TEACHING SQUARES
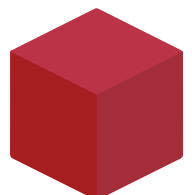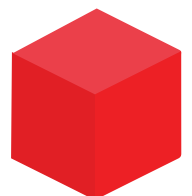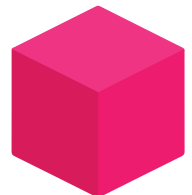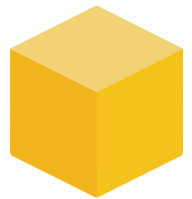
UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY
Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning

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OBSERVE & REFLECT *on* TEACHING & LEARNING

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Tables and Figures

Welcome

Welcome to the University of Calgary's Teaching Squares Guide which is intended to introduce you to the Teaching Squares philosophy and method for peer observation of teaching and learning. The guide provides background, context, and rationale for the program, along with practical directions and tools to guide you through the five components of the Teaching Squares process.

Teaching Squares founder, Anne Wessely from St. Louis Community College, created excellent materials from which numerous manuals have been subsequently developed. Due to the popularity of the program, many similar guides exist. Some elements of this document are borrowed directly from other manuals and program descriptions (Northern Virginia Community College, Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL) 2015; Stonehill College, Center for Teaching and Learning (CTL) 2008; The Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning, 2008; University of Waterloo, n.d.; York Technical College, n.d.), and others have been developed or adapted for a University of Calgary context. I indicate on the reference list and throughout the document the sources and resources drawn upon to bring together this guide. I also attempt to enhance the existing resources by expanding upon the theoretical foundations of the Teaching Squares method, the observation/reflection/debrief resources, and the supporting literature.

Feel free to use this document to implement a Teaching Square with peers in your own context or to bring together colleagues from across disciplines, perhaps in a more formal setting, such as the Taylor Institute for Teaching and Learning. The act of being watched and watching others teach can feel risky and vulnerable. The Teaching Squares framework provides the foundations to create a rich learning experience for individual participants and to build supportive teaching and learning communities within and across our campus. Welcome to a powerful opportunity to make teaching public and to learn from your colleagues at the University of Calgary.

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What will I get out of the Teaching Squares experience?

Teaching Squares initiatives are designed to enhance teaching and learning and to build community through a process of reciprocal peer observation, self-reflection, and group discussion. Originally created by Anne Wessely from St. Louis Community College, variations on Teaching Squares are widely implemented throughout universities and colleges in North America and the UK. Teaching Squares initiatives facilitate the sharing of successful and innovative teaching methods and ideas, and contribute to fostering a campus culture of ongoing reflection and improvement in teaching practice (Moorse & Moore, 2006).

By the end of the teaching squares experience you should be able to:

- observe, analyse, reflect on, and gain new insights into teaching and learning
- increase your understanding and appreciation of the work of colleagues
- gather ideas for developing your teaching and learning philosophy and 'repertoire'
- formulate a plan for trying out new approaches (adapted from The Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning, 2008; York Technical College, n.d.).

Why might I want to be involved in a Teaching Squares initiative?

Postsecondary teaching is typically experienced as a private endeavour that takes place behind closed doors and before the eyes of students exclusively. This privatization of teaching (Palmer, 2007) can create an environment of isolation for individual instructors; it also inhibits the potential for the rich dialogue and learning that can arise in conversations about teaching and learning with colleagues (Roxa & Martensson, 2009). In a Teaching Squares scenario, isolation is interrupted as individuals observe their colleagues in action and subsequently reflect on and discuss their learning as part of a community of teachers.

Teaching Squares initiatives also contribute to raising the profile and status of teaching more broadly in university contexts, where research is often situated as the privileged academic activity. Shulman (1993) argues that teaching needs to be treated more like research – as public, community property – in order for it to be seen as scholarly activity. Gathering together to watch, analyse, critically discuss, review, and reflect on teaching in the context of a Teaching Square makes the complex and rigorous work of teaching and learning visible and communally relevant.

Participating in a Teaching Square can vitalize and energize your individual teaching practices and ideas. Your involvement can also contribute to more broadly positioning teaching as scholarly, social activity involving not only individual instructors and their students, but larger communities of colleagues (within and beyond disciplinary contexts).

What makes Teaching Squares unique?

