

EQUITY-MINDED INQUIRY SERIES

Observations



CENTER *for* URBAN
EDUCATION

USC Rossier

School of Education

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The inquiry tools presented in this guide are the product of the staff who worked at the Center for Urban Education (CUE) from 1999 to 2018. The tools evolved over time, in response to what CUE staff learned from using the tools at campuses across the country, as well as from research on race, racism, and racial equity. Presented here is a collection of CUE's most impactful tools, organized and edited by Cheryl D. Ching, PhD., who served as a research assistant at CUE from 2012 to 2017 and as a post-doctoral scholar from 2017 to 2018.

HOW TO CITE

Center for Urban Education. (2020). *Equity-minded inquiry series: Observations*. Rossier School of Education, University of Southern California.

ADDITIONAL TOOLS

For additional inquiry tools, please visit
<https://www.cue-tools.usc.edu/>

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INTRODUCTION: WHAT IS OBSERVATION?

One of the most basic forms of research, observation has been used since at least the time of Aristotle to understand the social and natural world (Adler & Adler, 1994). Observation is a natural, intuitive activity that we undertake on a daily basis as we take notice of our surroundings and environment. “We can no more stop observing than we can stop breathing,” the researcher Gary Shank (2002) writes.

Unlike the observation we do in our everyday life, observation for research is systematic, purposeful, and motivated by an idea to examine or a question to answer. To this, observation for inquiry adds a focus on understanding and reflecting on local problems of practice, policy, or culture; a need to find solutions to those problems; and a desire to enact necessary changes (Malcom-Piqueux, 2016).

OBSERVATION FOR INQUIRY INTO RACIAL/ETHNIC INEQUITY

In this guide, observation is presented as a method of inquiry. Conducting observation inquiry can help practitioners develop awareness of how racial/ethnic inequity is a problem of policies and practices enacted at classroom, department/ program, and broader campus levels. In particular, the observation inquiry process can:

- Make visible to practitioners how campus programs, services (e.g., assessment and placement testing, career counseling), and classroom environments work or do not work for racially minoritized students, among whom include Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans, and Pacific Islanders.
- Reveal the racial consequences of their actions, as well as racial/ethnic patterns that persist in their areas of responsibility (e.g., the classroom). Racial patterns can manifest in two ways: (1) a disproportionately *positive* impact on the outcomes and experiences of white students, or (2) a disproportionately *negative* impact on the outcomes and experiences of racially minoritized students.

- Prompt practitioner reflection on how their actions or the implementation of campus programs or services produces inequitable outcomes by race/ethnicity. With a better understanding of the root policy and practice causes of racial/ethnic inequity, practitioners are better equipped to propose changes that are more likely to bring about racial/ethnic equity.

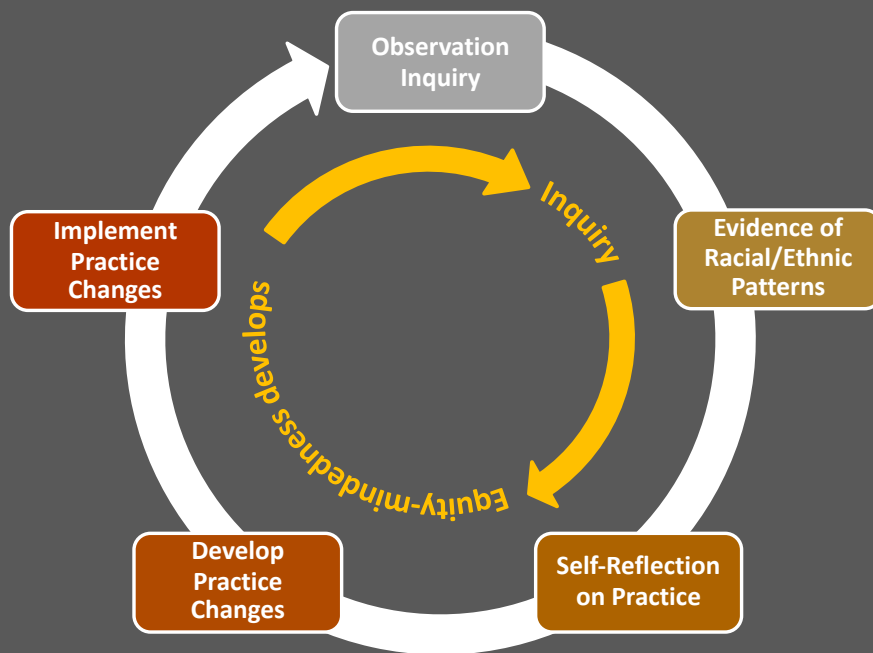


FIGURE 1.
OBSERVATION FOR
CRITICAL INQUIRY AND
DEVELOPING EQUITY-
MINDEDNESS

OBSERVATION INQUIRY FOR DEVELOPING PRACTITIONER EQUITY-MINDEDNESS

According to Estela Bensimon (2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015), achieving racial/ethnic equity requires practitioners to develop competence in equity-mindedness, which involves being:

- Critically race-conscious;
- Aware that practitioner beliefs, assumptions, knowledge, and approaches are racialized and can have racial consequences, typically to the disadvantage of racially minoritized students;

- Aware that norms, policies, and practices that are taken for granted in higher education can perpetuate racial hierarchies and inequalities, even in the absence of explicit racism; and
- Willing to reflect on racialized outcomes and exercise agency to produce racial equity.

Observation inquiry can foster the development of practitioner equity-mindedness by:

- Raising practitioner awareness of racial patterns and consequences;
- Prompting self-reflection on practices;
- Helping practitioners devise policy and practice changes that advance racial/ethnic equity; and
- Enabling practitioners to actively self-monitor interactions with racially minoritized students.



GUIDE CONTENTS

THE PROTOCOLS

CUE's observation guide includes three types of protocols that practitioners can employ to better understand how policies and practices contribute to racial/ethnic inequities. Deciding which kind of observation to conduct depends on where critical inquiry is needed, based on an analysis of student outcomes data disaggregated by race and ethnicity.

1. Descriptive Observation

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The descriptive observation protocol focuses practitioners on the question of how students access and use campus programs, services, and spaces. Key to this type of observation is the notion of “strangefying” that which is familiar and routine (e.g., the financial aid process) in order to see whether and how these programs, services, and spaces produce intended outcomes for racially minoritized students (i.e., equitable access to financial aid) (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 104). The protocol walks practitioners through a four-step process that involves customizing the protocol for inquiry, conducting the observation, reflecting on what was observed, and sharing findings with campus leaders and colleagues.

