

## **TEACHER OBSERVATION DEFUSING DEFENSIVENESS**

Observation Procedures. The observation method is simple—it consists of you and your partner taking time to observe each other and share information. In some schools, observation is formally scheduled for all teachers (across disciplines). Observing across disciplines promotes partnerships and integration. It's up to you to help each other feel comfortable and safe with this process. Use the attached form for observations.

All observations are scheduled in advance, and you and your partner will have discussed beforehand what areas the observer may be looking for. It helps for you to be observed a minimum of two times, for a period of 30-45 minutes each. If you do not feel comfortable with someone in the room "coding" the interactions, then it is possible to videotape the class and code the interactions later.

If you have access to a copy of the "Dateline" video produced by NBC and aired March 1992, show it to participants after the discussions about teacher/student interaction and teacher response in the classroom. In this video a teacher volunteers to have her classroom videotaped by Myra & David Sadker to watch for gender bias. Use the following discussion questions after viewing the video:

1. Did you identify with any of the teacher behaviors in the video?
2. Which ones?
3. What surprised you?

## **Observation Guidelines**

When teachers who have been alone in their classrooms are approached about observing each other, they may recall being evaluated as student teachers. It's important to communicate that observation is not evaluation; it is allowing access to information about classroom interactions that are difficult for us as teachers to capture when we are involved in presentation or discussion. The following ideas help identify and defuse defensiveness:

- When information is personalized, it's easy to become defensive and quit listening. Deal with this by noticing when you're absorbing and make a mental note to detach from the information. Feedback is not a personal attack; it is information that helps us look objectively at our teaching practices.
- Notice when you are deflecting attention from the issues by blaming (it's someone else's fault), judging (you did that wrong), absorbing (taking it personally), advising (let me tell you what to do), or discounting (that's not true/important, etc.). Usually, when any of these responses occurs, listening has stopped.
- Notice when you get turned off by "hot buttons" – painful words or ideas that identify age-old belief systems (e.g., women's place should be in the home). Some of these may be valid, but others do not honor us.
- Questions to respond with when participants get defensive:
  1. What has been left out?
  2. What do you want?
  3. "We're off the subject..."