



## Developing And Using Observation Checklists

Checklists or rating scales permit the observational process to occur quickly and systematically with a specified focus. They must

- use mutually exclusive categories of behavior or activity
- develop a set of rules to govern how events are observed and recorded
- be pilot tested.

Nevertheless, some school principals find the use of predefined categories too constraining and prescriptive. The alternative is to take written field notes while you observe or after you are finished.

## Analyzing Observations

Once you have your recorded data, reflect on possible explanations for what is observed.

- make reflective notes beside your observations
- look for patterns, including impressions, questions, and recognizable themes or commentaries
- look for the taken-for-granted and obvious
- look for the unexpected
- avoid judgments.

## Making Time for Observation

To make time for observations you can:

- structure observations as part of group roles
- make observation a regular part of your routine
- plan and schedule observation within the structure of your day plan
- identify the administrator role; tell the staff what you are doing
- observe during hands-on activities or during group work
- use natural and unobtrusive ways to record data, for example, post-it notes, clipboard.