Conventional peer observation teaching development programs emphasize the giving and receiving of critical, evaluative feedback among colleagues. These initiatives often focus their efforts on developing the skills of peer reviewers and much research converges around understanding and improving the nuances of peer observation and feedback processes (see for instance Bell & Cooper, 2013; Golparian, Chan & Cassidy, 2015; Hubball & Clarke, 2011; Yiend, Weller & Kinchin, 2014). The value and importance of peer critiques of teaching should not be underestimated as these models aim to hold teaching to rigorous, objective and transparent standards of evaluation (Bernstein & Edwards, 2001). However, critics of such approaches to improving teaching have concerns about the capacities of colleagues to judge the performance of their peers (Courneya, Pratt & Collins, 2008) and the ultimate effectiveness of critical evaluation as a tool for improving teaching (Thomas, 2001). The environment produced in peer evaluation approaches can be intimidating and less than conducive to open and honest exploration of teaching values and practices.

In contrast to traditional peer observation initiatives, Teaching Squares approaches involve reflecting on what can be learned about one's own teaching by observing colleagues. Rather than evaluating others, the Teaching Squares emphasis is on self-evaluation and reflection. Beginning with the work of Stephen Brookfield (1998), critical reflection has come to be recognized as an important tool for transforming and enhancing teaching practice. For Brookfield, critically reflective teaching entails coming to "see how we think and work through different lenses" (1998, p. xiii). By allowing individuals to be 'learners' again in their colleagues classes, Teaching Squares can provide unique lenses through which to reflect on and talk about teaching and learning (University of Waterloo, n.d.). There is also growing appreciation that reflective practice is, in and of itself, a skill to be developed and nurtured (Clegg, Tan & Saeidi, 2002; Hammersley-Fletcher & Orsmond, 2005; Hubball, Collins & Pratt, 2005). The Teaching Squares experience aims to support and enhance both observation and critical reflection skills through offering numerous tools and templates to guide participants in these processes.

Guiding Principles:

In order to create a supportive, open, and energizing environment, these principles provide the foundations for Teaching Squares activities (adapted from North Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008):

Figure 1. Teaching squares guiding principles

Confidential reciprocity Everyone observes and is observed / we all experience both the role of teacher and learner in a confidential environment	**Mutual respect** We enter the classroom respectful of instructors, students, and contextual differences
Appreciation We aim to identify and build upon practices that create effective environments for learning	**Self-referential reflection** We report what was learned from the observation to improve our own teaching rather than trying to improve a square partner's teaching

How does the Teaching Squares initiative work?

Although Teaching Squares Programs can vary, a typical format involves four instructors who agree to visit each other's classes once over the course of a semester, and then meet to discuss what they have learned from their observations. This format entails approximately 8 hours of an individual's time (not including an optional debrief meeting following each observation which can add an additional 1.5 hours). The time commitment and process are as follows (adapted from North Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008):

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Figure 2. Teaching squares time commitment and process

1. **Initial square gathering**

   Meet colleagues, review the program (philosophy and logistics), set goals/expectations, and establish an observation schedule (1.5 hours)

2. **Prepare for observations**

   Share and review course outlines and/or pertinent information to provide context for the observation, think about an observation focus, and select observation note-taking materials (approximately 20 minutes for each observation -- 1 hour)

3. **Classroom Visits**

   Attend the agreed upon class and take observational notes (approximately 1 hour for each observation -- 3 hours)

4. **Optional Debrief Meeting**

   A brief opportunity for the observee to reflect on their teaching and for the observer to share preliminary observations (approximately 30 minutes for each observation -- 1.5 hours)

5. **Reflections**

   Write thoughts about your observations following each class visit and in preparation for the final meeting (approximately 30 minutes for each observation -- 1.5 hours)

6. **Wrap up square share meeting**

   Share with colleagues what you have learned about your own teaching from watching them in action, and make a plan for implementing changes accordingly (1 hour)

The pages to follow expand upon the components of the Teaching Squares process, providing guidance and practical tools to assist participants along the way.

1. Initial square gathering

Section 1 is adapted from North Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008.

Along with reviewing the Teaching Squares philosophy and method, the following templates will help you get oriented and organized.

1.1 Who are my teaching square partners?

Table 1. Who are my teaching square partners?

Name	Email	Phone

1.2 Setting Expectations: What do we hope to gain from this experience?

Taking the time to clarify this question at the start and revisiting it throughout the program will help you to get the most out of your teaching square and be a better square participant. You can use the following chart to record your own and your colleagues' goals for the square.

