

GUIDE SERIES

Master Code Justifications

Purpose

This document provides an overview of the guidelines to write master code justifications. Well-written master code justifications are a crucial part of the operationalization of *Teach Primary*, as they contextualize the tool for use in different places. These guidelines provide the parameters of how to ensure master code justifications are of high-quality (see Annex 1 for an example).

Background on Master Code Justifications

A master code justification should include specific evidence from the video that supports the chosen behavior quality scores and the overall master codes for each element. To assign the preliminary master code scores, coders must watch the classroom footage without stopping the video recording and take down notes on specific things that are said and done in the video, with timestamps. Once the coders finalize the master code scores, they must write the master code justifications to complement the scores. This involves re-watching the video to ensure the codes match what's happening in the classroom and the time stamps are correct. These master code justifications should be evidence-based and written as an objective argument for the chosen scores. It's important to remember the classroom interactions (not the teacher) are being scored as many coders tend to rate teachers, not what teachers are doing (as indicated by the tool).

Tips for Writing Master Code Justifications

Examples

- 1 Use language from the manual.** The first sentence of the justification will likely be taken largely from the behavior score description. Using language from the manual strengthens the description and will inform the overall structure of the master code justification.

Example: The teacher does not exhibit gender bias but does not challenge gender stereotypes either. This is evident as she calls on both boys and girls to share their thoughts on the photos. Moreover, she also calls on both genders to come to the front of class to match the photos to the words. This serves as evidence for why she provides students of all genders with equality opportunities to learn in the classroom, she does not explicitly challenge gender stereotypes.

- 2 Use examples and direct quotes from the video.** This is one of the most important aspects of a well-written justification as it is what the trainer will use to describe the codes to observers. Explicit examples and quotes from the segment are needed for a high-quality master code justification, as opposed to paraphrasing. Always check quotes from the notes while watching the recording or from a fellow coder. It is crucial for these quotes to be accurate to appropriately capture exactly what was said in the video.

Example: The teacher does not explicitly state a lesson objective, but it can be inferred from the lesson activities. For example, in the beginning of the segment, the teacher explains, "Today we write a tell a story, but before we begin writing it, we must first identify the vocabulary words we have not mastered yet." Although the teacher does not state a clear lesson objective, one can be inferred based on what she says and the activities she has the students do throughout the lesson.

3 **Use timestamps whenever possible.** Timestamps add strength to the justification and can be used by the master trainer as specific examples of evidence during the training.

Example: The teacher sets clear behavioral expectations throughout the lesson. For example, she sets clear behavioral expectations for the groups as she reminds students the rules about the activity, such as, [4:30] "Sit properly.... Don't joke around with your classmates ... Help one another ... Participate in your group." The teacher repeats the instructions during the activity and says, "sit down, let's listen" when students have finished the group activity and the leaders report to the class.

4 **Refer to counterexamples or instances that may be confusing.** These are used to explain why it is or is not evidence for a behavior.

Example: The teacher explains content, such as when she uses the cat photos to help explain unfamiliar words to the students. For example, she says, "Through pictures, we will find out the meaning of the word." However, this explanation is not very clear as students come up with different words to describe the photos. Because the students did not understand the graphic explanations and the explanations were somewhat confusing, this behavior is scored medium.

5 **Consider the importance of all the events when determining the overall element score.** Sometimes, even though a behavior is present, it may not significantly affect the overall score of the element.

Example:

Social and Collaborative Skills – 1 **Behavioral Marker Scores: L, L, L**

- There is no evidence the teacher promotes collaboration among students. Although the students stand in the front of the classroom and hold the numbers so that the other students in the classroom can see [05:02], "Turn your face toward the students and show the card as well"; however, the students do not collaborate to share materials, ideas, work towards a common goal, or produce a product.
- There is no evidence the teacher promotes students' interpersonal skills. The teacher responds to a student who is being teased, however, the teacher simply tells the offending student [10:18] "Ifreen, take your seat" and is not heard promoting interpersonal skills.
- There are no examples of negative behaviors in this classroom and there is evidence of superficial student collaboration as the students complete the activity of asking one another to name the main characters of a story.