2. Participant Observation

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The participant observation protocol asks practitioners to “walk in students’ shoes”—that is, to experience campus programs, services, and spaces *as if you are a student*, and in particular a racially minoritized student. Attempting to see the college from the eyes of a student is another way of “strangefying” the familiar, but one that is designed to bring practitioners a little closer to the student experience. The protocol walks practitioners through a four-step process that involves getting ready to walk in students’ shoes, conducting the observation, writing up and reflecting on the observation experience, and sharing findings with campus leaders and colleagues.

3. Peer Observation

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The peer observation protocols ask instructional faculty to work with two or more of their peers to conduct observations of each other's



classrooms. Three protocols are included in this guide, which focus on: (1) classroom engagement; (2) instructor communication; and (3) classroom policies and rules. By observing the classrooms of their peers, faculty can serve as a “mirror” for their colleagues, helping them see what kind of classroom environment they cultivate, how they interact with students, and whether racial/ethnic patterns are evident.

REFERENCES & ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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PROTOCOL: DESCRIPTIVE OBSERVATION OF PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SPACES

Conducting observations of campus programs, services, and spaces gives practitioners a way to see how students access and use support services at your institution. This observation approach asks practitioners to take on the role of a researcher and look at your institution with a different lens, with the goal of seeing and understanding how support services are implemented on your campus.

Going through this observation inquiry process enables practitioners to do what education scholars Kris Gutiérrez and Shirin Vossoughi (2010) call “strangefying” that which is familiar. “Strangefying” is key to “making visible the routinized practices of work and educational spaces, [and] bringing to the surface potential contradictions between these practices and the objects or desired outcomes of activity” (p. 104). In other words, “strangefying” brings to light whether and how a college’s routines and campus spaces are in fact working to achieve espoused equity outcomes.

OBSERVING PROGRAMS, SERVICES, AND SPACES

The protocol outlines a four-step process that practitioners would follow.

1. Develop the protocol.
2. Conduct the observation.
3. Reflect on observation findings and process.
4. Present and disseminate findings.

Each step includes a series of questions to structure your inquiry. Note that these questions are designed to **focus** and **guide** the inquiry process; however, they are not exhaustive of all the possible things you may observe. We encourage you to review the questions carefully and, if needed, to incorporate additional questions or adapt the questions to better suit your context.

1. DEVELOP THE PROTOCOL

Before conducting any observation, first develop the observation protocol you will use. Observing can be an intense and taxing activity; a protocol can help set the bounds of what you attend to and notice in a space, enabling you to focus on what's most important for your overall goals. For this observation inquiry, that goal is to understand how students—particularly Black, Latinx, Native American, Pacific Islander, and other students from racially minoritized groups—experience a program, service, or space on your campus. The program, service, or space can be associated with:

- Financial aid
- Admissions
- Transfer
- Career counseling
- General counseling and advising
- Health services
- Tutoring center

Note that these are just examples; we encourage you to think widely about what can be observed.

In developing your protocol, consider including questions about the physical attributes of the space being observed, the staff, the students, and the activities and interactions taking place in the space. We offer sample questions to get you started.

SAMPLE OBSERVATION INQUIRY QUESTIONS

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. Are entrances clearly marked so new students can easily find program offices, centers, and services?
2. What does the space look like?
 - a. What do you see as you walk through the door?
 - b. How is the space decorated and furnished? What is on the walls?
 - c. Is the environment inviting and/or welcoming for students? If so, how?
 - d. Are there places where students can wait? Describe.
 - e. Are there places where students can speak with a staff member in private? Describe.

STAFF

1. How many staff (professional and student workers) do you see?
2. What is the racial/gender makeup of the professional staff and /or student workers?
3. What roles do you see the professional staff and/or student workers playing?
4. What is the demeanor of the professional staff and/or student workers?
5. Is there a sufficient number of professional staff and/or student workers available to meet the needs of the students? Are students being seen in a reasonable time?

STUDENTS

1. Count and assess everyone who is in the space or who comes to the space during your visit.
 - a. How many students do you see?
 - b. What is the demeanor of the students?
 - c. What is the racial/gender makeup of the students?
 - d. If you were a student of color, do you feel that you could find a community of peers in this space?

SAMPLE OBSERVATION INQUIRY QUESTIONS

ACTIVITIES AND INTERACTIONS

1. How do the professional staff and/or student workers greet/welcome students?
2. How long do students typically wait before they are seen?
3. Who approaches whom?
4. What are the communication styles of the professional staff and/or student workers as they speak to and interact with students?
5. Do the professional staff and/or student workers use plain language, or is there taken-for-granted higher education terminology (i.e., jargon) that might be confusing for students without prior college exposure? Take note of the terminology and how students respond.
6. What tone of voice is used by professional staff and/or student workers when speaking with students? What is their “body language”?
7. What is the balance of conversation? Who speaks and who listens?
 - a. Does this vary by the race/ethnicity of the professional staff and/or student workers and students?
8. What materials are available for student to use or take with them that support their use of the center (flyers, posters, books, resource materials, computers)?
9. What activities do you observe going on?
 - a. Is there an observable sequence of activities?
 - b. Who is involved in these activities?

Once you've settled on the questions, prepare a worksheet that will aid your notetaking during the observation. We encourage you to include a rough diagram of the space you're observing, which can help jog your memory during Step 3, Reflecting. In your diagram, consider recording physical aspects of the space (e.g., where doors and windows are located); where professional staff and/or student workers are situated; where material resources (e.g., tables, chairs, books) are positioned, etc.

In addition, we urge you to take **descriptive** notes. By descriptive, we mean for you to capture that which you see with your eyes, hear with your ears, smell with your nose, or touch with your hands. Descriptive notes are important because they serve as the evidence upon which your **interpretations** about how students experience the program, service, or space are based.

**EXAMPLE: DESCRIPTIVE NOTE**

Walking into the space, I noticed a light flickering overhead. Two individuals—students, I presume—were sitting at the round table in the middle of the room, writing in notebooks. One was Latina, the other Asian (female).

**EXAMPLE: INTERPRETIVE NOTE**

The space appeared warm and inviting; however, the flickering light at the back was distracting. The two students at the table were busy working and didn't seem bothered by the light.

2. CONDUCT THE OBSERVATION

Once you've developed the protocol and worksheet, consider how many times you'll observe the program, service, or space, and for how long. Regarding the latter, an hour (give or take) is a reasonable framework. Repeating the observation, ideally at different times of the day, not only means collecting more evidence; it can also help reveal whether patterns you notice in the morning—for example—also hold in the afternoon, or whether the presence of different staff members affects the experiences students have.

