

Virtual Lab School



Welcome!

Live Webinar will begin at 11:00 EST

Best Practices for Using the CORT

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To support your learning...

- ✓ All participants have been muted
- ✓ Please type questions or comments into Chat
- ✓ We will monitor the CHAT and answer questions throughout the training
- ✓ This session is being recorded to share on the Virtual Lab School site
- ✓ We encourage you to participate in the polls throughout the training
- ✓ Share your feedback after the training!
- ✓ If we disconnect – please log back in

LEARNING OBJECTIVES



Review current research regarding coaching practices and tools that support seasoned professionals and quality child and youth programs.



Review the purpose and primary components of the Caregiving Observation and Reflection Tool.



Discuss recent updates made to the Caregiving Observation and Reflection Tool and recommendations for implementing the tool in your program.

**Service-
Specific
Guidance**



“



SHARE OUT: CHAT

*Why do we observe professionals
in CYPs?*

”

Care and Education Quality



Lang et al., 2017;
Organisation for Economic Co-operation
and Development, 2018



Summative

Formative

observation

Why (and how) do we complete structured observations?

(Education Development Center 2019; ELLCO user guide, Smith et al., 2008; Taylor et al., 2013; Tomlin et al., 2013; Zaslow et al., 2010)

Focus on CQI of Individual Practice




Continuous Quality Improvement

Image from California AfterSchool Network



Head Start PBC Framework

Image from Head Start ECLKC



CQI Essential Aspect of Quality

High quality programs engage in CQI at multiple levels, including individual practice

Other critical things we know about global observations

- Tend to be stable across an academic year
- Unlikely to pick up small changes in practice when using multiple times over a short period
- **Duration of observation related to depth and breadth**
- **Frequency and duration inversely related**

