

# Participating in Microteaching

## Guidelines for giving and receiving feedback



Each participant has prepared a short sample of instruction (no longer than five minutes), and each participant will be providing feedback to peers. Readiness to both give and receive constructive feedback is essential for a microteaching session to be successful.

## Delivering instruction

### Preparing your sample instruction

- Though the lesson or activity you'll deliver is shorter and less detailed than what you would teach to students familiar with your subject, it is nonetheless **actual teaching**. Your job is to engage other participants and help them really understand the point(s) you're making.
- If you are incorporating visuals or handouts, bring five copies with you to the session. If you must use slides, email them to [CTLgrads@columbia.edu](mailto:CTLgrads@columbia.edu) more than 24 hours before the session.
- A form will help participants note observations about your sample instruction's organization and student engagement. Ahead of the session, please decide on a **more specific aspect of your teaching** that you would like feedback on. The form includes an open category for this aspect of your teaching.

### Receiving feedback

- It is **impossible to fail** during a microteaching session! While it is natural to be a little nervous when being observed teaching, your peers in this session are all in the same boat and are committed to helping each other improve teaching. No matter how you end up feeling about your performance, you will receive a lot of valuable insight and hear about strengths you may be unaware of.
- You'll receive a lot of feedback, and some of it may be contradictory. **Don't worry about responding to every point.** Instead, get as much of a sense as you can of people's experiences learning from you. Feel free to ask for clarification about these experiences. Notes from the session facilitator will give you another record of the feedback you receive.

## Delivering feedback

### Learning and observing during sample instruction

- Before an instructional sample, write down into the observation form the **specific aspect of teaching** the instructor would like feedback on. If you have any questions about this, ask before the instructor begins.
- As you participate in an instructional sample as a student, **don't role-play** the part of an undergraduate; just be yourself, learning.
- **Jot brief notes on the form** during the sample to help you provide specific feedback afterwards. Stay engaged in learning as much as possible, even as you note observations about instructional technique.
- Remember to **note what helps you learn, as well as what hinders you from learning**. Instructors can be very self-critical and blind to aspects of their teaching that should actually be celebrated and further developed.

### Providing feedback after sample instruction

- When delivering your feedback, **focus on your subjective experience as a learner**.
  - Begin observations with "I" rather than "You".
    - Ex: *I had a hard time reading the text on your slides while you were talking*, rather than *You don't provide enough time to read through text on your slides* or *You shouldn't use so much text on your slides*.
  - Similarly, avoid sweeping characterizations, and keep focused on your experience.
    - Ex: *I was encouraged to respond to your question when you smiled at me*, rather than *You seem like a really approachable teacher*.
- **Resist the temptation to problem-solve**. Microteaching sessions raise issues that take reflection and practice to really address. Don't jump into offering solutions or advice for improvement unless the instructor specifically asks you to.

## After the microteaching session

The session facilitator will provide you and CTL a summary of aspects of teaching that are discussed during the session. This summary will not contain identifying information. If the session has raised particular questions or concerns, we encourage you to contact us directly for consultation, at [CTLgrads@columbia.edu](mailto:CTLgrads@columbia.edu).

Practice followed up by immediate and structured feedback is a proven driver of skill development. After you experience this exercise, consider setting up similar opportunities for your actual students.

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**Sources:** Allan, D. and Ryan, K. (1969). *Microteaching*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley; Persellin, D., and Goodrick, T. (2010). Faculty development in higher education: Long-term impact of a summer teaching and learning workshop. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (10:1), 1–13; Remesh, A. (2013). Microteaching, an efficient technique for learning effective teaching. *Journal of Research in Medical Sciences : The Official Journal of Isfahan University of Medical Sciences*, 18(2), 158–163.