In addition, consider whether you'll involve a colleague in the observation. You could decide to do the observation together. If you decide to go this route, we recommend you position yourselves at different places in the space. Inviting a colleague to do the observation with you allows you to compare (descriptive) notes. Alternatively, you and your colleague can decide to conduct the observation at different points during the day and week, which would allow you to gather more evidence and data.

Finally, don't forget to make the arrangements with the practitioner in charge of the program, service, or space you plan to observe. Seeking their permission is crucial for building trust, particularly if you intend to present your findings and attendant recommendations to that practitioner during Step 4.

3. REFLECT ON OBSERVATION FINDINGS AND PROCESS

After the observation is complete, review your notes and reflect on the notes captured. Ask yourself the following reflection questions:

- What did you learn about the program, service, or space during the observation? What was surprising? Not surprising?
- Were there patterns evident by race and ethnicity, in terms of:
 - Who (students) use the space?
 - Who staffs the space?
 - The interactions between the professional staff/student workers and students?
- Overall, how would you describe the program, service, or space? What aspects were positive, if any? What aspects were negative, if any?
- Based on your observation, would you say that this program, service, or space is:
 - Student-centered? What evidence contributes to your interpretation?
 - Mindful that students' experiences can differ based on race? What evidence contributes to your interpretation?
- What recommendations do you have for the practitioners who oversee the program, service, or space? How will these recommendations improve the program, service, or space for students from racially minoritized groups?

4. PRESENT AND DISSEMINATE FINDINGS

Consider sharing your observation findings, reflections, and recommendations with the practitioners who oversee the program, service, or space, as well as with campus leaders who can help implement your recommendations. The following questions can help frame the presentation:

- What does the program, service, or space reveal of the campus attitudes toward students exploring transfer? Toward students from racially minoritized groups exploring transfer? What are some issues that should be raised for departmental and campus discussions?
- What changes, if any, would you recommend that would make the program, service, or space better for all students and more equitable for students from racially minoritized groups? If changes were recommended, who would have to make the changes? What is the process to implement those changes? What buy-in would need to be acquired, and from whom?

PROTOCOL: PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION BY WALKING IN STUDENTS' SHOES

One way to understand how students experience your institution is to see campus programs, services, and spaces *as if you are a student*. Called “walking in students’ shoes,” this observation is a type of “participant observation,” which the sociologists Howard Becker and Blanche Geer (1969) describe as:

the method in which the observer participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some disguised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said, and questioning people, over some length of time. (p. 322)

With CUE’s walking in students’ shoes inquiry, you are the observer and your institution’s programs and services are the things “under study.”

Since it’s not possible to actually walk in students’—and in particular, racially minoritized students’—shoes at your institution with all its complexity, this inquiry is about approximating an experience that gets you close enough to seeing the college from *their* eyes. Put another way, walking in students’ shoes likewise enables you to “strangefy” the familiar in order to see whether and in what ways support services produce intended outcomes (Gutiérrez & Vossoughi, 2010, p. 104).

WALKING IN STUDENTS’ SHOES

To demonstrate the walking in students’ shoes inquiry, we focus on two key campus areas that affect students’ experiences and outcomes: the assessment and placement testing process, and the transfer center in community colleges. Each inquiry protocol outlines a four-step process that practitioners would follow.

1. Get ready to walk in students’ shoes.
2. Walk in students’ shoes.
3. Reflect and write field notes.
4. Present and disseminate findings.

Each step includes a series of questions to structure your inquiry. Note that these questions are designed to **focus** and **guide** the inquiry process; they're not exhaustive of all the possible things you may observe at your institution. We encourage you to review the questions carefully, and if needed, incorporate additional questions or to adapt the questions to better suit your context.

One final note before turning to the inquiry protocols. As the walking in students' shoes inquiry draws heavily from the ethnographic tradition of research, we ask that you write up your observations in the form of "field notes."

For ethnographers and other researchers who use participant-observation methods, field notes are the primary vehicle through which observation data are captured. There are no hard and fast rules about what a field note should contain. In general, however, field notes are **descriptive** and **reflective** in nature. Field notes are descriptive because researchers use them to narrate what they observe and learn "while participating in the daily rounds of the lives of others" (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 2011, p. 1). Field notes are reflective because researchers often incorporate into their narration of the day impressions and nascent interpretations of the social life under observation.

As you will see in Step 3: Reflect and Write Field Notes, we've included a handful of questions to guide this part of the inquiry process. As with all the questions here, consider them a starting point for your reflection and writing.

WALK ONE: ASSESSMENT & PLACEMENT TEST

1. Get Ready to Walk in Students' Shoes

For the walking in students' shoes observation of the assessment and placement process:

- Imagine yourself as a new student experiencing the assessment and placement process for the first time.
- Critically consider the assumptions and messages hidden in this process that may impede students' progress.

To prepare yourself to walk in students' shoes, ask yourself:

- What might first-time college students be thinking as they prepare to take the assessment test?
- What might they know or not know about the assessment test and process?
- What anxieties or concerns might they have as they start the assessment test process?
- Consider racially minoritized students in particular. In addition to being a first-time college student, what might they be thinking about the assessment test? While students might not use this language, how might the following issues result in concerns and anxieties: stereotype threat, racial tension, campus climate?

Also, don't forget to make the arrangements to take the assessment and placement test, which includes letting the practitioner in charge of assessment and placement at your campus know that you will be conducting this participant observation.

2. Walk in Students' Shoes

Once ready, embark on the assessment test process. The following questions are designed to draw your attention to specific practices that are part of this process, and whether they are or are not working. Note that these questions do not exhaust all the practices that are associated

with taking the assessment test. Feel free to develop other questions as you go through this process.

- Before the test:
 - a. Where did you find the information to schedule an appointment?
 - b. What are the scheduling policies?
 - c. How did you schedule the assessment? How long did it take?
 - d. How long did you wait for an appointment? What options were you given in terms of location, time, and day to take the test?
 - e. What assessments did you sign up for? Did you have to take assessments you didn't want or need to take?
 - f. What assessment test preparation information were you provided, if any? Where was this information located? Did this information include guidelines for preparing to take the assessment test?

