

### **Advantages of Narrative Reports In Teacher Observation**

- ❖ A narrative includes specific evidence of what occurred in a classroom. You can use this evidence to support claims you make when you talk with the teacher after the observation.
- ❖ Carefully recorded notes will help you to remember what you observed when you later approach the task of interpreting and making judgments and when you talk with the teacher.
- ❖ If your purpose is improving instruction, the teacher needs to know not what her/his “grade” is or whether she/he is performing satisfactorily, but rather, exactly what needs to be improved. A narrative provides real examples to use in discussing how something might have been done differently. Even if you only have good things to say about the teacher, it’s better to be specific about what was done well.
- ❖ A narrative is chronological. You simply write what you see as it happens. If this is your goal and your approach to the task of observing, you are less likely to miss something important than if you are searching for evidence related to various checklist items.
- ❖ Open-ended observation gives you the opportunity to record what happened in its natural context. Behavior only has meaning when you see it and interpret it in light of the setting: where it fit in the lesson, what the learners were doing, what happened right before, how the learners responded, etc.
- ❖ Taking narrative notes reflects a measure of respect for the teacher. Your approach shows that you understand that teaching styles vary. There are many different ways to be an effective teacher. You are literally there to learn—to see how she/he handles different learners and situations--not just to see how she/he measures up to a predetermined list of competencies.
- ❖ Others:

## Disadvantages of Checklists

Saphier (1993) points out the following flaws in the checklist approach to documenting teacher observations.

- ❖ They never have enough categories to include every event you observe. According to Saphier, “the more categories there are, the more likely this is to happen, since the categories become more specific.”
- ❖ There is usually no place to record supporting evidence for your claims. When you make a check or give a numerical rating, you are, in effect, making a claim. Saphier says even a form that allows space for comments is less than ideal because the amount of white space provided limits what you can write.
- ❖ When you use a checklist, you note the presence of, or give the teacher a rating on a certain behavior or quality. But according to Saphier, “Knowing the presence or absence of a behavior is useless unless we know how it was used, in what context...in other words if the behavior was used appropriately.”
- ❖ He also says that checklists and other instruments with categories for organizing observations “efface the reader’s sense of the flow of the class—the way events unfolded.” Instead, a chronological narrative shows how events related to each other.

Saphier, John. (1993). *How to make supervision and evaluation really work*. Acton, MA: Research for Better Teaching, Inc.