Table 2. Setting Expectations: What do we hope to gain from this experience?

What are my goals for the program? What do I hope to gain from the 'square'?	
Partner #1's goals: Name:	
Partner #2's goals: Name:	
Partner #3's goals: Name:	

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1.3 Setting up a schedule: When will we visit each other's classes?

It is ideal to establish the visiting schedule at the initial square meeting while all members of the group are together. As an observee, you will want to avoid scheduling visits on particular days (such as during scheduled exams), but try not to over-orchestrate the observation schedule according to your teaching plans. For instance, if you have a group activity planned for a given session you might decide that you are not really 'teaching', however, there is plenty to observe as the activity is set up and the students subsequently participate in it. It is valuable for observers to get a chance to see a range of approaches and activities – any opportunity to see how students are learning is useful from an observer perspective.

Table 3 indicates your teaching schedules this semester (you might choose to skip this table and move on to Table 4).

Table 3. Course schedule

Partner's Name	Course name(s) / #	Day / time	Location

Table 4. Our visiting schedule

Name	When I'm visiting (Day, time, location)	When I'm being visited (Day, time location)

2. Prepare for observations

2.1 Considerations for observee: Provide context

Getting a sense of the 'big picture' of a course can make it easier to understand what's going on in a single class and thus can lead to a more meaningful observation experience. You might want to exchange course outlines, relevant assignments and texts with your square partners. By discussing the following questions (adapted from Northern Virginnia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008) you can also give visitors that sense of the big picture:

- What are your main goals for the course?
- What purpose does the course serve in the major or the general curriculum?
- Why do students take this course?
- How would you characterize your students this semester? Are they a typical group?
- How often have you taught this course before?
- What are your goals for the day your colleague is coming to visit?
- Are you trying anything new this semester?

2.2 Considerations for observer: Choose a focus

There's a lot going on in any class and it can be a challenge to keep track of it all without a plan going in. One approach is to choose a particular focus through which to approach your observations. Going into a class with some specific questions in mind can help you orient your attention and lead to a more meaningful observation. As an observer, it is advisable to reflect on your own teaching development and what you would like to work on in choosing an observation focus.

Here are some examples, though there are many more possibilities. **Keep in mind that your observation goal is not to provide feedback, but rather to collect data that you can subsequently reflect on in terms of your own teaching.** For example, if you are interested in issues of student engagement, you will observe and take note of the various ways in which engagement occurs and is cultivated in the observee's classroom.

The guiding questions to follow (adapted from Northern Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008; Vanderbilt Center for Teaching, n.d.) provide ideas for thinking about your observation priorities ahead of time.

2.2.1 Engagement

- When do the students seem most engaged in the material? When do they seem the least engaged?
- How do I know the students are engaged?
- What is specifically going on when engagement is happening? What are the students doing? What is the instructor doing?
- How is the class organized and paced? How does this affect student engagement?
- What are the patterns of conversation? Who holds the 'conversational ball'? Is it student-to-student, student-to-instructor, the same students again and again?
- How does the instructor use verbal and non-verbal communication?

2.2.2 Content

- What do the students already know about the content of today's class?
- Are the students curious about the content? How is the content made relevant to the students? How is this done explicitly? How is it done implicitly?
- How do the students know what's important in today's class? What activities or practices do the teacher or students undertake to make what matters most evident?
- What happens to help students learn the material? What are the various approaches used to convey the content?
- Did the students get it? How do I know? How do the students know? How does the instructor know?

2.2.3 Diversity

- How would diversity be described in this classroom – what are the visible classroom demographics?
- How are differences in learners accommodated? What are the activities or approaches applied here that might help different learners?
- Is there anything about the content of today's class that reflects a diversity of perspectives?
- What are the different approaches that are used to make the classroom an inclusive place? How are different students encouraged to participate?
- What else is noteworthy in terms of diversity and inclusion in this setting?

2.2.4 Instructional strategies

- What are the different instructional strategies used in this class? (presentation/lecture, discussion, etc.)
- Do some strategies seem to work better for the students than others? Why is this the case? What seems to make the difference here?
- How does the teacher use classroom media (digital technologies, slides, video, music, etc.) and/or space?
- Are there any seemingly unexpected moments in the class? How are they handled?
- Are questions used as a teaching strategy? If so, what kinds of questions does the teacher ask, and when? How are the students involved in asking and answering questions? How is the instructor involved in asking and answering questions?
- Are small groups used in the class? If so, when and how are they implemented? What impact do they appear to have on student learning?
- Which instructional strategies seem more engaging for the students? Which strategies allow them to participate in higher order thinking (such as self-reflection, application, critical thinking)?

