CMSTEP
Cincinnati Montessori
Secondary Teacher Education Program

Observing in the Montessori Secondary Classroom
Video Peer Review Sheet

_____ Teacher Observed

_____ Observer

Name of School _____ Date _____ Number of Students _____ Ages _____

Directions: You will have 90 minutes to complete the following steps.

- Identify two segments from your video to share with your partner. Find one segment that you feel strongly represents your Montessori teaching practice and another that you think illustrates an area that has room for improvement.
- Trade video reflections and related supporting materials with your partner.
- Read through your partner's reflection and supporting materials carefully, providing feedback in the appropriate sections of the Video Peer Review sheet. (Note: You only need to read the sections of the reflection that pertain to the chosen video segments.)
- Watch your partner's two identified video segments, pausing the video as necessary to provide feedback in the appropriate section of the Video Peer Review sheet. (See the questions from the "Observing in the Montessori Secondary Classroom" sheet at the back of this packet to inform your comments.)
- After reviewing and commenting on both of your partner's video segments…
    - Trade your Video Peer Review sheets.
    - Discuss your feedback, referring back to the video, supporting materials, and/or reflections if clarification is needed.
    - At the bottom of your Video Peer Review sheet where it states "To the teacher…", comment on the way that this peer conference has helped to inform your teaching practice.
    - Finally, record any additional insights from this conversation in the relevant places on your reflection. These insights can be handwritten or typed in a different color.
    - Upon completion of your peer review, resubmit your reflection and any additional supporting materials as necessary.
- Watch your time carefully!

To the observer: It helps to ask oneself the question, "What can this teacher do that is better than I can do?" The task of the observer is to act as a catalyst, empowering the colleague to find his/her own way to improve the work with the children. The observer must ask him/herself, "How can I avoid being critical and develop the keen skills of observation?" Through making observations, asking questions inwardly, and taking time to process, the observer's comments can often help the colleague come to solutions or find ways to resolve problems in the classroom.

The observer should strive to:

Have emotional equilibrium
Practice careful non-judgmental observation
Acknowledge one's own path of self-development
Have appropriate professional boundaries
Honor confidentiality as a basis for relationships based on trust
Maintain an open and approachable manner
Exercise humility
Be both a leader and a team player
Be inwardly balanced
Carry enthusiasm
Be articulate
Be a good listener and respectful of the other
Maintain a positive attitude
Be flexible, not dogmatic
Be perceptive, objective, and fair
Be organized
Set realistic goals and practice effective follow-through

Video Segment Observed (e.g., seminar, mini-lesson, etc.): _____

Reflection
As you read your partner's reflection, make notes below for the debriefing session.

_____
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_____

Video Segments
In answering the following questions, consider the Montessori environment, teacher, students, procedures, and academics. (See the reference questions from the "Observing in the Montessori Secondary Classroom" sheet located at the back of this packet.)

- What did you notice is going especially well in the classroom?

_____
_____
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- What kinds of things might this teacher want to consider?

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Supporting Materials

- In what ways were the supporting materials effective?

_____
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- In what ways could the supporting materials be more effective? Are there any additional materials that should be included?

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Additional Comments:

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To the teacher:
Use this space to comment on the ways this peer review has helped inform your teaching practice.

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Montessori Environment

- Is there student maintenance and care of the classroom? How is this evidenced?
- Are the lessons and objectives clearly posted and visible for the students?
- What is the physical classroom like? Is it tidy? Clean? Organized? Beautiful?
- Is there evidence of the natural world present in the classroom (e.g. healthy plants, classroom pets, etc.)?
- How are the classroom materials cared for?