- During the test:
 - a. How did you find the assessment test location? Were there signs leading you to the test location?
 - b. What were you told when you arrived at the test location?
 - c. Was there a staff member available to answer your questions?
 - d. What instructions were you given for the assessment test, if any? Were the instructions helpful?
 - e. What materials were you provided to work out test questions, if any?
 - f. How long did the exam take to complete?
 - g. Was the testing center conducive to taking an exam? If yes, in what ways?
 - h. Were there students present while you were taking the exam?

- After the test:
 - a. Once you completed the assessment test, were your next steps clear (e.g., how to obtain your results)?

- b. How were the test results and placement information provided to you? By whom?
- c. Were you encouraged to see a counselor to consider course options based on your test score?

3. Reflect and Write Field Notes

After you've completed the assessment test process, describe the experience you had in your field notes. Ideally, you would write your field notes on the same day you completed the assessment test. Ask yourself the following reflection questions to get started:

- Overall, how would you describe the assessment test experience for first-time college students? First-time college students from racially minoritized groups? What aspects were positive, if any? What aspects were negative, if any?
- Was there a point during the assessment test process where you were confused or unclear on what you needed to do? If yes, do you think this point of confusion or lack of clarity is a barrier for first-time college students? First time college-students from racially minoritized groups? In what ways?
- Was there a point during the assessment test process where you were confused or unclear about the language used in associated written materials, or by staff members you encountered? If yes, do you think the confusing or unclear language is a barrier for first-time college students? First time college-students from racially minoritized groups? In what ways?
- Was there any point during the assessment test process where you wished you had more help than was provided? If yes, what kind of help would you have liked to receive? In what ways is that help essential for first-time college students? First time college-students from racially minoritized groups?

4. Present and Disseminate Findings

Following self-reflection and field-note writing, consider sharing your experience walking in students' shoes with other practitioners in your department. The following questions can help frame the presentation:

- What does the assessment test process reveal about the campus attitudes toward first-time college students? Toward first-time college students from racially minoritized groups? What are some issues that should be raised for departmental and campus discussions?
- What changes, if any, would you recommend for making the process better for all students, and more equitable for students from racially minoritized groups?
- If changes were recommended, who would have to make the changes? What is the process to implement those changes? What buy-in would need to be acquired, and from whom?

WALK TWO: TRANSFER CENTER

1. Get Ready to Walk in Students' Shoes

For the walking in students' shoes observation of visiting the transfer center:

- Imagine yourself as a student interested in transferring to a four-year institution.
- Critically consider the assumptions and messages hidden in this process that may impede students' progress.

To prepare yourself to walk in students' shoes, ask yourself:

- What might a student be thinking as they plan their first visit to the transfer center?
- What might they know or not know about the transfer process?
- What information would they be seeking from the transfer center?
- What anxieties or concerns might they have about transferring to a four-year institution?
- Consider racially minoritized students in particular. What might they be thinking about the transfer process? While students might not use this language, how might the following issues result in concerns and anxieties: stereotype threat, racial tension, campus climate?

Also, don't forget to make the necessary arrangements to conduct this participant observation. For a visit to the transfer center, you may need to seek approval from the administrator who oversees the center.

2. Walk in Students' Shoes

Once you're ready, visit the transfer center. The following questions are designed to draw your attention to specific practices that are part of this process, and whether they are or are not working. Note that the questions do not exhaust all the practices that are associated with visiting the transfer center. Feel free to develop other questions.

- Before the visit:
 - a. Where did you find information on the transfer center (e.g., location, operating hours)?
 - b. Did you have to schedule an appointment to visit the transfer center? If yes, how did you find the scheduling information? What steps did you have to take to schedule the appointment?
 - c. Decide what information you'll need from the transfer center. For example, will your visit be about gathering information on the transfer process in general? About transferring to specific four-year institutions? About transferring with respect to your major?

- Visiting the transfer center:
 - a. How did you find the transfer center? Were there signs leading you to where the center is located? Was it easy to find?
 - b. When you arrived at the transfer center, was there anyone to greet you? If yes, who greeted you? What did that person say?
 - c. Is there a process for signing in at the transfer center?
 - d. What does the transfer center look like? Was the center small or big when compared to other support centers on campus? What's on the walls? What materials are available? What technology (e.g., computers) are students allowed to use? Was it quiet or loud?
 - e. If you did make an appointment to see a transfer center staff member, did you have to wait? Was there a place to sit down?
 - f. What advice were you given about the transfer process? What materials (e.g., forms, guidebooks) were you provided with? What types of events or transfer related services were discussed? Were transfer-related and transfer-impacting¹ indicators discussed?

¹ *Transfer-related* indicators are defined as those indicators pertaining directly to transfer (e.g., process), whereas *transfer-impacting* indicators pertain indirectly to transfer (e.g., completing transferable math and English), but have the potential to control transfer access for students who begin postsecondary education in two-year colleges, non-degree coursework, or technical colleges (Chase, Dowd, Bordoloi Pazich & Bensimon, 2014).

- g. Besides the staff and yourself, who else was in the transfer center? Were there students? From what you can tell, what was the race/ethnicity of those students?

3. Reflect and Write Field Notes

After your visit to the transfer center, describe the experience you had in your field notes. Ideally, you would write your field notes on the same day of your visit. Ask yourself the following reflection questions to get started:

- Overall, how would you describe the experience visiting the transfer center? What aspects were positive, if any? What aspects were negative, if any?
- Was there a point during the visit where you were confused or unclear about what you needed to do? If yes, do you think this point of confusion or lack of clarity is a barrier for students visiting the transfer center for first time? For students from racially minoritized groups visiting for the first time? In what ways?
- Was there a point during the visit where you were confused or unclear on the language used in associated written materials, or by staff members you encountered? If yes, do you think the confusing or unclear language is a barrier for students visiting for the first time? For students from racially minoritized groups visiting for the first time? In what ways?
- Was there any point during the visit where you wished you had more help than was provided? If yes, what kind of help would you have liked to receive? In what ways is that help essential for first-time visitors? First time visitors from racially minoritized groups?

4. Present and Disseminate Findings

Following self-reflection and field-note writing, consider sharing your experience walking in students' shoes with other practitioners in your department. The following questions can help frame the presentation:

- What does the transfer center reveal about the campus attitudes toward students exploring transfer? Toward students from racially minoritized groups exploring transfer? What are some issues that should be raised for departmental and campus discussions?
- What changes, if any, would you recommend for making the transfer center better for all students, and more equitable for students from racially minoritized groups? If changes were recommended, who would have to make the changes? What is the process to implement those changes? What buy-in would need to be acquired, and from whom?

