

Peer Observation: Class Environment

Classroom Environment

- What is the mood before class begins? During class? At the end of class?
- How is the classroom arranged, and how does this seem to influence teaching and learning?
- What kind of rapport exists between instructor and student, and among students?

--Adapted from "Teaching Visits Observation and Discussion Guide,"
Vanderbilt University's Center for Teaching

Classroom Culture

Communicative Interactions

- Students were involved in the communication of their ideas to others using a variety of means and media.
- The teacher's questions triggered divergent modes of thinking.
- There was a high proportion of student talk and a significant amount of it occurred between and among students.
- Student questions and comments often determined the focus and direction of classroom discourse.
- There was a climate of respect for what others had to say.

Student/Teacher Relationships

- Active participation of students was encouraged and valued.
- Students were encouraged to generate conjectures, alternative solution strategies, and ways of interpreting evidence.
- In general the teacher was patient with students.
- The teacher acted as a resource person, working to support and enhance student investigations.
- The metaphor "teacher as listener" was very characteristic of this classroom.

--RTOP/Reformed (Science & Math) Teaching Observation Protocol

Classroom Environment

Use the information gathered through field notes, student work samples (videotape if available) and post-observation professor interview to complete the ratings in this section.

- The classroom environment encouraged students to generate ideas, questions, conjectures, and/or propositions that reflected engagement or exploration with important mathematics and science content and concepts.
- Intellectual rigor, constructive criticism, and the challenging of ideas kept students engaged.
- Interactions reflected collegial working relationships among students. (e.g., students worked together and talked with each other about the class).
- Based on conversations, interactions with the professor, and/or work samples, students were intellectually engaged with important ideas relevant to the focus of the class.
- The majority of students were on task throughout the class.
- Professor has set up room for success – students can see what is written on board, work in groups easily, get to lab materials as needed, professor can move to each student or student group, etc.
- The classroom environment established by the professor reflected attention to issues of access, equity, and diversity for students (e.g. cooperative learning, language-appropriate strategies and materials).

--UT Observation Protocol for Physics

Equity-Mindedness in Implementing Classroom Policies and Rules

USC's Center for Urban Education (CUE) developed a [peer observation guide](#) with a good section on peer observation of equity-minded teaching (pp. 27-60), with a subsection (pp. 49-60) on classroom **policies** ("official, explicitly stated guidelines that are documented in the course syllabus") and **rules and expectations** ("unofficial,

PROMPTS: IMPLEMENTING UNSTATED POLICIES

While the course syllabus states what are considered the "official" policies of the class, it's also possible that the instructor enacts unstated or "unofficial" rules and expectations, which are made apparent by what an instructor says and/or does, or by how they respond to students' behavior. Like stated policies, unstated or unofficial rules and expectations have the power to shape how students are **supposed** to act in the classroom and engage with others, as well as set the instructor's **expectations** for what constitutes "good," "bad," and normative student behavior.

unstated guidelines that can be inferred from what an instructor says and/or does in the classroom, and in their interactions with students”).

Some observation prompts are to the right, but the section is ***too good to simply excerpt here, so please follow the link above***. It includes specific guidance for the observation process and examples of equity-related implementation of classroom policies and rules.

--USC's Center for Urban Education

Unstated rules and expectations may be observed:

- When the **instructor poses a question** to the class, which could reveal an unstated **participation rule or expectation**. (Consider: Do instructors cold-call students? Do instructors only call on students who raise their hands? Do instructors allow students to speak without being called on first?)
- When the **instructor writes on the board**, which could make apparent an unstated **notetaking rule or expectation**. (Consider: Do instructor communicate to students that they should take notes? How? Do students start taking notes without prompting? Which students?)
- When a **student calls the instructor's attention**, which could demonstrate an unstated **naming rule or expectation**. (Consider: Do students call the instructor by their first name, i.e., Estela; use a salutation, i.e., “Ms.” or “Dr.” Bensimon; or by their title, i.e., “professor”? How does the instructor respond?)

Note: This is not an exhaustive list of moments on which to focus, but a starting list of possibilities.