



Active Insight: Evidence in Action



Tip #442: Peer Observation for Growth

Overview

Watching a colleague teach is one of the most direct ways to develop as a professional. Peer observation offers teachers a low-risk opportunity to see different approaches to instruction, classroom management and student engagement in action. When observation is focused and followed by a structured conversation, it builds shared language and collective confidence across a staff. Schools that embed peer observation into their professional learning culture see more consistent teaching practice and stronger collegial relationships over time.

Key Teaching Ideas

The value of peer observation comes from its focus. An open-ended visit to watch a colleague rarely produces useful insight. A ten-minute observation with a specific question, such as how the teacher manages transitions or how they respond to off-task behaviour, gives both teachers something concrete to discuss. The debrief matters as much as the observation itself. A brief, honest conversation after the visit, grounded in what was seen, builds trust and produces the kind of specific improvement that whole-staff professional development rarely achieves.

Practical Application

- **Focused Observation Brief:** Agree on a specific focus before the visit, such as instruction clarity, transition management or student engagement strategies. A narrow focus produces more useful feedback.
- **Short Visit Format:** A ten-minute observation is often more productive than a full lesson visit. Brief, focused observations are easier to schedule and less disruptive for both teachers.
- **Structured Debrief:** Follow each observation with a short conversation using a simple format: what was noticed, what worked well and one question for reflection. Keep it specific and evidence-based.
- **Strategy Swap:** Two teachers agree to try each other's approach to a specific challenge and then compare how their classes responded. This builds shared understanding without formal observation logistics.
- **Team Goal Setting:** After a series of observations, a teaching team identifies one shared focus to work on together. A collective goal builds accountability and sustains the improvement cycle.



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Next Steps

Build your peer observation practice with professional learning tools available at activeeducationaustralia.edu.au.

References and Research

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) – Professional standards and peer learning resources covering observation, feedback and collaborative practice.