

Learning Environment Audit

Overview:

We have designed this reflection form to support educators in holistic observations of their school community, classroom practices, and student social relationships. The *individual student*, *classroom*, and *whole-school* questions are intended to help teachers gain a deeper understanding of their students' experiences, especially their immigrant origin and newcomer students. The ultimate goal is to use the findings to create action plans that foster a greater sense of inclusion and belonging for all students.

This is a shortened document. If you are seeking a more thorough observation tool with scaffolded questions, we will be releasing one shortly!

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Directions

- **First**, print this document so that you have the questions as a reference
- **Next**, locate a personal notebook to capture your answers in
 - We encourage you to answer as many questions as possible; the questions you do not have an answer for offer an opportunity for reflection.
- **Note:** For the *Individual Student Questions*, choose one student to focus your observation on
 - Reflecting on any student will help you gain a stronger understanding of the student experience at large, but focusing on students whose experiences are most different from your own, students who are new, and/or students who are in the minority will help illuminate important aspects of your school community.
 - At the top of your notebook, capture the initials of this student's preferred name, keeping the student anonymous.
- **Finally**, once you have completed your observation, use your responses to reflect on how you can create an [action plan](#) to center belonging for your students.

Individual Student Questions

Student Identity and Experiences

- How does your student self-identify?
 - Try to list as many social identity markers as you are aware of (Ethnicity, Race, Religion, Gender, Orientation, Country of Origin, Interest, Activity, etc.)
- What are their preferred communication language(s) and mastery levels?
- What is their relationship to academics (prior experiences and current)?
 - What inspires this student?
 - Where do they need scaffolds?
- How would you describe this student's peer community/friend group?
- What is their caregiver dynamic (what do you know about their home/community life)?
- What are their outside-of-school commitments?
- **Reflection:** For the above questions, how did you determine what you *actually* know from what you *think* you know?
- Does this student experience barriers to inclusion, and/or does anything prevent them from being invited into social or academic spaces?
 - If so, what are the barriers and/or identities that are excluded?
 - **Reflection:** How were you able to tell? What might stand in the way of you knowing if barriers exist or exclusion is happening?

Academics: Socio-Emotional and Civic Dispositions

- What social-emotional, academic, and civic outcomes are expected/rewarded for this student?
 - **Reflection:** Why do you think this is?
 - How does this compare to expectations for others?
- Do they have opportunities to express their civic agency (express their voice, take action, and be respected as a leader/community member)?

Academics: Windows, Mirrors¹, and Cultural Representation

- What knowledge and insights does this student bring to the classroom?

¹ Rudine Sims Bishop, The Ohio State University. "Mirros,Windows, and Sliding Glass Doors" originally appeared in Perspectives: Choosing and Using Books for the Classroom. Vo6, No 3. Summer 1990.

- Is that knowledge recognized, valued, and celebrated?
 - If so, how? If not, why might it not be?
- Is this student's identity, culture, and history represented in the curriculum?
 - If so, what language, framing, or tone is used in the discussion?
 - Is the student an active participant in discussions?
 - Is the student expected to shoulder the burden of being "the expert"?
 - If so, where does this happen, and what can you do to mitigate the weight of that responsibility?

School Community

- How is this student greeted/welcome by others?
- What is this student's experience like in social spaces, such as: at lunch, during recess/study halls, or in the hallways?

Student & Faculty Dynamics

- How would you describe their relationship with other faculty?
 - Do they appear to have a close bond and/or a caring relationship with at least one adult in the building?
- Did you know anything about this student before you met them?
 - If so, what was it, and how did you hear about it?
- How does the faculty talk about this student, what data is shared, and in what way (tone, intentions, timing)?

Community and Society

- How might the language heard in your community impact your student and their experience inside school?
 - What about outside of school?
 - What about language seen/heard in the media (TV, Radio, Newspapers, etc)?
 - What about language seen/heard in social media (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok, etc)?

