

Focus Areas and Sample Questions*

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CLASSROOM ARRANGEMENT

- What is the set-up of the desks and chairs?
- How far do students sit from each other? From the teacher? Are students clustered in some way?
- What does the classroom look like? What things are on the wall? What resources (i.e., technological, books) are available in the room?
- Is there a lot of noise in the room? Are there interruptions from outside the classroom?
- Are the chairs comfortable? Is there enough lighting and work space in the classroom?
- Where do people choose to sit? (Does it change over time?)

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT / AUTHORITY

- What is the classroom agenda? Who sets it, and how is it?
- Is the agenda flexible? When a question is asked or a topic raised which diverges from the agenda, what is the response (by teachers, by students)?
- What is the daily routine (e.g., signing in, signing out)?
- What are the classroom rules? Who decides them? How are they communicated?
- How do participants call each other (by name, by title)?
- In what configurations do students work – individually, in a large group, or in small groups?
- What evidence reflects issues of authority in this classroom?

* Excerpted from *Observation Guide*, National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy. Revised March 24, 1998.

Focus Areas and Sample Questions

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CLASSROOM TALK

- Who talks? To whom, and for how long?
- What is the interaction pattern – one person talking at a time, many people at one time, or a mix? Who regulates this pattern? How is turn-taking managed?
- How do participants talk to one another (active listening, interrupting, building on what another says)?
- What do participants talk about (lesson activities, personal experiences, etc.)?
- How often are there silences and how are they handled?
- How are multiple perspectives handled?
- How often are there disagreements? What are they about? How do instructors handle disagreement?

TEACHER TALK

- How does the teacher greet students?
- What kinds of questions does the teacher ask (e.g., yes/no questions, questions with one right answer, open-ended probing questions)?
- To whom does the teacher direct questions?
- What kind of feedback does the teacher give to questions?
- How does the teacher show s/he is listening?
- How does the teacher give directions? (What kind?)
- How does the teacher encourage discussion?

Focus Areas and Sample Questions

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LEARNER TALK

- What kinds of questions does the student ask? How often?
- What kinds of answers do the learners give? How long are their responses?
- How often do learners initiate new topics/offer opinions? What topics/opinions? How do they make connections?
- Who's talking, and how often?
- Are there differences in the amount of learner talk across these variables: male/female, native/non-native, age, etc.?
- How do learners respond to teacher feedback?

LEARNER ENGAGEMENT / SENSE OF COMMUNITY

- How do learners interact with each other?
- How much movement is there in the classroom? What kind?
- What is the affect of the students?
- How busy are students and what are they doing?
- Do learners receive equal amounts of contact with the teacher?
- How do learners elicit help? By asking another student, raising their hand, waiting for the teacher to circulate?
- Does the learner help make decisions about the class activities and lesson topics?