

## A Quick and Easy School Visit Observation Guide

Culturally responsive teaching emphasizes cultural ways of learning and cognition rather than focusing on cosmetic “race related” displays. Affirmation of students’ cultural roots comes through incorporating deep cultural values and cultural ways of learning (*using the memory systems of the brain, organizing around social interaction (collectivism), and combining oratory skills with academic talk*) rather than through superficial pictures of “heroes” or images of Africa or Mexico or irrelevant mentioning in the curriculum.

		
What do you see as you walk through?	What do you hear as part of the environment?	What conversations are happening?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Are there <b>rituals and routines</b> that students know and participate that support transitions between blocks or that help open and close learning blocks?</li> <li>• Are students <b>working in authentically communal ways</b> to get started in a lesson or do thinking together?</li> <li>• Does there seem to be a <b>spirit of inquiry</b> in the classroom? Students are doing research and talking through how new information fits with what they already know. There’s project-based learning.</li> <li>• Are there “<b>anchor charts</b>” to help students <b>remember</b> processes and inspirational messages about <b>grit and perseverance</b> visible?</li> <li>• Are there <b>positive messages about making mistakes and turning errors into information</b>?</li> <li>• Does the environment seem to be “<b>intellectually safe</b>”? All students are making contributions, not just the same ones. Students can think out loud.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do you hear a <b>humming of student voices</b> as they work or is it too quiet?</li> <li>• What is the ratio of teacher talk and authentic student talk (not just “getting into groups”)?</li> <li>• Is there ample <b>student discussion</b> around the lesson?</li> <li>• Do you hear <b>students smoothly code switching</b> between home language and academic language?</li> <li>• Is <b>music incorporated</b> into the environment? Maybe to signal a transition or as background during thinking time?</li> <li>• When you ask, can <b>students talk about what they are working on</b>, why it’s important and how it connects to what they already know?</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Is there “<b>cultural modeling</b>” to <b>help scaffold</b> students’ understanding of the content (i.e., using metaphors, character experiences from culturally oriented music lyrics, TV shows)?</li> <li>• Is there <b>trust building language</b> and interactions (i.e., building a rapport and personal connection)?</li> <li>• Are there <b>one-on-one instructional conversations</b> (during conferencing around writing or other projects)?</li> <li>• Are there <b>regular opportunities to get</b> and talk about authentic <b>feedback</b> (timely, corrective, actionable, affirming)</li> </ul>