

Earth Science by Design

Classroom Observation Guide

This guide is intended to structure the classroom observations that partners make of each other.

The purpose of the classroom observation is to provide feedback to your partner and to the Earth Science by Design project staff about what actually happened in the session. We believe that this feedback can help teachers improve their teaching. It also helps the project staff know how these sessions embody the principles of Understanding by Design.

The guide is organized in terms of questions about actual behavior. You should focus on directly observable behavior and should *not* include opinions or interpretations of the behavior. Please try to be objective!

Whenever possible, provide specific examples of the behavior you observed. Include as much detail as you can. (i.e. "Teacher asked for thumbs up/down signal three times and distributed a short written quiz at the end of the lesson.")

No one class session will include all the behaviors described below, so some questions will remain unanswered, or will simply be answered "no" or "not applicable."

Date _____ Approx. # of students in class _____

Teacher name _____

School _____

Observer name _____

Unit name _____

This session is # _____ of _____ sessions anticipated in this unit.

(Please attach any handouts students used in this session.)

Briefly describe the overall structure of this session:

The opening or introduction of the session:

The main activities of the session:

The closing or wrap-up of the session:

Describe Specific Teacher Behaviors Observed During this Session

Did the teacher introduce or review the essential questions of the unit? Describe.

Did the teacher make clear to the students how the activities of this session are related to the essential questions and the unit goals? Describe.

Did the teacher keep this session “on track” and aligned with unit goals, i.e. avoided “side trips” and tangential activities/discussions? Please describe.

Did the teacher use informal methods to check for student understanding during the session? Please describe.

Did the teacher relate today's learning experiences to the culminating performance assessment? If so, please describe.

Did the teacher review or reinforce the expectations for the performance assessment?

Did the session include learning experiences that build the knowledge and skills that help students explore essential questions and big ideas? If so, describe the activities.

Did the teacher elicit student preconceptions or misconceptions and then use this information to guide the work of the session? If so, describe.

During this session, did students and/or the teacher use Web resources? Please describe.

Student Behaviors During this Session

Did students discuss or refer to the essential questions of the unit? If so, please describe.

Did students discuss or refer to the performance assessment? If so, please describe.

Did students relate today's learning experiences to the big ideas? If so, please describe.

Did students seem to be attentive and engaged in the lesson? Describe.

Did students ask questions or make statements that go beyond fact gathering and that reflect conceptual struggles? If so, please describe.

Did students demonstrate their understanding (i.e. "I get it! Now I know what you mean by the rock cycle, etc.")? If so, please describe.

In this session, were students asked to reflect upon and review essential questions? If so, how was this structured?

Were the students encouraged to monitor their own progress and learning? If so, please describe.

Reflections on the Session by the Partners

After this session, discuss your observations of this session with your partner. Encourage your partner to interpret and reflect upon their actions. Use this space to record your joint reflections about the session.

Reflection questions:

1. Did the session fulfill the goals the teacher had for it?
2. How could the session have been improved?