2.2.5 Classroom climate

- What is the mood before class begins? During class? After class?
- How is the classroom arranged physically and how does this influence teaching and learning?
- What kind of rapport exists between teacher and student(s) or among students?
- What kinds of things does the instructor do to address the environment in this class?
- What are the students doing to contribute to the classroom environment?

There are many approaches to observing a class – these are merely intended as suggestions. You will establish your own priorities according to your experience and approaches as an instructor and as a student, and your particular goals for participating in this program. You might find that you enter the classroom with a focus in mind, but that it changes as events unfold in the learning environment. **Again, the classroom observation experience is intended to provide you with data to subsequently reflect upon in terms of your own teaching rather than to provide input to your colleagues about their teaching.**

3. Classroom visits

This section is adapted from North Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008.

3.1 How long should I stay?

Although class lengths can vary considerably, observing an entire class typically offers the best and least disruptive experience for you, your square partner, and the students. If scheduling conflicts do not permit watching the whole session, discuss with your square partner the least disruptive means of joining and leaving the class. Staying for at least 50 minutes is advisable.

3.2 How should I introduce my square partner to students?

If you anticipate students noticing and/or being curious about a visitor's presence in the classroom, it is reasonable to introduce your square partner and to explain the purpose for her/his visit. Most students are impressed to learn that their instructor is participating in a project to improve teaching and learning. Whether you introduce the visitor or not is a matter of individual preference and might best discussed with your square partner prior to the start of class.

3.3 What is my role when I visit?

Although the urge to participate in an engaging class can be strong, participants find that they best fulfill their teaching squares goals by restricting themselves to the role of observer. Recording your observations of the activities of both the teacher and the students involves considerable focus and attention.

3.4 How do I record my observations?

There are many ways to organize your classroom observation notes. Templates for recording classroom observations and preliminary reflections are provided on the following pages. Feel free to use or to alter these templates as you see fit.

Table 5. Double-entry observation notes

Some people find it helpful to organize their observation notes by dividing them into *descriptions* and *reflections*. The description can reflect the instructor's actions, students' reactions, and the content being conveyed, while your reflections can track your own reactions to what's happening in class. Reflections can be recorded both during class and afterwards. Occasionally, marking down the time as you go can also help you get a sense of how long particular segments of the class take (a sample completed version of this template can be found in Appendix A).

Time	Description of what's happening	Personal reflections

This template is offered as a tool in most Teaching Squares Program guides.

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Table 6. Class observation form

You might alter the headings on this form to align with the observation focus that you have identified in Section 2.

Course & Instructor	Class topic/objective	Date
Describe the academic setting (lecture/lab, learning space, class size, student characteristics, learning environment, etc.):		
Describe how the instructor and students began and ended the class:		
Describe learning activities that took place during the class:		
Describe instructional tools and/or teaching strategies that were used by the instructor:		
What tips did you pick up on classroom management?		
What did you observe that you'd like to incorporate into your classes?		

Adapted from Northern Virginia Community College CETL (2015). *The Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning: Teaching Squares.*

4. Optional debrief meeting

Some participants appreciate an opportunity to briefly debrief the classroom observation once it has occurred. This optional meeting can provide a chance to have a preliminary one-on-one talk about the observation experience. The debrief discussion is intended to facilitate reflection on the part of both the observer and observee, and can be guided by a series of questions designed with this in mind. **The observer's role is to share their observations and learnings rather than to provide directive feedback.** This meeting is entirely optional, as the wrap up share square meeting (component 6 of the process) is required and also provides an opportunity for participants to consolidate and share their reflections and learning with their colleagues.

4.1 Guidelines for optional debriefing discussion following a classroom observation

These are sample questions (adapted from University of British Columbia Centre for Teaching, Learning and Technology, 2016) for the observer to ask the observee (2-3 of these questions are sufficient to guide a post-observation conversation).

