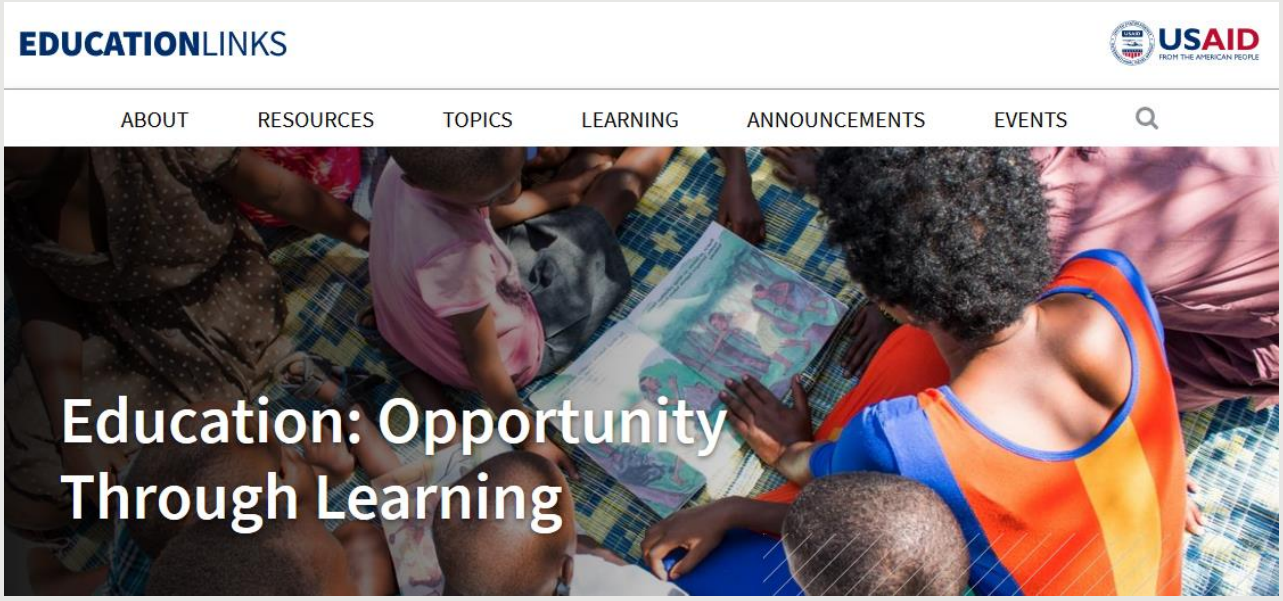
- **Identify the observation purpose**
  - See Table 2 on page 18
- **Engage diverse stakeholders and technical experts**
  - See Table 5 on page 32
- **Develop or adapt a high-quality instrument to align with purpose**
  - See pages 26-31 for a description of considerations
- **Develop protocol for the classroom observation visit**
  - See instrument templates for illustrative ideas
- **Pilot a draft instrument**
  - See pages 33-34 for more information to guide planning

Key considerations and guidance

- **Identify, train and support classroom observers**
  - Allow adequate time to prepare for training
  - Align training to instrument, observer profiles, capacity needs
  - Provide multiple opportunities for observers to practice and be assessed for inter-rater reliability (IRR)
  - Provide ongoing training and support
  - See more guidance on page 35
- **Plan for instrument administration**
  - Identify instrument medium (e.g., paper or e-version), frequency, etc.
  - See page 35 for a discussion of issues
- **Disseminate and use observation results**
  - See page 45 for more information

Other resources relevant to classroom observation

- Coaching in early grade reading programs: Evidence, experiences and recommendations
- Literacy Landscape Assessment Toolkit
- Promoting successful literacy acquisition through structured pedagogy
- Rapid Education and Risk Analysis Toolkit



Download at www.edulinks.org

Instrument Templates

Instrument templates

- Summary of key recommendations
- Identifying teacher professional development needs
- Supporting individual teacher professional growth
- Monitoring teachers' adherence to EGR program approach
- Measuring teachers' use of instructional time
- Simple observation checklist

I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Items to be identified by the program.

II. CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

SECTION A: Duration of Lesson

Expected Start Time:

Actual Start Time:

SECTION B: Use of Instructional Ti
minute interval. **Note: You may sele**

Reading Skills
1. Print Concepts
2. Phonemic Awareness and Phonics
3. Passage/Story Reading
4. Writing (Student writing)
5. Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension
6. Oral Language
7. Other

SECTION C: Use of Instructional Ti
minute interval. **Note: You may sele**

8. Teacher provides direct instruct
9. Teacher assigns activities for s

SIMPLE OBSERVATION CHECKLIST OF EGR LESSON

Instructional Categories and Observable Behaviors	YES	NO
Lesson Structure, Content, and Facilitation		
1. Teacher is fully prepared for the day's lesson, as indicated in the teacher's guide (e.g., ALL materials are prepared; teacher has song for today's lesson written on the board).		
2. Teacher follows teacher's guide for modeling specific literacy skill or activity (e.g., "I do"/modeling of reading, writing, speaking or listening).		
3. Teacher follows teacher's guide for modeling literacy skill or activity while students actively participate with the teacher (e.g., "We do"/guided practice of reading, writing, speaking, or listening).		
4. Teacher follows teacher's guide for giving students an opportunity to practice literacy skill or activity independently (e.g., "You do"/independent practice of reading, writing, speaking, or listening).		
5. Teacher uses instructional strategies and literacy practices as described in the teacher's guide.		
6. Teacher uses program resources as described in the lesson to model reading skills and support the lesson (e.g., teacher's guide, student books, and other teaching and learning materials, etc.).		
Classroom Management		
7. Teacher starts class on time (e.g., within three minutes of expected time on schedule).		
8. Teacher adheres to the time allocation for specific lesson activities in accordance with teacher's guide (if provided).		
9. Teacher uses at least two types of instructional grouping at least once during the class (e.g., whole group, small group, pair work, individual work).		
10. Students are on task and focused on the lesson for at least 90% of the time during the observation.		
Physical Classroom Environment		
11. Classroom or learning space is physically safe for ALL students (e.g., no visible risks that could cause physical harm).		
12. At least one example of text or print is visible in the learning space (e.g., alphabet strip, pocket chart, a word wall poster, labels, student names, classroom rules, student work, etc.).		
13. A student book provided by the intervention [e.g., primer; insert specific name for program] appears to be available for XX% of children.		
14. At least one type of teaching and learning material provided by the intervention is available for student use that is not a student book primer (e.g., supplementary reading books, posters, flash cards, etc.).		
Classroom Culture/Supportive Learning Environment		
15. Teacher provides equal opportunities to ALL students to participate (e.g., girls, boys, students with different abilities and needs, students seated in different parts of the classroom).		
16. Teacher interacts with ALL students in a positive and respectful manner throughout the entire lesson.		
Student Engagement		
17. Students practice reading and/or writing (not copying) independently in at least one activity.		
18. Students interact and work with peers during at least one activity.		
19. Students use the learning materials provided by the program in at least one activity.		
20. Students seek assistance from teacher when needed (e.g., ask questions).		
Checking for Understanding		
21. Teacher checks student understanding throughout the lesson as indicated in the teacher's guide (e.g., calls on students, walks around the room checking students' work).		
Feedback		
22. Teacher praises ALL students for correct responses and behaviors.		
23. When students perform incorrectly, teacher corrects incorrect responses AND gives student(s) an opportunity to try again.		

Reflections and Future Directions

Summary and future directions

- Improve planning
- Improve quality of instruments
- Expand focus from adherence to quality
- Increase experience sharing and reflection

Photo: Juarez & Assoc., Guatemala Lifelong Learning Project (USAID)

Activity 6:
Individual reflection: KWL Chart

K	W	L
What do you know?	What do you want to know?	What have you learned?

Activity 7:
Reflection for action

Reflect and use the Zoom Chat to share

Based on what you learned in today's webinar, what would you like to start doing right now or in the future to improve the development and use of classroom observation in an EGR initiative you are working in or supporting?

Thank you for joining us!

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