Harvard Medical School Curriculum Fellows Program Education Workshop Series

Fall 2019 Workshops

Better Teaching Through Observations

Bradley Coleman, PhD Director, HMS Curriculum Fellows Program September 19th 12:30-2:00PM TMEC 328

From Z to A: Principles of Backwards Design

Saoirse McSharry, PhD Curriculum Fellow, Cell Biology October 17th 12:30-2:00PM TMEC 128

Applying Growth Mindset in the Classroom

Jelena Patrnogic, PhD Curriculum Fellow, Landry Cancer Biology Consortium November 14th 12:30-2:00PM TMEC 128

Developing Your Mentoring Philosophy: a workshop for graduate students and postdocs to create individualized mentoring statements

Temperance Rowell, PhD *Curriculum Fellow, Harvard/MIT MD-PhD Program* **December 12th** 12:30-2:00PM Modell 100A

Better Teaching Through Observations

Bradley Coleman, PhD Director HMS Curriculum Fellows Program bradley_coleman@hms.harvard.edu

September 19th, 2019



At the conclusion of today's workshop, you should be able to:

- assess the appropriateness of various observation protocols/approaches in specific teaching situations
- practice the teaching observation process
- identify the barriers to the acceptance of critical feedback
- provide feedback in a way that maximizes its impact

What are possible reasons we might do a teaching observation?

For each of these reasons, is the goal serving the teacher or the person doing the observation?

For each of goals, what characteristics must the observation have in order to achieve it?

Teaching observations can have widely variable goals

- formative vs. summative
- intrinsic vs. extrinsic
- for observer vs. instructor



Observations are not 'one size fits all'. You must select an approach to observation with your goals in mind.

effective teaching observations are <u>actionable</u>

- make sure both parties acknowledge the goals and that the protocol you choose will serve them

- focus on specific observations of instructor and students, grounded in best practices defined by scholarship of teaching and learning (and personal experience)
- avoid judgement (good vs. bad)



each group will be given an observation protocol

Take **<u>5 minutes</u>** to review the protocol and answer the following questions. Each group will present their answers to the class.

Your explanation should focus on the following:

- How does the protocol work procedurally?
- What is the goal (stated or implied) of this approach?
- What, if any, value judgements are made about what makes for good teaching?

- Which observation goals (like we described earlier) would your protocol be well suited to?

Practice Observation

We will watch a 7 minute teaching video. Use the protocol your group was assigned to perform a teaching observation.



https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=83WB9ZWkZH4 https://seercenter.uga.edu/realisevideos_immerse/



Practice Observation

We will watch a 7 minute teaching video. Use the protocol your group was assigned to perform a teaching observation.

thoughts?

The outcome of a teaching observation is giving feedback.

this is hard.

1) it's hard to criticize someone in person

2) critical feedback doesn't 'stick'

differential encoding

experimental design



(this is are *actually* 10% more likely than they thought.) BAD NEWS victim of violence by stranger disease of spinal cord serious hearing problems infertility car stolen dementia drug abuse gallbladder stones being convicted of crime

Nature Neuroscience 14, 1475–1479 (2011)

differential encoding

experimental design



Nature Neuroscience **14**, 1475–1479 (2011)

differential encoding

negative feedback is less likely to lead to behavior change



results

on average, participants' were less able to improve their estimations when the corrective feedback provided undesirable information

fMRI showed that error-processing areas of the brain are **less active** when the corrective feedback provides undesirable information

Nature Neuroscience 14, 1475–1479 (2011)

motivated reasoning

<u>motivated reasoning</u>: information/evidence is evaluated in the context of existing worldview



<u>motivated reasoning</u>: information/evidence is evaluated in the context of existing worldview

three requirements for motivated reasoning

- 1) must be about something meaningful to the person
- 2) they must have a preferred interpretation (good v. bad; right v. wrong)

3) there must be enough uncertainty for multiple interpretations to be plausible

1) must be about something meaningful to the person

I care about teaching.

2) must be a preferred interpretation (good v. bad; right v. wrong)

I am a good teacher.

3) there must be enough uncertainty for multiple interpretations to be plausible

That class was terrible.

"I nailed it!"

3) there must be enough uncertainty for multiple interpretations to be plausible

Therefore, the more your negative feedback is framed as a judgement of performance the MORE likely it is to trigger a motivated reasoning response and the LESS likely it is to lead to behavior change

You had a hard time keeping your students engaged.

no I didn't...

...they're just a quiet group

...they were deep in thought

VS.

When you asked clicker question #3, only half of the students voted. I saw 5 or 6 were on Facebook.

Summary

- we are less likely to encode information associated with undesirable feelings

- we naturally explain away (and ignore) feedback that doesn't conform to our pre-conceived notions

Suggestions for giving effective feedback

- BE SPECIFIC

- this makes it harder for the subject to doubt or twist your feedback in order to explain it away (motivated reasoning)
- specific examples may naturally lead to recognition of larger patterns, discussion of best practices

-AVOID JUDGEMENT and CRITICISM

- when we see feedback as criticism, we are less likely to internalize it
- direct description of observed behavior is inherently less critical
- ask the subject for self-reflection on your feedback to aid with its encoding

-PRACTICE

- the more you practice, the more comfortable you will become framing your thoughts and observations in this way

In pairs, take turns giving the other person some of the negative feedback you collected from our demo teaching video observation.

remember:

BE SPECIFIC AVOID JUDGEMENT AND CRITICISM