



CLASSROOM COACH

Improving Preschool Classroom Quality

Glossary of Classroom Coach Terms

- 1. Adult-Initiated activities** are activities that the adult leads from beginning to end, allowing for individual child expression and participation at his or her developmental level.
- 2. Anecdotal notes** are brief accounts of what the adult has seen and heard while interacting with and observing children: the *when, where, what, who, and how*. Anecdotes should be specific and objective, rather than subjective.
 - **Objective anecdotal notes** are not influenced by the adult's personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudices; they are based on fact and are unbiased.
Example: *Ch1 and Ch2 had a disagreement over who should use the purple marker. Ch1 hit Ch2 and took the marker. T1 came over to help resolve the conflict.*
 - **Subjective anecdotal notes** are influenced by the adult's personal feelings, interpretations, or prejudices and are biased.
Example: (subjective words are bolded) *Ch1 was **angry** and took the purple marker away from Ch2. Ch2 started **whining** and grabbing for the marker so Ch1 hit Ch2. T2 **was too busy to notice so T1 hurried** over to resolve the conflict.*
- 3. Assessment Results** (in the context of this course and the Classroom Coach) are the results of the universal screener used at the beginning of the school year and the results of the child observation measure used throughout the school year (e.g., Ages and Stages Questionnaires®, COR Advantage).
- 4. Attributes** are those things that belong to a person, thing, or group.
Example: The attributes of a triangle are that it has three sides.
- 5. Cardinality** is the ability to name the number of objects in a given set; to know the cardinal number of a set.
Example: There are three green frogs in my bag and there are two yellow birds and one green frog in Susie's bag. Each bag has a cardinality of 3.
- 6. Child-Initiated activities** are activities that the child controls from beginning to end. The adult supports the child's ideas and allows him or her to guide his or her own play and learning.

- 7. Closed-Ended Questions** are questions that may be answered with a *yes*, *no*, or a one-word answer.
Example: *Do you feel good?* or *Do you like red or blue?*
- 8. Individual Education Programs (IEPs)** refer to the programs developed specifically for a child who is receiving additional services, such as speech and language, hearing impaired services, or other kinds of special education services.
- 9. Models/Approaches** (in the context of this course and for the Classroom Coach) refers to the type of curricula that is chosen for the classroom in which you teach (e.g., HighScope, Creative Curriculum, Montessori, Reggio, etc.).
- 10. Moderately Challenging Activities** are activities that are accessible enough that they are not overwhelming but are challenging enough that they require effort to understand or complete. This means that the activities are challenging enough to hold the child's interest and give a sense of achievement upon completion but not so easy that children are bored and not so hard so that children give up. Think about Goldilocks when providing moderately challenging activities: Is it too challenging, not challenging enough, or is it just the right amount of challenge.
- 11. One-to-One Correspondence** is the ability to match one object to another by counting off *1, 2, 3*, and so on, while touching each object along the way. For example, the teacher might ask, *how many red cars are there?* In response, the child counts *1, 2, 3*, and *4* and presses their finger to each red car as they say the numbers; the child doesn't touch the blue and yellow cars.
- 12. Open-Ended Questions** are questions that leave room for the respondent to answer fully or in many different ways, using their own knowledge, feelings, and experience.
Example: *What are the best things about outside time?*
- 13. Phonological Awareness** is the ability to recognize and play around with the different sounds in a language, for example, breaking apart words into onset and rime, substituting initial sounds like changing *rake* to *bake*, and noticing letter sounds and other specific sounds like *th-* and *ch-*.
- 14. Positive Feedback** occurs when an adult reinforces the work that a child is engaged in or has completed by providing positive feedback that encourages the child to continue to the activity. For example, the teacher might say, *you finished your drawing? Let me*

see. From looking at it, I can tell that you really took some time to combine colors to create new ones and I noticed that it took you almost the whole work time to draw it. Let's hang it up so the other kids can see it and enjoy it too.

- 15. Praise** rather than positive feedback expresses approval or admiration but does not necessarily convey a message that encourages the child to continue to engage in an activity. The first example, which follows, might encourage the child to draw, but does not reinforce or extend a specific action such as combining colors or persisting at drawing. The second example, which follows, is “empty praise” that a four-year-old child might have little to do with whether the behavior is reinforced, as her mother may decide whether she wears a bow in her hair or not, and it sends the message that today your hair looks nice, but on other days it doesn't.

Example: *That drawing is very pretty* or *Your hair looks nice today with that ribbon in it.*

- 16. Research-Validated Child Observation Measure** (in the context of this course and for Classroom Coach) refers to the child observation measure used in your classroom. Research validated means that the measure has gone through a rigorous psychometric process to ensure that its users can score it reliably and that the results of the measure provide valid information for its intended use (e.g., measuring student growth throughout the school year. Examples include HighScope's COR Advantage, Teaching Strategies' GOLD, and the Desired Results Developmental Profile (DRDP), developed by the California Department of Education.

- 17. Scaffolding** occurs when an adult supports a child at their current developmental level as they engage in tasks or activities and then supports the child's learning by using gentle nudges that helps them complete the task/activity successfully. (Scaffolding is used until children can perform the task/activity on their own). See Appendix A for more about scaffolding.

- 18. Screener** (in the context of this course and for the Classroom Coach) refers to the universal measure you use in your classroom at the beginning of the school year (e.g., Ages and Stages Questionnaires) to identify children with developmental delays who may require additional services.

