

## TEACHING ASSISTANTS' TRAINING PROGRAM (TATP)

### FEEDBACK ON TEACHING

When providing feedback on a colleague's teaching performance, it is important to remember that our role is not to judge or evaluate a person's approach to teaching or teaching style, or to demonstrate everything that we might know about teaching. Rather, the goal is to share strategies and perspectives that will help the teacher identify a plan for improving her or his teaching practice. As observers, we are reflecting back to the teacher what it is like to be a student learning in his or her class. As teachers, we are hearing, perhaps for the first time, honest feedback on how we communicate ideas and whether we create a successful learning environment.

As an observer giving feedback...	As the teacher receiving feedback...
<p><b>Focus on behaviours, not the individual.</b> Describe what you see and what you hear. What does the teacher say or do? Remember: you are providing feedback on the teaching performance, not the person.</p>	<p><b>Be sincerely open to all comments.</b> As soon as you invite someone's opinion, you need to be prepared to hear it! If you hear what you perceive to be negative comments, separate the comments from yourself as a <i>person</i> and focus on what could be changed next time to improve your <i>teaching</i>.</p>
<p><b>Be specific.</b> Identify a specific comment or behaviour and describe how it affected you. Link your comments to specific moments in the teacher's lesson. Whenever possible, offer concrete strategies for addressing particular concerns.</p>	<p><b>Avoid being defensive.</b> Try to react positively to comments. The observers providing you with feedback will need positive reinforcement, too! Saying "That's great advice, I hadn't thought of it that way" opens up a dialogue with your observers.</p>
<p><b>Be positive and constructive...and honest!</b> Always offer a positive observation first. However, try to avoid insincere praise. Follow up constructive comments with your ideas for improvement or things to try.</p>	<p><b>Specify the feedback you're looking for.</b> If you would like feedback on your voice production or time management or clarity of examples or your introduction...say so! Be specific when asking for feedback.</p>
<p><b>Check your ego at the door.</b> This process isn't about you, and showing off all you know about teaching. This process is about the teacher you are observing. Avoid grandstanding or one-upmanship.</p>	<p><b>Confirm your understanding of the feedback provided.</b> If you need to ask for clarification of a particular comment, feel free to do so. Ask an observer to rephrase a comment or paraphrase back to the observer what you think she/he is saying.</p>
<p><b>Offer options and alternatives.</b> Don't just point out areas of difficulty. Remember, you're not providing a summative evaluation of this person's teaching—you're helping the teacher identify what to try next time.</p>	<p><b>Share your reaction to the feedback.</b> Once you've heard all the verbal feedback, reflect back on your self-assessment of your lesson and think how your own assessment of your teaching compares with the observations of your colleagues. What have you learned?</p>
<p><b>Avoid prescriptive language.</b> Instead of saying "You should do this..." or "Don't do that...", phrase your suggestions as stemming from your own observations: "I'm wondering if you tried X, what might happen..."; "I'd like to see you try Y"; "I would have benefitted from a clearer explanation here, could you try this...".</p>	
<p><b>Don't demand unreasonable change.</b> Avoid pointing out challenges the teacher cannot reasonably change or address.</p>	
<p><b>Be concise.</b> Too many comments will overload the listener. Focus on one or two key points.</p>	

Adapted in part from Verderber & Verderber, (1983), in Leptak, J. 1989. Giving and receiving constructive criticism. *Lifelong Learning* 12(5), pp. 25-26. Also, "Giving and Receiving Constructive Criticism" handout from McGill University.

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### MICROTEACHING CHECKLIST

**This is a partial list of things to keep in mind when preparing your lesson. In a short microteaching lesson, you won't necessarily be able to hit all of the individual points below. This is fine. You can, however, keep in mind the 4 broad categories that contribute to an effective lesson.**

**An instructional presentation should incorporate the following 4 key elements:**

**1) Preparation of the learner.**

- a. The learner is oriented to the subject at hand.
- b. The learner's interest is piqued.
- c. The learner is informed of the lesson's goals.
- d. The learner is told what to expect from the lesson.

**2) Presentation/demonstration of materials.**

- a. Topics are presented in a logical order.
- b. Topics are presented in a sequence, e.g. moving from general to specific or from superficial to most important or from foundational to complex.
- c. Each topic is clearly introduced and there is a clear transition from topic to topic within the lesson.
- d. The instructor models a concept or activity for learners.

**3) Involvement of the learner.**

- a. Learners are asked questions to probe their understanding of the material.
- b. Clarification of key concepts is provided at regular intervals; learners are asked to explain key concepts back to the instructor.
- c. Learners have the opportunity to interact with each other.
- d. Learners have the opportunity to practice or use the material being taught.

**4) Review and summary.**

- a. Instructor recaps main ideas.
- b. Instructor invites learners to share what they've learned.
- c. Instructor points the way to further information on the subject of the lesson.