INTRODUCING CLASSROOM OBSERVATION

WHAT IS CLASSROOM OBSERVATION?
- educators observing each other’s practice, providing feedback and learning from each other to improve their impact on students’ learning
- focused on improving teacher practice in alignment with learner needs and school and region/state level priorities
- aims to make classroom practice more visible and encourage colleagues to collaborate to improve teacher practice and student learning

WHY CLASSROOM OBSERVATION?
- provides effective professional learning that emphasises reflection and feedback on practice to improve learning
- develops teachers’ self-awareness about their own teaching practice and its impact
- can help determine professional learning needs at individual and school level
- supports the development of a common understanding of effective teaching practices that have impact
- supports sharing of ideas and expertise among teachers including modelling of good practice
- provides opportunities to discuss challenges and concerns with colleagues
- builds whole-school accountability for the quality of teaching and learning occurring

WHAT ARE THE KEY ELEMENTS?
- draw on skills used in everyday teaching
  - understanding the context
  - using available evidence
  - providing descriptive, non-judgemental observation
  - maintaining objectivity
  - reducing bias
- an agreed focus for classroom observation and shared protocols
- develop trust between the teachers observing and being observed
- collegial commitment to the sharing and ongoing development of practice

WHAT ACTIONS ARE INVOLVED?
- plan: invite staff to participate in establishing the conditions or ‘ground rules’ for initiating observation practices e.g. what strategy will be used, how will people nominate to observe/be observed
- gradual steps: begin with small changes e.g. encourage staff to visit each other’s classrooms for 5-10 minutes and think about observed practices and how they could be used in their own class
- establish supportive structures: provide time for observation; encourage staff to begin working with others they feel comfortable with; establish collaborative groups to initiate conversations about learning across the school
- offer choice: allow staff some control over who observes them/who they observe and the timing of observations
- collaborate: build opportunities into schedules for teachers to work together on common goals; provide support and structures to ensure staff are jointly planning and problem solving

WHAT DO I NEED TO CONSIDER?
- incorporate classroom observation into the school’s performance and development cycle
  - Reflection and goal setting: data from classroom observations helps set goals effectively and realistically as it provides evidence of the impact of a teacher’s practice and therefore the strengths and areas for development
  - Professional practice and learning: data from observations of practice help to inform the continuous improvement of practice
  - Ongoing feedback, reflection and review: data from observations helps to evidence of performance and development in review discussions and ascertain goal achievement

Where can I find out more?
AITS Teacher Toolkit
Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework

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