ADAPTING THE PROTOCOL: WALKING IN STUDENTS' SHOES IN OTHER PROGRAMS AND SERVICES

Now that you've tried walking in students' shoes with the assessment and placement tests and the transfer process, ask yourself about other routine processes on your campus that your Vital Signs data suggest could be implicated in producing inequitable outcomes for racially/ethnically minoritized students. For example:

- Completing admission and financial aid documents
- Visiting the Financial Aid Office
- Visiting the Career Center
- Making a counseling appointment

In addition to exploring other areas of your campus from the perspective of students, consider this an opportunity to get your feet wet with developing your own participant observation protocols for equity-minded inquiry. There is no right or wrong when it comes to developing these protocols; however, keep in mind your overall objective for this inquiry, which is to better understand how your students are experiencing a particular program, service, or process, and how that program, service, or process works or does not work for them.

Please consult the sample observation inquiry questions on pages 10 and 11 to develop your protocol.

PROTOCOL: PEER OBSERVATION OF CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

Peer observation inquiry allows two or more instructors to work together to practice being race-conscious in their classroom, and to watch for racial/ethnic patterns that may provide insight into actions that could better support equitable outcomes.

The equity-minded observation prompts and reflection questions included in this protocol are designed to guide instructors through a cycle of inquiry in the classroom, with a focus on classroom participation. Through this inquiry process, instructors can develop their equity-minded competency in the following areas:

- Viewing the classroom as a racialized space and identifying racialized patterns;
- Actively self-monitoring interactions with students, especially students from racially minoritized groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders); and
- Reflecting on racial consequences of taken-for-granted practices.

OBSERVING CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

The protocol outlines a four-step process with actions for practitioners to undertake before, during, and after the peer classroom observation.

1. Before the Observation

- Decide how many observations you and your partner will conduct of each other's classrooms. Consider conducting two to three observations over a set period of time—for example, two weeks—which would allow multiple opportunities to witness potential patterns (racial and otherwise).
- Set a date when you and your partner will discuss the observation notes. This meeting should occur once all the observations are complete.

- For the instructor being observed: Explain to the students in the class that your peer is present to do an observation of how you conduct the class, for your professional development. In your explanation, you can share with students that the observation is about helping you learn how to be a better teacher for them.
- For the instructor doing the observing: Review this protocol so you're clear on what you're looking for during the classroom observation.

2. During the Observation

- Arrive before class starts, and situate yourself where you have an unobstructed view of the instructor and a view of most students.
- Diagram the classroom: Draw a diagram of the classroom you're observing, in the space allotted in Part 1 of the Classroom Engagement Observation Worksheet on page 35. Write down the name of the instructor you're observing, the name of the class, and your name. Also write the date of the observation and the time the observation starts and ends.
- Focus your observation using the prompts described on page 29.

CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT PEER OBSERVATION PROMPTS

WHO AND WHERE

1. To the best of your ability, note students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age according to where they're sitting in the classroom on the Classroom Engagement Worksheet 1 (page 35).

NOTE: Given that race/ethnicity is a social construct, your best guess of each student's racial/ethnic identify will be appropriate for this exercise.

2. Once you've noted the students' demographic details, assign each student a number. The numbers will help you keep track of the counts for the prompts below.

NOTE: For an example, see the completed Classroom Observation Worksheet Part 1 (page 34).

STUDENT PARTICIPATION

1. Count the number of times:
 - Students raise their hand.
 - Students speak.

Note the counts on the Classroom Engagement Worksheet 2 (page 36).

INSTRUCTOR ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS

1. Count the number of times:
 - The instructor **calls on** a particular student. Note whether or not the instructor calls the student by name.
 - The instructor **speaks with** a particular student. Note whether or not the instructor calls the student by name.

INSTRUCTOR ENGAGEMENT WITH STUDENTS

1. Mark where the instructor walks in the classroom.

NOTE: For an example, see the completed Classroom Observation Worksheet Part 1 (page 34).

REMEMBER: Observing can help uncover **what** is going on, although it cannot explain **why** patterns exist. Understanding **why** requires further inquiry.

Classroom Observation Worksheets are adapted from Robinson (2017).

3. After the Observation

- Meet with your partner after all the observations have been conducted, to debrief and share impressions. The following questions were developed by Robinson (2017), based on the work of Allen & Blythe (2004). The facilitation points were also developed by Robinson (2017), based in part on the School Reform Initiative's *Feedback Principles* and *Feedback Provided During Protocols*.
 - a. When **giving** feedback to your partner, keep the following question in mind: Does my tone make it clear that I'm advocating for the success of my colleague?
 - b. When **receiving** feedback from your partner, keep the following idea in mind: People need to move out of their comfort zone (i.e., be challenged, take risks) in order to learn.
- For the instructor who did the observation, facilitate the debrief by sharing:
 - a. What you appreciated about how the instructor conducted the class.
 - b. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about students' participation in the class—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - c. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about the instructor's efforts to engage students in their classroom—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - d. Wonderings, also based on the observation data you collected, about apparent racial/ethnic patterns in the classroom.

4. SELF-REFLECTION

Once you've debriefed with your partner, engage in a self-reflection process guided by the following questions:

- What is the racial/ethnic, gender, and age composition of your students in this class? Are there racial/ethnic groups not represented by your students?
- Are there patterns by race/ethnicity in terms of where students sit (e.g., in the front or back of the classroom, together) in the classroom?
- Are there patterns by race/ethnicity in terms of students who raise their hands? Who don't raise their hands?
- Are there patterns by race/ethnicity in terms of students you call on?
- What did this peer observation make you realize about racial/ethnic patterns in your classroom?
 - Were you already aware of these patterns?
 - What will you do to better understand the nature of these patterns?
- Do you believe these racial/ethnic patterns are problematic? If yes, what do you intend to do to ensure that these patterns do not persist? What strategies might you try out in your classroom? (See the following page for examples of equity-minded actions.)
- How can you involve other instructors in your department in this self-observation inquiry?

**EXAMPLES OF INQUIRY-INFORMED, EQUITY-MINDED CLASSROOM
ENGAGEMENT ACTIONS****Who**

- It's important to notice, by race/ethnicity, who is present and who is absent. If students from a particular racial/ethnic group are not present in your classroom, and there is a large proportion of students from this group on your campus—consider reaching out to campus advisors or counselors for guidance on why students from this racial/ethnic group aren't enrolling in your course, and possible actions you could undertake to support this group's enrollment.

Note: Keep in mind that under-enrollment may not necessarily be a problem. For example, under-enrollment in a developmental course may mean a racial/ethnic group has moved on to college-level courses.