Figure 1. Cross-System Comparisons Using ECERS and CLASS Scores

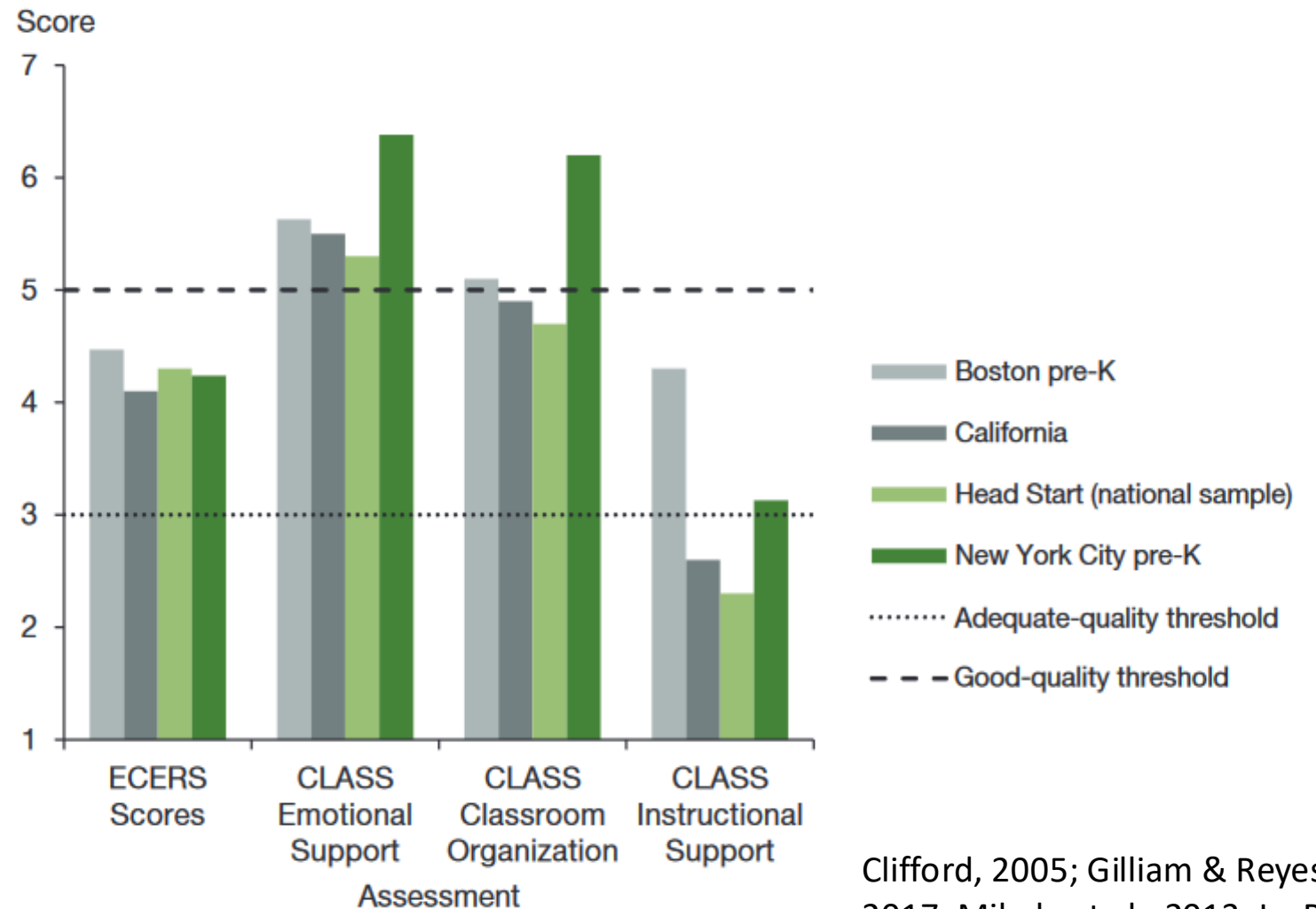
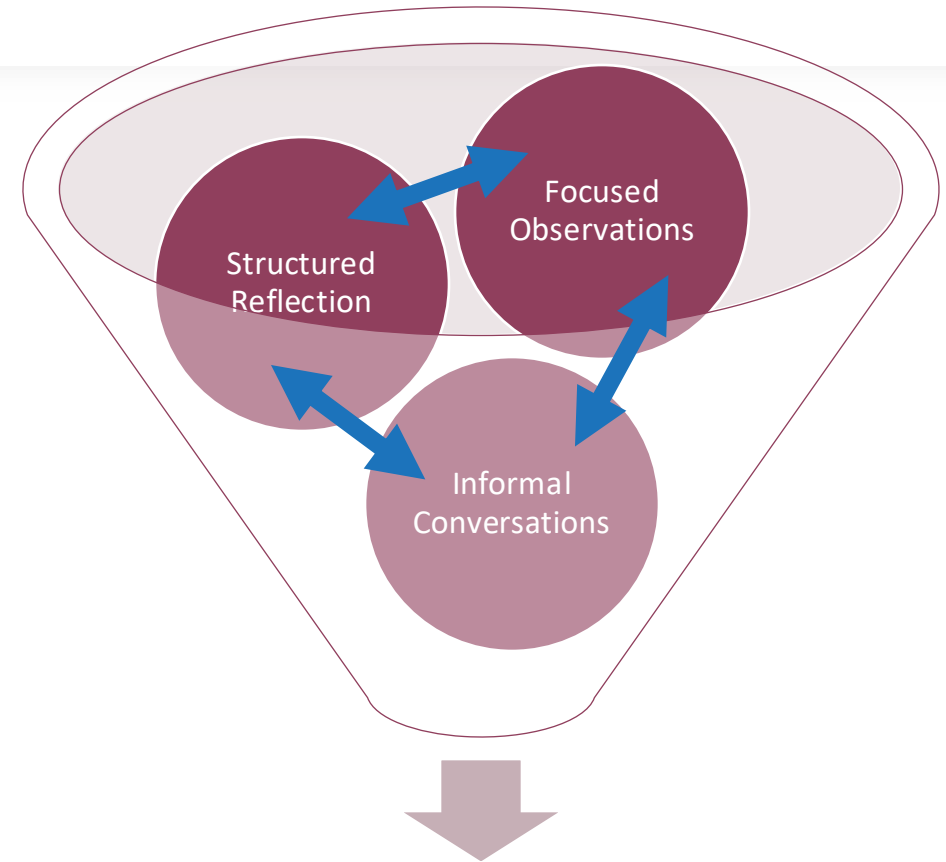


Figure from Weiland & Guerrero-Rosada, 2022

Clifford, 2005; Gilliam & Reyes, 2017; Mihaly et al., 2013; La Pora & Pianta, 2004; Polikoff, 2015; Weiland & Guerrero-Rosada, 2022



Integrating Observational Data With Reflection...