Your Classroom Questions

Classroom Community

- Do students exhibit curiosity toward each other's lives?
 - How do you know / what does this look like in your classroom?
- Do students value each other's opinions?
 - How do you know / what does this look like in your classroom?
- Do students in your class support each other academically?
 - Do students remind each other about homework, tests, and projects?
 - Do students more frequently collaborate or compete with each other?
- How do students show that they listen to each other when sharing?
 - Does everyone receive the same treatment?
- Are there in and out groups in your classroom?

Academics: Socio-Emotional and Civic Dispositions

- How do students speak about power and inequity?
- How do students respond when one of their classmates has been mistreated?
- Does conflict more often arise from isolated incidents or running tensions?

Academics: Windows, Mirrors, and Cultural Representation

For the following questions from the [Re-Imagining Migration Culturally Responsive Teaching Checklist](#), reflect on either a specific unit, lesson, or year-long curriculum.

- ❖ When you answer the questions, also consider:
 - How do you know?
 - What do you think the impact of this is on your students?
- Do you include major figures, contributors, or historical events from cultures other than the dominant culture in the lesson?
- Do you include cultural or artistic works (literature, music, visual and performing arts/artists) from cultures other than the dominant culture in the lesson?
- Do you infuse multiple perspectives, frames of reference, and content from various groups and perspectives to extend students' understanding of the nature, development, and complexity of the society in which they live?
- Does your teaching encourage students to take reflective actions to help resolve social problems?

Student & Faculty Dynamics

- Do your classroom rules apply to all students?
 - If not, why not? What are the extenuating circumstances?
- Are accountability measures for rule-breaking applied equally to all students?
 - If not, why not? What are the extenuating circumstances?
- Do your students express that classroom systems and procedures feel fair?
 - If not, what are they naming that feels inequitable?

Whole School Community Questions

Student Identities and Relationships

- How do students greet each other in common spaces?
 - Consider what is said, tones, and body language
 - If everyone is greeted by someone?
- Are there “in” and “out” groups in the school community at large?
 - What do you think separates the different groups?
 - What makes these groups different?
 - What benefits/disadvantages come with being in the “in” group?
 - What benefits/disadvantages come with being in the “out” group?
 - How do adults respond to the groups?
 - Do they try to shrink, increase, or ignore the differences between the “in” and “out” groups?

Civics, Student Community, and School Culture

- What does cultural celebration look like at your school?
- Who is publicly celebrated, and what for?
- What languages are materials translated in?
- How does your school celebrate stories of migration?
- How are the hallways/classrooms decorated?
- What is the environment like in community spaces?
 - Hallways? Auditorium? Gym? Lunchroom?
 - Is it stressful? Welcoming?
- Are student activities open to all?
 - If so, are all students encouraged to attend/lead?
- Do students support each other?
 - **With Academics:**
 - ☐ Share notes with absent students
 - ☐ Study together / sharing study materials
 - ☐ Remind each other about upcoming quizzes/tests
 - ☐ Encourage each other to try new challenges
 - **In Social Spaces:**

- ☐ Include people who express a desire for community:
 - ☐ In the lunchroom
 - ☐ During whole school moments
 - ☐ After School
- ☐ Invite new people to join:
 - ☐ Clubs
 - ☐ Teams
 - ☐ Activities
- ☐ Create accessible spaces where everyone can access joy:
 - ☐ **Safety:** ☐ supervised and ☐ welcoming to all
 - ☐ **Finances:** ☐ free or ☐ accessibly priced
 - ☐ **Location:** ☐ ADA Accessible (ex: wheelchair ramp or elevator) ☐ easily found by all
 - ☐ **Transportation:** ☐ public or ☐ private transport
- **With Resource:**
 - ☐ Connect peers in need to resources:
food/clothing/technology/school supply share and/or drive
 - ☐ Connect peers in need to organizations in the community

Professional Learning

- Does your school receive professional development on:
 - ☐ Immigrant Origin Student Intake?
 - ☐ Belonging?
 - ☐ Multilingual Learner Education?
- What does school faculty know about the student population and how best to serve them?

Action Plan

Now that you have completed your observation form turn your reflections into an [action plan](#) that focuses on centering student belonging.