# How to Collect Low-Bias Data

Many observers of teaching confuse descriptions of classroom practice with opinions about classroom practice. Opinions can be a reflection of one's biases and personal preferences, particularly when they are not supported by a collection of evidence. Descriptions (evidence) and opinions differ in the following way:

Description of Classroom Practice (Observer records an event with no interpretation)

VS.

Opinion About Classroom Practice (Observer interprets an event based on own beliefs about good teaching)

To consistently apply the rubric to observations of classroom practice, it is essential to be able to make observations of evidence that stand independent of opinions (premature interpretations of evidence that are based on personal beliefs).

| EVIDENCE | OPINION |
|---|---|
| observable | draws conclusions |
| objective | subjective |
| free of value judgment | may include value judgment |

## Evidence Types:

**Verbatim scripting of teacher or student comments:**

"Would one person from each table come to collect the materials?"
"We have five more minutes to finish. Let's look over our work before we hand it in!"

**Narrative statements of observed teacher or student behavior:**

The teacher stood by the door, greeting students as they entered.
Students were seated at tables in groups of four, working independently.

**Numerical information about time, student participation, resource use, etc.:**

Three students offered 80% of the comments during the discussion.
Fifteen minutes was spent in circle time.

**Environment aspect of learning environment:**

The assignment was on the board for students while attendance was taken.
The students used the station tags to know which of the three centers to work in during independent work.

# Analyzing Evidence after the Observation

## Step #1

### The Three Rs

After collecting evidence and prior to the post-observation conference, implement the 3 Rs...

1. *Remain* in the observation mode to "clean the data".

2. *Review* the data to ensure it reflects evidence and not opinion (use the checklist below)

3. *Reflect* and sort the evidence to align it with the instructional framework

4. *AND...* consider any additional information or explanations provided by the teacher in their self-reflection regarding the lesson

## Step #2

### Evidence Checklist

Ask yourself...
✓ Have I recorded only facts?

✓ Have I included any opinion (in the guise of fact)?

✓ Is my evidence relevant to the 2013 Framework for Teaching?

✓ Whenever possible, have I quantified works such as *few*, *some*, and *most*?

✓ Have I used quotation marks when quoting a teacher or student?

✓ Does my selection of evidence indicate any personal or professional preferences?

## Step #3

### M & M Factor *(Manageable and Meaningful)*

*Manageable:*

✓ Reviewing the data that I have for this component, what is my quick "instinct" for the level of performance? Have I done a QUICK check with critical attributes to confirm "instinct"?

*Meaningful:*

✓ Does the data tell the teaching/learning process with larger chunks of data that share both the teacher and students roles/responsibilities in the learning process?

✓ Have I determined celebrations and areas of concentration based upon the evidence linked to components/critical attributes?