Hullinger et al., 2019;
Fox et al., 2024
Lang et al., accepted

Improvement Opportunities



SHARE OUT- POLL

How are you primarily implementing the CORT in your program?



Focused Topics

Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice

Research indicates that effective professional development combines high-quality evidenced-based training with practice-based coaching that supports reflection, feedback, and implementation of new skills. Coaching is critical to enhancing the learner's understanding of new content and improving classroom practices. This course will focus on supporting 'Training & Curriculum Specialists' or 'coaches' implementation of the Virtual Lab School and use of effective coaching strategies to enhance practices in child and youth programs.

5

Coaching Across Careers

In this lesson, you will learn considerations for coaching staff members at various stages of their careers. The staff in your program are as diverse as the children you care for, and you will need to flexibly navigate how you support staff based on their current practices, professional needs, and program standards.



Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool (CORT)

Observe and reflect on caregivers' practices. Review examples to assist in determining mastery of practices across five domains.

What's New?

- Fillable PDF
- New component in BDI
- Mentoring added
- More SA examples
- Action Plan



	CAREGIVER
	OBSERVER
	DATE(S)

Mastered
Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.

New Format

The CORT provides a systematic framework to observe and document interactions and experiences that occur within a classroom. The goal of this measure is to assess and document a caregiver's strengths and areas for growth by observing actual caregiving practices. This measure covers the many domains that make up a high-quality child care environment. The observation tool is divided into five domains:

- Each of these domains is comprised of key skills or practices. Training & Curriculum Specialists or Program Managers should use this tool to observe and document a caregiver's use of these key practices. The T&CS or Program Manager should carefully observe interactions and experiences offered by the caregiver and document the caregiver's competency for each skill. This information can then be used to help identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, and goals for caregivers.

This tool is intended to be used to observe caregivers' practices related to quality interactions and experiences and document their level of mastery. For each skill, the observer will mark the caregivers' level of mastery as Emerging, Developing, or Mastered.

During an observation you will only see a snapshot of the child care environment and teaching practices. If there is a domain on the observation form that you did not observe or do not think you observed sufficiently to identify the caregiver's current skills level, rather than trying to rate the domain, indicate this by rating the item as N/O.

D
Developing
Staff member understands the practice but is still working to consistently implement it.

M
Mastered
Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.

New Examples

BDI4 Variety of Developmentally Appropriate Experiences

Provides and facilitates a variety of developmentally appropriate activities and experiences that support all learning domains.

Emerging

Activities are limited and/or narrow in focus.

- *Does not guide or facilitate interactions at activities*
- *Materials are accessible but few or no specific activities are prepared in the environment*
- *Planned activities lack variety and focus only on one or two learning domains (e.g., math, literacy)*
- *Children engage in free play only*
- *Children do not have access to messy or physical activities*

Developing

A variety of activities are provided but not all learning domains are consistently emphasized.

- *A variety of activities are prepared and available in the classroom, but some learning domains are missed (e.g., art activities or gross motor activity is missing)*
- *Professionals interact during activities but scaffolding may be limited.*
- *School-age children are offered group games, arts and crafts, and dramatic play, but rarely focus on character development*

Mastered

Consistently provides a variety of activities that support all learning domains.

- *Arranges and facilitates at least one activity for each learning domain (e.g., cognitive, math, science/sensory, social-emotional, language/literacy, physical)*
- *Professional is engaged and scaffolds learning at a variety of activities*
- *Activities are intentionally chosen to meet all learning domains*
- *Staff member can articulate how specific learning objectives are being met at each activity*

LL2 Reading Opportunities

Provides children with multiple opportunities to participate in reading in different and meaningful ways each day.

Emerging

Minimal opportunities for enriched and enjoyable reading.