- 19. Subitizing** is the ability to recognize at a glance the number of items present. Humans can typically subitize a set of up to seven objects. Subitizing is critical for understanding cardinality.

Example: A child looks at a group of children in line and, without counting one by one, says *There are four kids in line.*

Appendix A

Scaffolding Learning Within the Gradual Release of Responsibility

The gradual release of responsibility model helps clarify teaching in the broadest possible sense in six simple words: **Show Me, Help Me, Let Me.**

Show Me refers to modeling, **Help Me** refers to scaffolding, and **Let Me** refers to trying it on my own. Although simple, this tried-and-true approach is used by families, teachers, and coaches to teach children how to learn everything — from riding a bike to identifying the letters of the alphabet to kicking a soccer ball.

Show Me

The first step of the gradual release of responsibility is to show children what you want them to learn. This step is often referred to as *modeling*. The teacher intentionally shows the children step by step how to do something, such as put paper on the easel, mix two colors to make a new color, place the blocks on the shelf, or say thanks when someone helps you. Modeling, at its best, simply shows children exactly how you expect them to accomplish the task or how to behave. It can be a show without words or a show and tell. When you show and tell, you think aloud about what you are doing and why you are doing it.

Show Me, in the broadest sense, is scaffolding instruction for all. A common mistake teachers make during the Show Me step is that they often show and show and show and never move on through the next two steps of the gradual release of responsibility: Help Me and Let Me. For differentiating instruction purposes, some children may need to be shown more than once; however, the majority of children should move on to the Help Me step after the Show Me step. Some children will already know how to do the task or behavior and can move right to the Let Me step to hone their skills on their own.

Help Me

The second step of the gradual release of responsibility is to help children as they learn and play. This step is often referred to as *scaffolding*. The teacher intentionally helps children accomplish the task or behavior. Your ultimate objective is to scaffold or help your children until they can accomplish the task on their own or independently. The help comes in a variety of forms, from simple cues to learning routines. When you feel that a simple nudge can take a child's play to higher levels of learning, you can provide cues, suggestions, a retelling of past experiences, and dialogue that points out what you are noticing to help the child bridge prior knowledge to new knowledge.

Sometimes specific scaffolding approaches are needed to help develop creative and independent thinkers, including the following approaches:

Reading aloud — Reading aloud models the reading process. When you add thinking aloud to the read-aloud, you model and scaffold reading comprehension. When you add questioning, you scaffold both convergent and divergent thinking processes (e.g., “In this book, Ruthie told a lie. How did she feel about lying?” [convergent question]; “This book was about telling the truth. Should everyone always tell the truth?” [divergent question]).

Self-talk and think-aloud protocols — When you use these protocols, you scaffold children’s ability to think through how to solve a problem, how to think about books as they are reading them, or how to build with blocks so that they don’t fall down. Remember that children’s cognitive abilities are still in development, so opportunities for them to see developed, critical-thinking processes are essential.

Open-ended questions — When you ask open-ended questions, you scaffold children’s convergent and divergent thinking processes.

Convergent thinking requires children to start with pieces of information that they use to converge on one answer or solution, a skill needed in life when one has a plenty of information to use to make a decision.

Divergent thinking, on the other hand, starts with a prompt that encourages children to think critically, diverging toward multiple distinct answers, a skill needed in life when one is faced with a broad problem with little information.

Ask children some of these powerful questions that lead to convergent and divergent thinking:

- **What are you thinking?**
- **What made you say that?**
- **What else is possible here?**
- **What do you need to learn more about _____?**
- **What are you noticing?**
- **What does that remind you of?**
- **What happens when/if we _____?**
- **What is different in your thinking now?**
- **Whom would you like to share this with?**
- **How will you share it?**

Teacher feedback — Concise, constructive feedback about children’s work can act as the bridge from the Help Me step to the Let Me step. For preschool-aged children, concise means that the teacher says one thing that is good about the work and one thing that could be better. Everyone can do one thing to make their work better.

Help Me is scaffolding instruction for small groups and individual children. A common mistake teachers make during the Help Me step is that they often help and help and help and never move on to the next step of the gradual release of responsibility: Let Me. For differentiating

instruction purposes, some children may need to be helped more than a few times; however, the majority of children should move on to the Let Me step after the Help Me step. Some children will already know how to do the task or behavior and may need more advanced instruction or may engage in more complex play.

To meet students where they are and appropriately scaffold during a lesson or while playing, you have to know the individual and collective zone of proximal development (ZPD) of your learners. ZPD can be referred to as those skills and behaviors a child uses but confuses (e.g., the child writes the letter *r* but writes it backwards; the child draws a picture of the toy he wants to use but can't say the word, the child can build a one-foot tower but not a two-foot tower). Knowing what children can do on their own helps the teacher know what they can most easily learn next with competent assistance.

Let Me

The third (and final) step of the gradual release of responsibility is to let children *try it on their own*. The ultimate goal is for children to accomplish tasks and behaviors confidently, competently, and independently. Independent practice is crucial for children to hone and master the tasks and behaviors on their own. To help children achieve this goal, offer encouragement as children grow in their independence.

Six Simple Words

The gradual release of responsibility model is certainly not a new teaching idea as it is as old as time. But it can help you get back to the basics of teaching and learning in six simple words: **Show Me, Help Me, Let Me.**