

The Power of Cross-Sector Classroom Visitation: Protocol and Best Practices

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Session objective

We describe a process to facilitate cross-sector classroom observations and discussions of shared problems of practice.

We also describe the benefits and challenges of using observations in professional development. Attendees will receive a copy of a student-focused observation protocol to use in their own practice.

Reflect

- Consider a time when you observed someone else teach a lesson...
 - What was your purpose for observing this lesson?
 - What did you notice and how did it affect your thinking about your own teaching?

Goals of Successful Transitions

- Improve students' transition from high school to college or from community college to university math and ELA.
- Because of the goal, it was important for all participants to look a little deeper at what we all valued for student learning and experiences, and at the experiences students had as they transitioned through our system.

Preparation for visitation

- Participants read:
 - Common Core State Standards for Math
Standards for Mathematical Practices
 - Common Core State Standards for ELA
Portraits of students who are college and career ready in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and language.
- In groups, discuss and analyze what the two sets of standards have in common.

Both standards emphasize:

- The balance between procedure and understanding
- Use of proof /evidence
- Communication
- Describing situations
- Interpret results and synthesize ideas
- Construct, defend, and critique arguments
- Link and organize concepts
- Inquiry and problem-solving
- Ability of student to choose the right tools and use with strategic intention
- Critical thinking
- Pattern recognition
- Revision & perseverance – try and try again
- Recognition of counter-examples / opposing claims in arguments

Purposes for a Student Visitation Protocol

- The goals of the visits are to better understand the demands students encounter and the skills they will need in order to meet the demands. Throughout this process, imagine that you are a student in this environment and what information you might need to be successful. By 'skills' we mean the types of independent and collaborative learning skills that will help students meet expectations, and knowing how to study at levels appropriate to the content and expectations (e.g. strive to understand and apply principles).

Visitation Protocol

Observe for and record:

- The demands that students encounter in the setting
- The critical thinking required in the lesson
- Independent learning skills required
- Collaboration skills required
- Student engagement in the setting
- Explicitly communicated educational expectations

Results of visitations

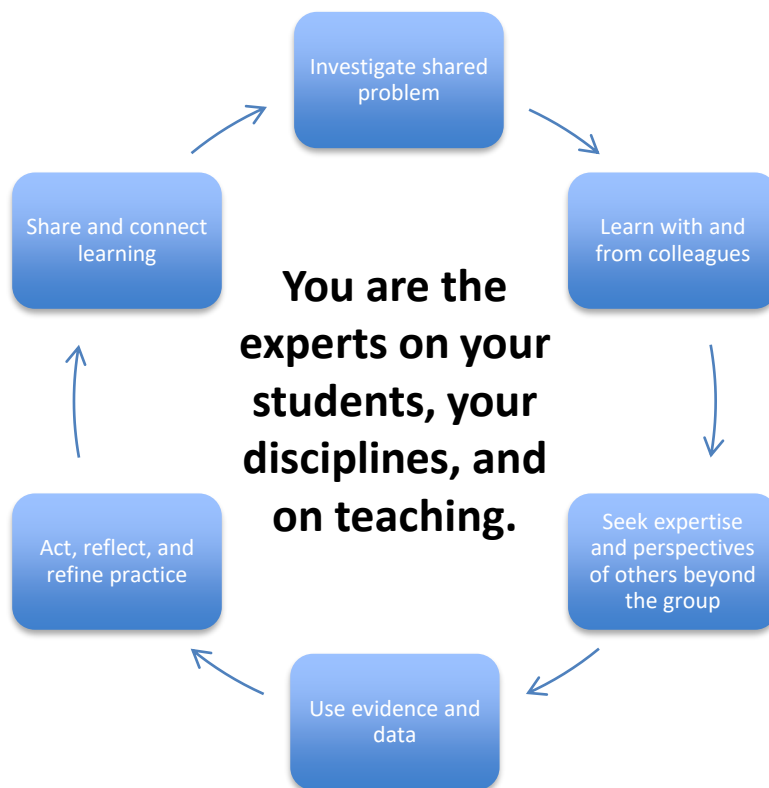
- A tremendous amount of trust was built in each others practice and experience after the observations. We found common ground and more shared experiences than differences.
- Cohorts came to “own” their shared problems of practice.

Results of visitations

- Observers described how their observations differed from their expectations, and how the skills they observed were similar to or differed from those expected of their own teaching and learning environment.
- Instructors' reflection on their observations was essential for inquiry learning since it uncovered assumptions and helped them reflect on their own teaching.

Visitations provided a foundation for the inquiry process

Cycle of Inquiry



Cohort Responsibilities

(from *Taking Inquiry to Scale*)

- Investigate shared problems or questions of practice
- Learn with and from colleagues
- Seek expertise and perspectives of others beyond the inquiry group
- Use evidence and data
- Act, reflect, and refine practice
- Share and connect learning

Visitations allowed cohorts to own their shared problem of practice

- Combined ELA and Math Problems of Practice:
 - Independent Learning
 - Critical Reading and Writing Skills
 - Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills

Closing thoughts & thanks

Visitation Protocol:

<https://sites.ewu.edu/successfultransitions/project-leadership/project-leadership-resources/>

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