- *Children are only read to during whole group time*
- *Children are not given time to freely enjoy books in developmentally appropriate ways with adult support available*
- *School-age children are asked to read a book as a consequence for behavior*
- *School-aged children are discouraged from reading a particular book based on an adult's assumptions about that child's ability (e.g., discouraged from reading a chapter book because it's "too difficult")*

Developing

Reading is a part of specific, daily routines.

- *Children may be read to during whole group time and have opportunities to independently look at books during free choice*
- *School-age children are allowed to read independently as an alternative to other activities*

Mastered

Intentionally incorporates different reading experiences across routines and activities.

- *Children are read to as a whole group, in small groups, and when individual children request*
- *Literacy opportunities are incorporated into daily routines, such as meals, to reinforce concepts ("Which one has a letter that makes the "mmmm" sound, the milk or the Cheerios?" or for older children, encouraging them to read the food labels)*
- *School-age children are encouraged to read independently as an activity, or participation in a book club is offered for a scheduled amount of time*

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A variety of activities are provided but not all learning domains are consistently emphasized.

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- *Activities are intentionally chosen to meet all learning domains*
- *Staff member can articulate how specific learning objectives are being met at each activity*

New Indicator

CC8 Values Professional Growth

Responsive to professional development opportunities and support provided by a trainer, coach, or administrator.

Emerging

Does not value or understand the importance of professional development.

- Does not actively participate in goal setting
- Lacks interest in expanding current level of knowledge or practice, or in mentoring others
- Rarely follows through with action steps to improve practices

Developing

Participates in professional development.

- Shows interest in growing professionally but initiative or ownership is sometimes limited
- Models best practices to others in a few key areas
- Generally responsive and follows through with goal-setting steps

Mastered

Initiates own professional development and learning.

- Independently utilizes available resources, in conjunction with leadership support, to extend learning and practice
- Actively models practices for other professionals and seeks mentorship opportunities
- Asks questions and engages during professional learning opportunities

Added Mentoring Elements



	CAREGIVER
	OBSERVER
	DATE(S)

Professional's Overall Strengths:

Identified Goals for Growth:

Action Steps (including specific training and resources needed to support these goals and plans for follow-up):

Program Professional Signature:

Training & Curriculum Specialist / Observer Signature:

Date:

New Action Plan to Support Learning

Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool



CORT: Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool

Introduction

The CORT provides a systematic framework to observe and document interactions and experiences that occur within a classroom. The goal of this measure is to assess and document a caregiver's strengths and areas for growth by observing actual caregiving practices. This measure covers the many domains that make up a high-quality child care environment. The observation tool is divided into five domains:

- language and literacy
- responsive relationships
- balanced and differentiated instruction
- comprehensive caregiving
- family-centered practice.

Each of these domains is comprised of key skills or practices. Training & Curriculum Specialists or Program Managers should use this tool to observe and document a caregiver's use of these key practices. The T&CS or Program Manager should carefully observe interactions and experiences offered by the caregiver and document the caregiver's competency for each skill. This information can then be used to help identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, and goals for caregivers.

Rating

This tool is intended to be used to rate a caregiver's level of mastery related to quality interaction on each other, so a caregiver and some as developing, or mastered. When documenting the competency level that best describes the skills you see in the child care environment, the caregiver mostly has interacted with children, but you observe that caregiver could likely be better. However, a caregiver who consistently demonstrates developing qualities on a skill is rated as developing.

When rating a skill, take into account the behavior during your observation on each other, so a caregiver and some as developing, or mastered. When documenting the competency level that best describes the skills you see in the child care environment, the caregiver mostly has interacted with children, but you observe that caregiver could likely be better. However, a caregiver who consistently demonstrates developing qualities on a skill is rated as developing.

During an observation you will observe a caregiver's use of the skill in the observation form that you observe sufficiently to identify strengths, opportunities for improvement, and goals for caregivers. If you observe a caregiver who consistently demonstrates developing qualities on a skill is rated as developing.

E

Emerging

Staff member is building their understanding and use of the skill.

D

Developing

Staff member understands the practice but is still working to consistently implement it.