Montessori Teacher

- Balance of student-centered and teacher-centered classroom instruction (i.e. direct instruction to large group, but also small group lessons and coaching of small groups and individuals. You may not see all of these teaching modes during your observation.
- Teacher actively teaches and coaches at all times. This may include observing a student as she works to understand the next step for coaching the student.
- The balance of freedom and authority is an essential part of the life of the developing adolescent. Does the teacher intervene to guide students with inappropriate behavior? Does she provide the follow-through invitation for academic support for students who need tutoring and consequences for inappropriate behavior?
- It is important for the adolescent to be given healthy opportunities to follow the authority of the adult. Where is the evidence that this is happening? Does the adult understand how to set up the necessary infrastructure for students to follow guidelines that create student success and a pleasant classroom community?
- How does the teacher discipline students? What is a student's response to correction?
- Does the teacher have a thorough knowledge of the content?
- Does the teacher understand how to use differentiation of instruction so that all students are challenged and supported? How is this evidenced?
- Does the teacher provide a variety of teaching methods on a regular basis? (ex. TPR, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, musical?) Which ones did you observe?
- Does the teacher facilitate smooth transitions between activities?
- During blocks of time, do teachers provide an opportunity for students to work without being interrupted? Does the teacher distract the students?
- Does the teacher manage lessons so that they begin and end in a timely way?
- Is the teacher skilled at Socratic dialogue/Paideia seminar?
- What is the predominant temperament of the teacher?

Montessori Students

- How do the students greet the teacher? Do they look at her or avoid her eyes?
- What habits have students developed as they enter the classroom?
- Is there warmth between the teacher and the students?
- Do both the students and teachers respect the learning environment by walking to one another and speaking softly rather than talking across the room? (Unless in a large group lesson, which even then, does not disturb the class next door.)
- Do the students know the routine, their place? How is this evidenced?
- Is it clear that students understand the limits and guidelines of the classroom? If so, do they respect them?
- Are the students are responsive to the authority and guidance of the teacher?
  Do they make an effort? Can they work independently?
- Are students respectful of one another? Do they know how to go about problem solving appropriately?
- Are students engaged and focused on their academic work?
- Are the students really listening to the teacher? What are the indications?
- How are the relationships between the students?
- What are the work habits and problem solving skills of the students?
- What is the demeanor of the students as they move?

Montessori Procedures

- Is there evidence of some choice for students with clear limits and guidelines? This is apparent in the independence and respect with which the students conduct themselves within the classroom, as well as some choice in the work a student attempts (This does not mean the student chooses alternative assignments that are not sanctioned by the teacher or chooses not to work)
- Does the community meeting have clear procedures and leadership and feel orderly and respectful?
- Do students wait their turn to speak?
- Does conversation stay on-topic?
- Do students listen and respond to one another appropriately?
- Are only water, fresh fruit and vegetables eaten in the classroom? And only at the appropriate times?
- Do students sit respectfully and take notes during lessons? Is it expected that students automatically get out pen and notebook during lessons and with guests who come to speak to the class?

Montessori Academics

- Are there clear, appropriate, and rigorous objectives for academic work? How is this evidenced?
- Is the theme evident in the classroom (display, cover sheet, activities, kick-off, group initiative/processing, discussion, etc.)?
- Are rubrics used by the students and teachers to guide choices in behavior and work decisions?
- Do checklists show differentiated work?
- Does shelfwork reflect a variety of modalities (book, computer, manipulatives, cards, etc.)?
- Is there a project that is part of the cycle's curriculum? Do students have one major, long-term project and other short term projects?
- Do students regularly self-evaluate work and/or behaviors?
- What has the teacher done to make the lessons engaging?
- How does the curriculum encourage skills, knowledge, cooperation, self-discipline, and students to be citizens of the world?
- Does coursework have interdisciplinary links? What examples of this did you observe?
- Does the teacher understand the need for and actually address the following gateways for the adolescent (from *The Soul of Education*)? How does each show up in the classroom?

  The yearning for deep connection • The longing for silence • The search for meaning and purpose • The hunger for joy and delight • The creative drive • The urge for transcendence • The need for initiation