The teacher is ineffective at fostering a collaborative classroom environment. Although he creates an environment free of physical or emotional hostility, he does not promote collaboration between students. Also, he does not promote interpersonal skills.

Non-examples

1 Avoid generic statements without including evidence. Descriptors such as “weak medium” or “strong high” are useful because they establish the boundaries of the spectrum for each score point. However, these must include evidence as to why it’s not the score it’s near on the spectrum (i.e. why is it a low medium and not a low?). It’s important to cite them with specific evidence as why the score may be higher or lower than someone may expect. For example, if H, H, H is master coded as a 4, don’t simply say the first H was “weak high.” Instead, site specific evidence for why the master code for the overall element is scored as a 4, rather than a 5.

Non-example: We decided to score feedback as a 4, because overall, the feedback was pretty good, but it could have been better.

2 Make the justification clear, objective, and detached. For example, avoid writing justifications that attribute motive or intention to the teacher.

Non-example: Even though the teacher had several opportunities to adjust her teaching, she chose not to. I never observed the teacher adjusting her instruction during this video segment. If the teacher had adjusted her teaching, the students would have learned more.

Grammatical Notes

- Avoid constrictive phrases like “always” and “never.”
- All justifications should be written in active present tense as told from the third person. For example, instead of writing, “the teacher asked the student” use “the teacher asks the students,” etc. Do not use first person wording, such as “I,” “we,” “our,” “you,” etc.
- When using quotes, the period always goes inside the quote. If it’s the end of the sentence, this is true even if the period was not part of the original quote. *For example:* The teacher tells students, “Sit down.” Rather than, “Sit down”. Moreover, there is one space after a period before the beginning of the next word.
- If the sentence ends with a question mark, there is no need to put a period outside the quotation marks. *For example:* A student asks, “May I go out?” The teacher responds, “Yes.” Rather than, “May I go out?”.
- If there is a series of quotes, use commas regularly. Commas may be placed outside the quotations when they are not part of the original text. *For example:* The teacher says, “Good job,” “Correct,” and “Well done” throughout the lesson.
- Check the master codes for spelling and grammatical errors before submitting it.

Master Code Justifications

Behaviors with common justifications should always be double-checked to see if there's anything that can be added, like a specific example from the classroom footage. The sentence should reflect what happened in the video; however, the following may be used as *templates* for these behavior ranges:

- **1.3, if N/A** There are no apparent student needs in this classroom. All the students appear to have the necessary materials and emotional stability to participate in the classroom activities.
- **4.2, if N/A** There is no observable group or independent work in this segment.
- **6.2, if L** The teacher does not provide thinking tasks.
- **6.3, if L** The students neither ask open-ended questions nor perform thinking tasks.
- **8.1, if L** In this classroom, the teacher does not acknowledge students' efforts. Comments are focused on the result of students' work and no mention of students' efforts are made.
- **8.2, if M** The teacher has a neutral attitude towards students' challenges. Although students are not penalized for their mistakes, the teacher does not help them see the value of the challenge either. His/her statements are simply focused on achieving the correct results and do not indicate the teacher has a positive attitude towards student challenges (*be sure to include examples of these type of comments that may be confusing for observers as evidence for positive attitude towards challenge*).
- **8.3, if L** There is no evidence the teacher encourages planning in the classroom.
- **9.1, if L** There is no evidence the teacher promotes collaboration among students.
- **9.2, if L** There is no evidence the teacher promotes students' interpersonal skills. The teacher is not observed teaching empathy, perspective-taking, emotion regulation, or social problem-solving skills.