M

Mastered

Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.

Language Literacy

LL1 Quality Reading Materials

The learning environment has a variety of developmentally appropriate print and reading material with a wide range of vocabulary, themes, and pictures.

Emerging

Limited number of developmentally appropriate reading and print materials.

- Most books are scribbled in or torn
- There is not a clear system for organizing books and print materials
- Materials are not developmentally appropriate (e.g., chapter books in a preschool classroom library)
- Some books unknowingly reinforce negative assumptions or provide limited scope (e.g., only books with movie characters or religious stories are present)
- Nonfiction books are outdated or do not reflect current knowledge (e.g., space, geography)
- Books are the only source of environmental print that are directed at children

Developing

"Enough" reading materials and books are present but limited thought is put into the content of the materials.

- Organizational systems for books and print materials are not clear
- People and characters in books are not diverse
- Books do not reflect current knowledge
- Limited amount of books (e.g., signs, names of children in the room)
- Charts, visuals, and environmental print are not used to support learning

Mastered

Different types of reading materials and books are chosen to reinforce learning objectives and curricula.

LL2 Reading Opportunities

Provides children with multiple opportunities to participate in reading.

Emerging

Minimal opportunities for enriched and enjoyable reading.

- Children are only read to during whole group time
- Children are not given time to freely enjoy books in developmentally appropriate ways with adult support available
- School-age children are asked to read a book as a consequence for behavior
- School-aged children are discouraged from reading a particular book based on an adult's assumptions about that child's ability (e.g., "discouraged from reading a chapter book because it's too difficult")

Developing

Reading is a part of the daily routine.

- Children may have opportunities to read during free choice time
- School-age children are encouraged to read as an alternative to behavior consequences



CORT Observation: Language & Literacy

The CORT (Caregiving Observation and Reflection Tool) provides a systematic framework to observe and document interactions and experiences that occur within a classroom. Training & Curriculum Specialists or Program Managers should use this tool to carefully observe and record a caregiver's use of these key practices and document their strengths and opportunities for growth. Refer to the CORT Rating Guide for in depth examples of ratings for each skill or practice.

Emerging	Developing	Mastered
Staff member is building an understanding and use of the skill.	Staff member understands the practice but is still working to consistently implement it.	Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.

COMPETENCY	RATE: E/D/M	NOTES
LL1 Quality Reading Materials The learning environment has a variety of developmentally appropriate print and reading material with a wide range of vocabulary, themes, and pictures.	E D M	
LL2 Reading Opportunities Provides children with multiple opportunities to participate in reading in different and meaningful ways each day.	E D M	
LL3 Book Reading Interactions Engages with children during book reading to introduce and reinforce concepts, connect stories to children's lives, and provoke critical thinking.	E D M	
LL4 Embeds Language Support Embeds language and literacy support throughout children's activities and routines.	E D M	
LL5 Extends Language Expands on children's sounds, words, and sentences in ways that reinforce children's communication.	E D M	
LL6 Encourages Communication Models rich vocabulary and a variety of ways of communicating to promote language development.	E D M	
LL7 Promotes Social Emotional Learning Communicates about actions, thoughts, and feelings to promote social-emotional development through language.	E D M	
LL8 Responsive to Nonverbal Cues Uses nonverbal communication to support language and communication and observes children's nonverbal cues to inform own responses.	E D M	



What does the CORT measure ?

Assesses the quality of the environment and professional's practices related to:

- Language and Literacy
- Responsive Relationships
- Balanced Differentiated Instruction
- Comprehensive Caregiving
- Family Centered Practices



Competency Reflection

Each statement below refers to behaviors or attributes staff should demonstrate when interacting with children, families, or colleagues. Many of the competencies are directly observable. Other competencies may be assessed through conversations with the staff member or by examining the environment. Ask the staff member to complete the caregiver version of this competency reflection. For each of the statements, mark the level of mastery the staff member currently displays. Meet to discuss your observations and the staff member's thoughts and comments.