- If students from a racially minoritized group are over-represented in your course, consider conducting a quick classroom survey to better understand why these students are taking your class (for example, it's required for their major). This survey is also an opportunity to learn more about students' racial/ethnic backgrounds and identities, as well as learning goals for the class and how they can best be supported in their learning. Together, the information collected can prove useful when thinking about how to tailor course content (such as lecture examples or test questions) to better serve the students in your classroom.

Where

- If students from a racially minoritized group are more likely to sit in a particular area in the classroom, consider rotating where you stand each class so that the "front" and "back" of the room shifts over the course of the semester. (The "front" and "back" of the room are generally denoted by the position where an instructor conducts the class.)

- If you typically stand in the same place for most of the class session, consider circulating so you intentionally engage students, especially students from racially minoritized groups, from different points in the room.

Participation

- If students from a racially minoritized group are less likely to raise their hand or seem less engaged, experiment with your course content. Consider conducting a classroom survey that asks students their hobbies, majors, or career aspirations. Use this information to create examples that are relevant to their interests and who students are, particularly for those from racial/ethnic groups you want to reach. Also consider sharing the stories and contributions of important figures in your field who share the racial/ethnic identity of the students you want to engage.

Engagement

- If some students are from a racially minoritized group you do not regularly interact with, make a plan to interact with them. This could include making a point to say hello and ask how they're doing when they arrive to class. It could also entail setting up a 15- to 20-minute meeting over coffee with each student, the goal of which is to get to know them.

WORKSHEET

WORKED EXAMPLE: CLASSROOM DIAGRAM

Instructor Observed:
Debbie Hanson

Date:
April 8, 2018

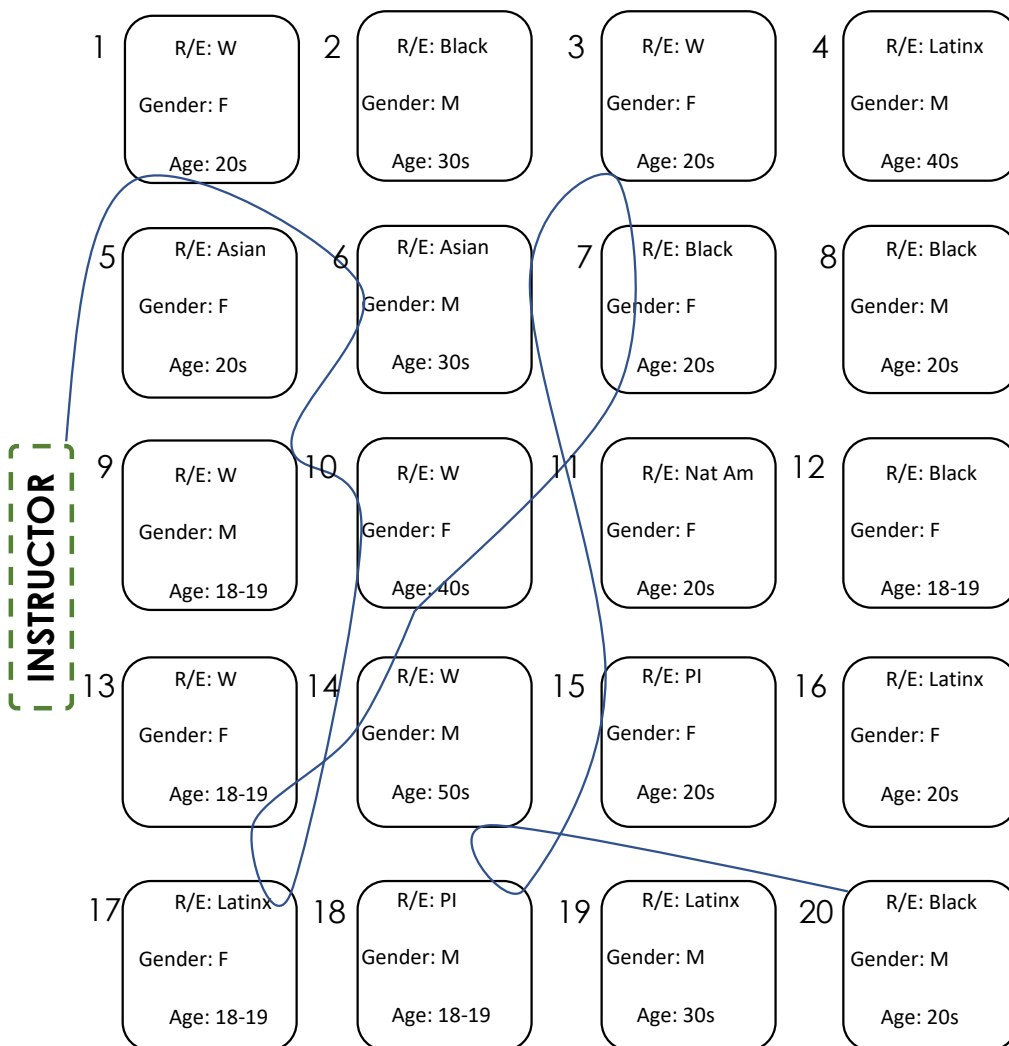
Class Observed:
English 101

Observation Start Time:
10:00 AM

Peer Observer:
Cheryl Ching

Observation End Time:
11:15 AM

Diagram of Classroom



WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

Instructor Observed:

Date:

Class Observed:

Observation Start Time:

Peer Observer:

Observation End Time:

Diagram of Classroom

REMEMBER to note each students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.



WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

	Student raised hand	Student speaks	Instructor calls on	Instructor speaks with
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				
11				
12				
13				
14				
15				
16				
17				
18				
19				
20				

PROTOCOL: PEER OBSERVATION OF INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION

Peer observation inquiry allows two or more instructors to work together to practice being race-conscious in their classroom, and to watch for racial/ethnic patterns that may provide insight into actions that could better support equitable outcomes.

The observation prompts and equity-minded reflection questions included in this protocol are designed to guide instructors through a cycle of inquiry in the classroom, with a focus on how instructors communicate with students, especially students from racially minoritized groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders). Through this inquiry process, instructors can develop their equity-minded competency in the following areas:

- Viewing the classroom as a racialized space and identifying racialized patterns;
- Actively self-monitoring interactions with students, especially students from racially minoritized groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders); and
- Reflecting on racial consequences of taken-for-granted practices.

OBSERVING CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT

This observation inquiry asks you to focus on **describing** what you see, hear, and notice about how the instructor communicates with students. During the observation period, refrain from **interpreting** or incorporating how you feel about the behavior of the instructor or the students.