- How do you feel about how the session went? What's your sense of how the class was for the students?
- What strategies did you use to enhance student learning?
- What do you think worked particularly well? What was the highlight for you? For the students?
- Is there anything that you feel didn't work well? Is there something you'd do differently next time you teach this class? If yes, what would you change and why?
- Is there anything that didn't go as planned? Did this turn out to be positive or challenging for you? What about for the students?
- Did the students get 'it' in the end? Do you think they learned what you hoped they'd learn in the class? How do you know?
- As an observer, here are some strategies I observed that you used to enhance student learning. Here's how I've grown (what I've learned) as a result of watching you teach.
- Reflective questions such as, "One of the teaching struggles I face is [engaging my students']. How do you deal with this problem? What did you do during today's class to engage students?
- Pragmatic questions such as, "How did you prepare for this session? "What are some of the choices you made as you prepared for this class?"

5. Reflections

The pages to follow provide templates for your use when reflecting on your observations of your square partner's work. You will find the templates useful for collecting your thoughts and reflecting following a classroom observation. You might also find that your recording/ reflecting method shifts over the course of the program as you gain experience. Feel free to choose from any of the templates provided (in Tables 5 through 8) or to develop something of your own. When complete, these documents are for your reference only, and merely intended to help guide your observations and reflective processes.

5.1 What? So What? Now What?

Table 7. What? So What? Now What?

Rolfe et al. (2001) provide a framework that can be useful for documenting your observations and reflections. Here three simple questions help you record and track your learning experiences. You might use this template after class when you can take some time to pull out your most important observations and then reflect on their relevance and implications for your future teaching.

What?	So What?	Now What?
What did you observe during the class? What stood out or took you by surprise? What exactly happened? What did the instructor and students do? Be as specific as possible.	*What is the relevance of this observation for you? Why does it stand out? What makes it important? What have you learned?*	*How does this observation connect to your teaching practice? How can you apply what you've learned in your current or future teaching? Is there something you will try or change as a result of this observation? What is your plan?*

Adapted from Rolfe, G., Freshwater, D. & Jasper, M. (2001*). Critical reflection for nursing and the helping professions: A user's guide.* New York: Palgrave MacMillan.

5.2 Teaching squares reflections: Immediate and follow-up

Table 8. Teaching squares reflection: Immediate and follow-up

Immediately following visit
Examples of good teaching and learning practice I've seen in this session.
What I have learned from observing this session.
Things I might try out as a result of observing this session.
Follow-up reflections after my own teaching
Things I have tried since observing the session.
What worked well (including details of learner response).
What I might do differently.

Adapted from The Quality Improvement Agency for Lifelong Learning (QIA) (2008). *Teaching and Learning Programme: Teaching Squares.*

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6. Wrap-up square share meeting

Once classroom observations and subsequent reflections are complete, program participants come together for a final meeting to share what they have learned throughout the process. You can decide as a group what is most helpful for you to discuss in this final meeting. **However, in keeping with the philosophy of the Teaching Squares Program, it is advisable to keep the conversation focused on self-reflection rather than critique or advice-giving.** This final meeting ultimately provides an opportunity to consolidate your thoughts and learnings from the program, to honour and appreciate your colleagues, and to think about how the Teaching Squares experience might shape your future teaching and learning practice.

Here are some questions (adapted from Northern Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008) that you can reflect on in preparation for the final wrap up discussion:

- What have you learned about your teaching philosophy from your classroom observations (this could be something new or something that has been affirmed)? What personal values do you bring to your teaching?
- How has the experience of being in the 'learner' role impacted your teaching?
- What have you learned is one of your teaching strengths?
- What aspect of your teaching do you wish to improve? How are you going to do this?
- What surprised you during this experience? What assumptions about teaching were challenged by what you observed?
- What is one thing you learned that will make your teaching more effective?
- What is one thing you learned that you are going to apply next semester in the classroom?

While keeping in mind that there is no right or wrong way to formulate your reflections, see Appendix B for hypothetical examples of reflective statements.

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7. Concluding comments

The Teaching Squares method emphasizes peer observation, self-reflection, and collegial conversations about teaching and learning. Learning by watching colleagues and reflecting on the relevance of those observations for your own teaching represents a striking departure from more conventional approaches that embrace observing with an eye toward evaluating and providing feedback. This shift can be challenging to both appreciate and enact, particularly within the context of a postsecondary environment where critique and evaluation are frequently on the agenda. Despite this, I have been fortunate to work with both faculty and graduate students in Teaching Squares initiatives on our campus and have seen the impact of this alternative approach on participants as they reflect deeply on their own teaching and repeatedly comment on the value of making the time to do so. A nonjudgmental environment is optimal for creating the conditions in which authentic teaching, rich and revealing discussions, and genuine growth and learning can take place. I am excited to provide this guide as a resource for your use.