E
Emerging
Staff member is building their understanding and use of the practice

D
Developing
Staff member understands the practice and is working to consistently or fully implement it

M
Mastered
Staff member consistently displays or implements the practice in an appropriate manner

COMPETENCY	RATE: E/D/M	NOTES
I Direct Observation		
A Read to children throughout the day, choosing age-appropriate books that introduce new vocabulary and concepts.	E D M	
B Take advantage of teachable moments and natural routines to build language and math skills.	E D M	
C Engage children's senses to learn new concepts.	E D M	
D Offer children choices and involve them in decision making opportunities when appropriate.	E D M	
E Use verbal and physical interactions to enhance learning opportunities.	E D M	
F Have conversations with children at their eye level and use their names when speaking to them.	E D M	
G Ask open-ended, meaningful questions.	E D M	
H Model an attitude of exploration and curiosity.	E D M	
II Observation or Conversation		
A Develop and maintain consistent, nurturing relationships with children and families.	E D M	
B Learn about the stages of cognitive development for the age groups served.	E D M	
C Observe the children in care regularly and use the observations to plan meaningful experiences and set appropriate learning goals.	E D M	
D Consult with a trainer, coach, or administrator if there are concerns about a child's development.	E D M	
E Listen for and respond to comments and questions about differences and possible stereotypes.	E D M	

Competency Reflections

- New staff members or FCC providers
- During foundational coursework
- Direct Observation, Observation or Conversation, Environmental Evidence

Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool

- Seasoned Staff members
- Completed foundational coursework
- Five Domains: Language & Literacy, Responsive Relationships, Balanced and Differentiated Instruction, Comprehensive Caregiving, Family-Centered Practice



SHARE OUT- POLL

Which element of the CORT do you find the most challenging?

Collaborative Coaching

Snyder, Hemmeter, & Fox (2016)

Practice-Based Coaching Framework



Focused Observations



- Frequency of observations
 - Entire CORT 2 times per year
- Duration of observations
 - 30-45 minutes per domain

A close-up photograph of a person's hands writing in a small, open notebook. The person is holding a black pen with a wooden barrel. The notebook is open, and the left page shows some handwritten notes. The background is blurred, showing a person's arm and a light-colored surface.

Methods of Observation

- Full Tool vs. Domain Specific
- Monthly, Quarterly, Bi-Annually

Guidance around Observations & Feedback



Prepare before observing



Use positive language



Be relevant and specific



Document factual information



Take objective notes

Virtual Lab School

Reflection

Focused Topics / Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice / Lesson 4

Quality Observation Checklist

Review your observation notes and evaluate the quality and objectivity of your observations using the checklist provided. Read each indicator and select "yes" or "no" to each question. Reflect on your objectivity and ways to improve your observation skills in the space provided.

1.	Are there any interpretations or assumptions included in the observation notes?	Yes	No
2.	Is there a clear area of focus in the observation notes?	Yes	No
3.	Is there a detailed description of the professional's actions?	Yes	No
4.	Are there detailed descriptions of the children's actions?	Yes	No
5.	Do the observation notes describe vocalizations?	Yes	No
6.	Are there direct quotes or examples of language in the observation notes?	Yes	No
7.	Are there detailed descriptions of facial expressions and/or gestures?	Yes	No
8.	Are there interpretive words like <i>angry, happy, sad, frustrated, wants, loves, enjoys, because, bored, distracted, frustrated, outgoing, enthusiastic, always, or never</i> included in the observation notes?	Yes	No

Notes:

FT, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 4, Apply
FT, Leadership Essentials, Lesson 5, Apply

Using the CORT- Rating

E

Emerging

Staff member is building their understanding and use of the skill.

D

Developing

Staff member understands the practice but is still working to consistently implement it.

M

Mastered

Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.

Alignment to TCS and Management Tracks

Language and Literacy

Communication & Language Development

Social & Emotional Development

Positive Guidance

Responsive Relationships

Social & Emotional Development

Positive Guidance

Self & Cultural Understanding

Balanced Differentiated Instruction

Cognitive Development

Positive Guidance

Self & Cultural Understanding

Comprehensive Caregiving

Healthy Environments

Safe Environments

Professionalism

Family Centered Practices

Family Engagement

Communication & Language Development

Reflective Questioning



Guide

Coaches should use a variety of open-ended questions to engage staff members in reflection. A variety of open-ended questions helps the learner to reflect on their current knowledge and outcomes of new practices implemented, and what went well or needs support. Use the questions to encourage reflection and support your coaching conversations with staff members.