The protocol outlines a four-step process with actions for practitioners to undertake before, during, and after the peer classroom observation.



EXAMPLE: DESCRIPTIVE NOTE

The instructor turned to the door, said 'Hello, Keisha' with an upbeat tone, and smiled when the student (Black, female) walked into the classroom. Keisha looked at the instructor and smiled back.



EXAMPLE: INTERPRETIVE NOTE

The instructor was friendly when Keisha, a female student, walked into the classroom. Keisha was friendly back.

1. Before the Observation

- Decide how many observations you and your partner will conduct of each other's classrooms. Consider conducting two to three observations over a set period of time—for example, two weeks—which would allow multiple opportunities to witness potential patterns (racial and otherwise).
- Set a date when you and your partner will discuss the observation notes. This meeting should occur once all the observations are complete.
- For the instructor being observed: Explain to the students in the class that your peer is present to do an observation of how you conduct the class, for your professional development. In your explanation, you can share with students that the observation is about helping you learn how to be a better teacher for them.

- For the instructor doing the observing: Review this protocol so that you're clear on what you're looking for during the classroom observation.

2. During the Observation

- Arrive before class starts, and situate yourself where you have an unobstructed view of the instructor and a view of most students.
- Diagram the classroom: Draw a diagram of the classroom you're observing, in the space allotted in the Instructor Communication Worksheet 1 (page 47). Write down the name of the instructor you are observing, the name of the class, and your name. Also write the date of the observation and the time the observation starts and ends.
- Focus your observation using the prompts described on page 41.
- If desired, use the Instructor Communication Worksheet 2 on page 48 to write down **descriptive** observations of your peer's communication with students. In the first column, describe what the instructor says or does. In the second column, write down the student's reaction, as well as the student's race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION PEER OBSERVATION PROMPTS

THE STUDENTS WITH WHOM THE INSTRUCTOR IS SPEAKING: Whenever the instructor is communicating with specific students, note your best guess of the students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

INSTRUCTOR'S TONE: Whenever the instructor is speaking, whether to specific students or to the entire class, note the tone of their voice (e.g., warm, stern, friendly, sarcastic).

STUDENT RESPONSE: Note students' verbal and non-verbal responses to what the instructor says and/or does.

GREETING STUDENTS/STARTING CLASS: When a student enters the classroom, what does the instructor say and/or do, if anything? What does the instructor say and/or do to start the class?

DELIVERING CONTENT: What teaching approaches (e.g., lecture, class discussion, group work) does the instructor use to engage students in the course content?

- What does the instructor say or do to structure the class, if anything? Does the instructor explicitly communicate the primary topic or objective?
- What questions does the instructor ask students about course content? Is the question directed to the whole class, or to a specific student?
- What references and/or examples does the instructor employ?

ANSWERING STUDENT QUESTIONS: What does the instructor say and/or do when a student asks a question about course material or an assignment?

SUPPORTING STUDENT SUCCESS: During class, does the instructor say and/or do anything to encourage students to do well in the course? Does the instructor encourage students to come to office hours? Note what the instructor says and/or does.

IMPLEMENTING POLICIES (CLASS, DEPARTMENT, AND/OR COLLEGE): What does the instructor say and/or do when a policy matter comes up during class (e.g., about mobile phone use, assignment deadlines, tardiness)?

CLOSING CLASS: What does the instructor say and/or do to students when the class comes to an end?

NOTE: These prompts may not cover all forms or areas of communication that occur during a class. Feel free to take descriptive notes of instructor communications that don't fit one of these prompts.

3. After the Observation

- Meet with your partner after all the observations have been conducted, to debrief and share impressions. The following questions were developed by Robinson (2017), based on the work of Allen & Blythe (2004). The facilitation points were also developed by Robinson (2017), based in part on the School Reform Initiative's *Feedback Principles* and *Feedback Provided During Protocols*.
 - a. When **giving** feedback to your partner, keep the following question in mind: Does my tone make it clear that I'm advocating for the success of my colleague?
 - b. When **receiving** feedback from your partner, keep the following idea in mind: People need to move out of their comfort zone (i.e., be challenged, take risks) in order to learn.
- For the instructor who did the observation, facilitate the debrief by sharing:
 - a. What you appreciated about how the instructor conducted the class.
 - b. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about students' participation in the class—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - c. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about the instructor's efforts to engage students in their classroom—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - d. Wonderings, also based on the observation data you collected, about apparent racial/ethnic patterns in the classroom.

EQUITY-MINDED COMMUNICATION QUESTIONS

WELCOMING: In what ways if any does the instructor convey to students (in words or actions) that they're welcome and that s/he cares about them?

DEMYSTIFYING: In what ways if any does the instructor communicate course content, policies, and processes in a clear and approachable way?

CREATING A PARTNERSHIP: In what ways if any does the instructor convey (in words or actions) that they see themselves as mutually responsible for student success and will work alongside students to ensure it?

VALIDATING: In what ways if any does the instructor validate his/her students' ability to be successful?

REPRESENTING: In what ways if any does the instructor ensure a range of racial/ethnic identities and experiences are represented in his/her stories, examples, lectures, etc.?

DECONSTRUCTING: In what ways if any does the instructor deconstruct or counter the common presentation of "whiteness" as the norm?

4. SELF-REFLECTION

Once you've debriefed with your partner, consider whether and in what way your communication with students can be described as equity-minded.

- Review the equity-minded communication questions on page 43
- Review your partner's observation notes of your class, as well as any notes you took during the debriefing session.
- Identify and label instances where you did and did not exhibit each equity-minded practice. For example, write WELCOMING next to the instances where you believe you demonstrated this equity-minded communication practice. Conversely, write WELCOMING- (i.e., add a minus sign) where you believe you did *not* demonstrate this practice when you *could* have.
- Tally the number of instances where you demonstrate (second column) and do not demonstrate (third column) each equity-minded practice.

EQUITY-MINDED PRACTICES	+	-
Welcoming		
Demystifying		
Creating a Partnership		
Validating		
Representing		
Deconstructing		

- Ask yourself:
 - a. What did this peer observation make you realize about the way you communicate with students in your classroom?
 - b. Are there patterns by race/ethnicity in terms of where you did and did not demonstrate each equity-minded practice?
 - c. Do you believe racial/ethnic patterns in your communication with students are problematic? If yes, what do you intend to do to ensure that these patterns do not persist? What strategies might you try out in your classroom? (See page 46 for examples of equity-minded actions.)
 - d. How can you involve other instructors in your department in this self-observation inquiry?