ANNEX

ANNEX 1: Exemplary Master Code A

Positive Behavioral Expectations

	LOW	MEDIUM	HIGH
2.1 ? The teacher sets clear behavioral expectations for classroom activities	<p>The teacher does not set behavioral expectations for classroom tasks and/or activities.</p> <p><i>For example: The teacher says, "Work on your reading comprehension skills," without providing instruction on what the expected behavior is for the activity.</i></p>	<p>The teacher sets unclear or superficial behavioral expectations for classroom tasks and/or activities.</p> <p><i>For example: When introducing a group activity, the teacher says, "Please sit in your preassigned groups and behave," without clarifying what such behavior would entail.</i></p>	<p>The teacher sets clear behavioral expectations throughout the lesson for classroom tasks and/or activities.</p> <p><i>For example: Upon introducing a group activity to the class, the teacher explicitly states the expected behavior for students in the group. This may include, "Use a quiet indoor voice" or "Take turns speaking."</i></p> <p><i>If students are working independently, the teacher gives directions on what to do when they complete the activity. The teacher says, "Please quietly get up, bring your worksheet to me, and read while you wait for your classmates to finish."</i></p> <p>Alternatively, the teacher is not observed setting clear behavioral expectations, but students are well-behaved throughout the lesson.</p>
2.2 The teacher acknowledges positive student behavior	<p>The teacher does not acknowledge student behavior that meets or exceeds expectations.</p>	<p>The teacher acknowledges some students' behavior, but is not specific about their expected behavior.</p> <p><i>For example: If a group is following behavioral expectations, the teacher says, "This group is working well together" or "This group is doing a good job," without clarifying why or how.</i></p>	<p>The teacher acknowledges students' positive behavior that meets or exceeds expectations.</p> <p><i>For example: A teacher says to the class, "I just noticed that members of Group A are taking turns to speak and are proactively working on the next assignment."</i></p>
2.3 ? The teacher redirects misbehavior and focuses on the expected behavior, rather than the undesired behaviors	<p>Redirection of misbehavior is ineffective and focuses on misbehaviors, rather than the expected behavior.</p> <p><i>For example: If s/he notices a distracted student, the teacher stops lecturing and calls out the name of the student, asking her, "Why are you not paying attention in class?" Alternatively, the teacher continues to ignore the student who is distracted, but the distracted student begins to tease and argue with the peer sitting next to her. This shifts the focus of the entire class away from the lesson and onto those 2 students.</i></p>	<p>Redirection of misbehavior is effective but focuses on misbehaviors rather than the expected behavior. Alternatively, redirection of misbehavior is somewhat effective and focuses on the expected behavior.</p> <p><i>For example: Upon noticing that 3 students are not working on the assigned problems the teacher says, "You 3 need to stop talking now, you are making too much noise." This statement focuses on the disruptive students' negative behavior, rather than on what is expected of them. Consequently, the disruptive students quiet down. In another scenario, the teacher redirects the students by asking them to "Focus on the task at hand." Even though the teacher focuses on the positive behavior expected from the students, for the most part, they continue to talk.</i></p>	<p>When a problem arises, redirection of misbehavior effectively addresses the problem at hand and focuses on the expected behavior.</p> <p><i>For example: If students are talking loudly and being disruptive during a lesson, the teacher says, "Remember to use quiet voices," and the students quiet down.</i></p> <p>Alternatively, the teacher is not observed redirecting students' behavior, but the students are well-behaved throughout the lesson.</p>

Exemplary Master Code Description:

2.1 – H – The teacher sets clear behavioral expectations throughout the lesson. For example, she sets clear behavioral expectations for the groups as she reminds students the rules about the activity, such as, [4:30] "Sit properly.... Don't talk to seatmates.... Help one another.... Participate with your group." She repeats the instructions during the activity and says, "sit down, let's listen" when students have finished the group activity and leaders report to the class.

2.2 – L – The teacher does not acknowledge student behavior that meets or exceeds expectations. The teacher gives students many instructions, but the students who follow her instructions by sitting down, etc. do not receive acknowledgement of their correct behavior.

2.3 – M – The teacher displays a mixture of ineffective redirection and temporarily focuses on positive behavior. Although the students are generally well behaved, there are multiple instances the teacher corrects misbehavior, particularly at the end of the activity when she repeatedly tries to get students to return to their seats. Because the teacher repeats her request multiple times without the students moving, the teacher is not ineffective at redirecting this misbehavior. Despite this, the teacher tends to focus on the student's expected behavior by asking them to sit and by reminding them to raise their hand when they want to speak.

Overall score: 2 – The teacher is somewhat effective at promoting positive behavior in the classroom. While the teacher sets clear behavioral expectations for classroom activities throughout the lesson, she does not acknowledge positive student behavior. Although she does attempt to redirect misbehavior and focuses on the desired behavior, the redirection is not particularly effective.



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