Types of open-ended reflective questions includes *awareness* questions, *analysis* questions, and *action* questions.

Awareness

Awareness questions ask the learner to reflect on what he or she already knows or is experiencing. Examples include who, what, when and where questions.

- What do you know about...?
- What have you tried so far?
- What did you do that worked well?
- How did that work for you?
- What do you think about...?
- What went well?
- What supports were most helpful?

Analysis

Analysis questions ask the learner to compare the current knowledge, skills, outcomes and experiences. Examples include how, why, what if, and what would questions.

- What do you know now after trying...?
- Did that work the way you intended?
- How does that compare with what your originally thought?
- How did you know you needed to do something else?
- How do you feel about that?

Alternatives

Alternative questions ask the learner to reflect on possible ways to achieve desired outcomes. Examples include how, what if, and what would questions.

- How could you find out about...?
- What would you do differently next time?
- What else could you have done to make practice consistent with standards?
- What might make it work even better next time?
- What other opportunities would be useful?

Name _____
Certifier _____
Date _____

Starter Phrases for Reflection



Guide

It can be helpful to prepare yourself for conversations about classroom observations. Use the phrases below as a resource to brainstorm ways to start a variety of reflective conversations with staff about their performance.

Objective phrases:

- Tell me about ... how Kelsey responded during homework time?
- What happened when ... you showed Daveon the number line?
- How did it go when ... Briley sat next to Jiyoung?
- I noticed that you...tell me more about that.

Interpretive phrases:

- What do you think would happen if ... you gave Carl a leadership role?
- Why do you think ... Case and West were fighting?
- Tell me how you felt about...the new schedule you started.
- How did the children respond when...?

Comparative phrases:

- If you had to do it again, how would you do it differently?
- How did today compare to yesterday?
- How would it be different if ...
- What do you think went well today compared to...?

General phrases:

- I wonder what/if ...
- I notice that ...
- I wonder how that was for the children.
- Can you help me understand?
- Tell me what you see.
- Share your thoughts.
- Did you have any challenges?
- What felt good about it?
- What do you think it looked like from the children's perspective?

Having Supportive Conversations

FT, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 5

TCS, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 2

CORT Observation: Responsive Relationships

E
Emerging
Staff member is building their understanding and use of the skill.

D
Developing
Staff member understands the practice but is still working to consistently implement it.

Mastered
Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.



CORT Action Plan

CAREGIVER

OBSERVER

DATE(S)

Professional's Overall Strengths:

Identified Goals for Growth:


I will sit on the children's level and engage in open-ended conversations with at least two children at the block area every day for two weeks.

Action Steps (including specific training and resources needed to support these goals and plans for follow-up):

Program Professional Signature:

Training & Curriculum Specialist / Observer Signature: _____

Date:



What's the right interval or frequency to complete goal setting and action planning?

Goal

Individual

Monitoring

Policy

Capacity

Going Beyond Mastery

Staff member demonstrates a clear understanding of the skill and implements the practice consistently.





Additional VLS Supports

If you are interested in learning more about the Caregiving Observation & Reflection Tool and the VLS resources that support implementation of this tool, we encourage you review these VLS courses more deeply:

Lessons & activities referenced in today's session:

- ☐ Focused Topic, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 4, Apply
- ☐ Focused Topic, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 5
- ☐ Focused Topic, Using the VLS: Coaching to Enhance Practice, Lesson 5, Explore
- ☐ Focused Topic, Leadership Essentials, Lesson 5, Apply
- ☐ TCS, Communication & Language Development, Lesson 2, Apply

Additional TCS and MGT courses for review:

- ☐ Safe Environments
- ☐ Healthy Environments
- ☐ Cognitive Development
- ☐ Communication & Language Development
- ☐ Self & Cultural Understanding
- ☐ Social & Emotional Development
- ☐ Positive Guidance
- ☐ Family Engagement
- ☐ Professionalism

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