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Appendix A: 'Double-entry' observation notes example

It appears that this observer has recorded both observations and reflections during the classroom visit. It is also possible to complete the description column during the visit and to subsequently reflect on recorded observations after the fact. In either case, **notice how the observer reflects on their own teaching rather than formulating feedback for the observee.**

Time	Description of what's happening	Personal reflections
11:25	*AH greets Ss as they come in. One S asks a question about the homework – AH says she'll address that in class.* *An agenda has already been written up on the board.*	*AH has easy rapport with students – seems organized with agenda already on board. I see that she held off on answering Ss question – I think I sometimes jump in too quickly with an answer.*
11:30	*AH closes door and says "reading quiz!" – Ss put away books and get out paper.* *AH reads through 5 questions, waits about 90 seconds between each.*	*Ss seem to know what's coming – this must be a regular thing. Interesting to let the Ss help write the quiz – what happens if someone suggests a bad question? But they sure like it.*
11:36	*Invites Ss to suggest "bonus" question – S7 speaks up immediately. Ss laugh.* *couple Ss come in late – don't get out paper, just sit there* *AH reads through questions one more time and then after a minute calls "time!" and Ss pass up papers.*	*Ok, definitely looks like a regular thing – and they already know they don't get to do the quiz if they're late. She must be really clear about her expectations. I wonder how Ss feel about that . . . they don't look frustrated. Might be an interesting thing to try.*
11:40	*AH points to agenda and elaborates on what they're doing that day. Asks if there's anything else she should include.*	*I get why an agenda is helpful, but as a student I used to feel that too detailed an agenda hampered spontaneity in a class, so I resist them now. Though a lot of that depends on how strict the instructor sticks to it. I notice that she asks for input – I should do more of that.*

Adapted from Northern Virginia Community College CETL, 2015; Stonehill College CTL, 2008.

 Teaching Squares: Observe and Reflect on Teaching and Learning
Prepared by Carol Berenson, PhD

Appendix B: Sample reflective statements

While there is no formulaic method of reflection, it is advised that you take some time to record final thoughts about your learning and key takeaways from your experience in the Teaching Squares Program. These are hypothetical examples of what a final reflective statement might look like.

I have always known that learning is not a spectator sport and I thought that I had a really interactive classroom. However, through watching my colleagues teach I've come to realize that there are many ways to get students involved in taking control of their learning and that I am not entirely comfortable sharing power in the classroom. I can see that my skills around asking and answering questions and facilitating discussion are excellent, however I am less comfortable with letting the students work independently. I'd like to try to provide more opportunities for this to happen in my classroom. I particularly liked the small group activity that I saw involving assigning roles for discussing a challenging issue. I think I can make something like that work in my course. I'll need to tweak it for my context, but I could see how engaged the students were and that they really grasped the concept being taught that day. I realize that I sometimes make assumptions about the students 'getting it' at the end of my classes, and I could be better at engaging them in activities that both deepen and affirm their learning (for them and for me). I have a new appreciation for how active learning can look and am excited (and a bit nervous) to try out something new that's less teacher-focused and more student-driven in the future.

This experience has helped me to think about how I will present myself and the kind of classroom environment I will cultivate as a new instructor. In my observations, I saw colleagues establish and cultivate very different classroom climates in their teaching. It was illuminating to see the differences – ranging from quite formal to very casual. I could see benefits and limitations for the students in all of the settings. It seemed to me that a relaxed environment set the stage for lots of student interaction and an uplifting classroom experience. At the same time, it seemed that some students were more comfortable than others with this environment and I was aware that it took lots of facilitation skill to make sure everyone felt included in this setting. The more formal classroom was less exciting, however it seemed to me that students had a sense of trust and respect for the instructor and they were (mostly) attentive to what was going on. As a new instructor, I think my style will be to present a somewhat formal, quieter, but competent and trustworthy demeanour. I can see how important it is to be approachable to the students and I would like to eventually be able lighten up, but at this stage in my career I think it's most important to establish myself as competent and capable through more formal channels. Once I've had some experience I'll look forward to revisiting my thinking about this.