Observation:
A Guide for Mentors Working with Resident Educators

Outcome
Through the use of the Observation tool, mentors will collect objective evidence and engage Resident Educators (REs) in formatively examining their own practice and setting professional goals. This can occur in both ongoing and formal observations. Additionally the mentor should arrange for the RE to observe exemplary teachers as frequently as possible.

The Mentor’s Role
Resident Educators and mentors establish a trusting relationship of mutual understanding and respect for risk-taking and growth to occur through informal, ongoing and formal observations. Mentors begin to establish a culture of professional reciprocity and trust by making informal observations. Informal observations occur early in the school year, they are a kind of get-acquainted classroom visit to establish rapport and expose the RE to a “tradition” of classroom interactions. A subsequent formal observation engages REs in professional dialogue around objective evidence of their classroom practice to help to inform their goal setting and instructional practice. Ongoing observations are at the heart of the Resident Educator experience and they should occur as frequently as possible. Ongoing observations may be quick classroom drop-ins or co-teaching moments, as well as reciprocal and exemplary teacher observations.

The Process for Resident Educators and Mentors
Mentors provide a first objective view into Resident Educators’ teaching practice. The early informal observations and the subsequent formal observations should be scheduled with the RE in advance.

Formal Observation

Using the Pre-Observation Notes TEMPLATE
Following several informal and/or ongoing observations of Resident Educators in their classrooms, mentors and REs should meet to discuss the upcoming formal observation. This template can be used to frame the conversation.

Conducting the Observation
The observation should be scheduled in advance at a mutually agreed upon time and last at least 30 minutes OR long enough to include the full cycle of a lesson. Mentors should focus on both the teacher and the students to capture evidence of student learning and engagement. Mentors do not record opinions or judgments about the lesson, the students or the Resident Educator. Mentors may use the Observation of Resident Educators Notes TEMPLATE to record notes.

Preparing for the post-observation conference
While the purpose of the formal observation is not evaluative, mentors and Resident Educators must spend some time reflecting on the lesson to prepare for the post-observation conference. Mentors should summarize
key observations and plan coaching language (instructional, collaborative, facilitative) and reflective questioning strategies. Mentors may use the Post-Observation Conference: A Reflective Conversation Tool, or the Instructional Cycle questions for reflection.

Similarly, the RE should reflect on the lesson and consider bringing additional data (e.g., student artifacts, lesson plan) to the post-conference. To facilitate this reflection, mentors may provide REs copies of their observation notes.

**Scheduling the post-observation conference**

Mentors should schedule a meeting with REs, ideally, within two days after formal observations to discuss the objective evidence collected during the lesson.

**Facilitating the post-observation conference**

Mentors should follow The Observation Protocols to guide their thinking and planning for the post-conference. Mentors guide REs to make discoveries about the lesson and student outcomes, as well as their own strengths and areas for growth. Together, the mentor and Resident Educator use this observation data to write the REs’ and mentors’ next steps.

In addition, mentors should guide REs to reflect on evidence from the lesson that demonstrates Standards 1 - 5 of the OSTP to help inform the RE’s self-assessment and goal-setting.

**Conducting ongoing observations**

Ongoing observations of REs throughout the academic year enable mentors to get to know their REs’ school context, students and curriculum, to better support their growth. These observations are less formal than the formal observation in that they do not require a formal pre and post conference. However, it is still critically important to follow each observation with a documented instructional conversation (using the Collaborative Log, collaborative conversations log, interactive journal, feedback note, etc.) within two days of the observation. Ongoing observations should last anywhere from 10 to 20 minutes.

The goal of each of the ongoing observations may be determined by instructional conversations between mentors and REs, and may be related to the professional goals set by the Resident Educator. REs can ask mentors to observe with a particular focus related to goal attainment, a specific instructional strategy or aspect of the lesson or a challenge they have identified. Depending on the reason for the observation, the mentor’s focus could be on the students or the teacher or both.

**Reciprocal Observations**

Reciprocal observations are shared professional observations that may occur between REs and mentors, between veteran teachers and REs, between REs and REs, between administrators and staff, etc. They may be experienced in real time or via electronic devices. This spirit of reciprocity exists in all observation formats. It is the understanding that both the observer and the one being observed gain insights into the complexities of teaching and best practices. Reciprocal observations formalize this philosophy by providing opportunities for professionals to share the same experience, to establish common language and common understandings of teacher standards and common qualities of effective teacher performance. Reciprocal observations provide opportunities for the observers to
participate comfortably in deep and difficult professional conversations about the art and science of teaching since they are not the subject of the conversation.

**Exemplary Observations**

*Teacher to teacher modeling has the greatest impact on teacher improvement.* *(Douglas Reeves).* Exemplary teacher observations bring the deepest change in instructional practices and have the greatest impact on increased student achievement. They should occur as frequently as possible throughout the life of a teacher. *Observation of Exemplary Teacher by Resident Educator and Exemplary Teacher Observation: Reflective Conversations* are tools that may be used to document exemplary teacher observations.

**The Resident Educator’s Repertoire of Practice**

Mentors provide evidence of observations and feedback by recording mentor conversations on the *Collaborative Log,* or Collaborative Conversation Logs, etc.

The response of the Resident Educator to the feedback will be manifested through the completion of the required Best Practices documents as well as in subsequent observations. All of these evidence documents are to be kept by the Resident Educators. These “kept” documents become the Resident Educator’s repertoire of practice; a collection of evidence documenting and tracing the professional learning experiences of the Resident Educator during the four years of residency.