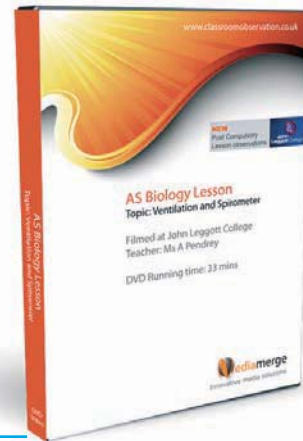


Observing for Impact

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It's time to talk about the 'Big O'. No, I don't mean Roy Orbison, but lesson observation. As teachers we are observed all day by pupils but stick an adult into the mix and our behaviour can go a bit skew-whiff – especially when Ofsted are involved. Observations are seldom pleasant but being observed is crucial to your professional development and for school improvement. They are also an entitlement and part and parcel of the job although drop-ins and learning walks can make these excessive. From a management point of view there has to be a clear understanding of its purpose

and practice beyond box-ticking and going through the motions. Lesson observations sound simple enough – but do you as a senior manager engage with them appropriately and do you need clarification why you are using them and for what purpose?

A poorly planned observation policy can lead to teachers becoming overly critical, competitive and defensive and can have a very negative and demotivating effect on the atmosphere in the staff room. Done well, however, an observation model can help teachers to improve and develop and build an environment of openness and experimentation.

To help you get the best from lesson observations Mediamerge has developed Observing for Impact, which is an impressive CD guide ideal for staff training and for helping to engage colleagues with the purpose of lesson observations. The materials are fully aligned with 2012 Ofsted observation practice and provide full support for policy decisions needed under the 2012 Performance Management and Capability arrangements.

There are 24 well thought out activities on offer that cover everything you need to know in order to make lesson observations in your school have a proper impact on every level. The scope of areas covered is comprehensive and includes defining different observation models for different purposes, exploring the context of a lesson, structuring post-observation conversations, using observation for leadership evaluation of school performance, triangulation of evidence, evaluating school improvement, agreement of observation protocols, how the observation process is led and managed, how observations generate appropriate evidence for Ofsted, and how outcomes are shared with all relevant stakeholders. To get you started there are two web pages that set the context, and each of the activities is supported by a downloadable PPT that guide you through. If your school does not have an agreed policy or protocol on observation then this resource will be

invaluable. If you do, then the resource will allow you monitor and review its arrangements.

How could it be improved? Well, the advice on offer is all sound and well-crafted but some talking heads on video would have bought things to life as for some the material might be too dry. High impact training sessions need a voice and having someone explain the activities would have helped inject some energy and insight into the activities. With the price of this resource north of £150, I think a sharpening of the pencil is in order.

Good teachers don't always make good observers. Training is paramount, which is why this CD is so important to engage with. You might have been observing lessons for years or you might be new to the job. Either way, the activities on offer will help professionalise and structure your approach so that your observations have a real sense of purpose and plenty of insight and gusto. Although it won't necessarily train you how to observe, what it will do is give you everything you need to organise observation and how to get the best from it. Ofsted inspectors themselves might be interested in this resource as part of their professional development and I think it will be especially interesting to union representatives too.

VERDICT:
One to watch
 At £178.80 (incl. VAT), this is a great resource for making lesson observations meaningful, consistent, equitable and robust, and well worth an investment.



THE PLACE TO BE

Outstanding and Beyond is the conference for educators who put learning and development at the heart of what they do. Discover the secrets of success with inspiring keynotes, a range of workshops packed with practical tools and techniques, a learning-focused exhibition, author book signings and the definitive bookshop for anyone who loves learning and teaching. Outstanding and Beyond takes place on 15th March 2013 at the Ricoh Arena, Coventry. To book your places email bookings@outstandingandbeyond.co.uk, call 0118 9797 551 or visit outstandingandbeyond.co.uk

As well as gathering practical ideas and advice, delegates will leave at the end of the day feeling inspired, uplifted and reminded of their crucial importance in improving the life chances of the children in their care.