EXAMPLES OF EQUITY-MINDED COMMUNICATION PRACTICES

Welcoming

- The instructor knows all the students' names and uses the correct pronunciation.
- The instructor gets to know students and their professional aspirations.
- The instructor's tone is welcoming and demonstrates a respect for students.

Demystifying

- The instructor takes time to clearly explain course or institutional policies or practices that first-generation students—who are more likely to be from a historically underserved racial/ethnic group—are unfamiliar with.
- The instructor takes time to listen to students and what they understand—and uses that as necessary to provide further clarification.

Creating a Partnership

- The instructor takes time to connect with each student during class, assess how clearly they understand the course content, and provide tailored support as needed.
- The instructor pointedly invites students who need extra help to his or her office hours in order to spend time working together.
- The instructor takes time to clearly explain course and institutional processes and policies—and then checks to see if students understand.

Validating

- The instructor encourages students as they progress.
- The instructor demonstrates multiple strategies to solve a problem or answer a question.
- The instructor talks in terms of “This is what you do to be successful,” not “If you do this, you’ll fail.”

Representing

- A range of racial/ethnic identities, backgrounds, and experiences are represented throughout course examples, lectures, and readings.
- The instructor manages course discussions to ensure that multiple student voices are heard, and that two or three students do not dominate.
- The instructor names and addresses instances of bias, racism, or societal racial/ethnic inequities that emerge in course content or discussions.

Deconstructing

- Classroom examples, lectures, and readings do not focus on the experiences of white, middle-class students.
- Multiple racial/ethnic identities, backgrounds, and experiences are incorporated throughout the class, rather than as a one-time add-on.

WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION

Instructor Observed:

Date:

Class Observed:

Observation Start Time:

Peer Observer:

Observation End Time:

Diagram of Classroom

REMEMBER to note each students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.



WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: INSTRUCTOR COMMUNICATION

Instructor said/did	Student reaction

PROTOCOL: PEER OBSERVATION OF CLASSROOM POLICIES AND RULES

Peer observation inquiry allows two or more instructors to work together to practice being race-conscious in their classroom, and to watch for racial/ethnic patterns that may provide insight into actions that could better support equitable outcomes.

The equity-minded observation prompts and reflection questions included in this protocol are designed to guide instructors through a cycle of inquiry in the classroom, with a focus on how policies and rules are implemented. Through this inquiry process, instructors can develop their equity-minded competency in the following areas:

- Viewing the classroom as a racialized space and identifying racialized patterns;
- Actively self-monitoring interactions with students, especially students from racially minoritized groups (e.g., Blacks, Latinx, Native Americans, Pacific Islanders); and
- Reflecting on racial consequences of taken-for-granted practices.

OBSERVING CLASSROOM POLICIES AND RULES

For the purposes of this observation inquiry, we're defining **policies** as official, explicitly stated guidelines that are documented in the course syllabus, while **rules and expectations** are unofficial, unstated guidelines that can be inferred from what an instructor says and/or does in the classroom, and in their interactions with students.

This observation inquiry asks you to focus on **describing** what you see, hear, and notice about the stated policies and unstated rules and expectations that an instructor implements in the classroom. During the observation period, refrain from **interpreting** (i.e., ascribing meaning to or incorporating how you feel about) the behavior of the instructor or students.



EXAMPLE: DESCRIPTIVE NOTE

A student (Latina, 20s) arrived to class 5 minutes after it started. The instructor looked in the student's direction. They made eye contact before the student sat down.



EXAMPLE: INTERPRETIVE NOTE

A Latina student around 20 years old was late to class. The instructor didn't seem bothered by the student's tardiness.

1. Before the Observation

- Decide how many observations you and your partner will conduct of each other's classrooms. Consider conducting two to three observations over a set period of time—for example, two weeks—which would allow multiple opportunities to witness potential patterns (racial and otherwise).
- Set a date when you and your partner will discuss the observation notes. This meeting should occur once all the observations are complete.
- For the instructor being observed: Explain to the students in the class that your peer is present to do an observation of how you conduct the class, for your professional development. In your explanation, you can share with students that the observation is about helping you learn how to be a better teacher for them.

- For the instructor doing the observation: Review the course syllabus so you're familiar with the instructor's *stated* policies. This will give you a general sense of what to look for during the classroom observation.

Note: Bring the course syllabus to the classroom observation session, so you can refer to it if needed.

Also review this protocol so you're clear about what to take notes on during the classroom observation.

2. During the Observation

- Arrive before class starts, and situate yourself where you have an unobstructed view of the instructor and a view of most students.
- Diagram the classroom: Draw a diagram of the classroom you're observing, in the space allotted in the Classroom Policies & Rules Worksheet 1 (page 59). Write down the name of the instructor you're observing, the name of the class, and your name. Also write the date of the observation and the time the observation starts and ends.
- Be present to what is going on during the class, focusing on whether and how the instructor implements **stated** and **unstated** policies and rules. Specific prompts can be found on pages 54-55.
- If desired, use the Classroom Policies & Rules Worksheet 2 on page 60 to write down your **descriptive** observations. In the first column, describe what the instructor says or does. In the second column, note the policy or rule you believe is being implemented. In the last column, write down the student's reaction, as well as the student's race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

PROMPTS: IMPLEMENTING STATED POLICIES

It's possible that no circumstance or interaction will emerge during the session that would enable you to observe how an instructor implements their policies. To focus your observation, pay close attention to these situations:

- At the **beginning of class**, which could reveal whether and how the instructor implements their **tardiness policy** (if they have one).
- If you notice **students on their mobile phones**, which could show whether and how the instructor implements their **mobile phone policy** (if they have one).
- During **class discussion**, which could demonstrate whether and how the instructor implements their **collegiality/civility policy** (if they have one).
- When **assignments are collected**, which could reveal whether and how the instructor implements their **late assignment policy** (if they have one).

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

In your descriptive notes, write down:

- **What** the instructor says and/or does when a policy matter comes up.
- To **whom** the instructor is directing their comments and/or actions. Note your best guess of the students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.
- How students **react** to what the instructor says and/or does.

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 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.

Again, in your descriptive notes, write down:

- **What** the instructor says and/or does when a policy matter comes up.
- To **whom** the instructor is directing their comments and/or actions.
Note your best guess of the students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.
- How students **react** to what the instructor says and/or does.

3. After the Observation

- Meet with your partner after all the observations have been conducted, to debrief and share impressions. The following questions were developed by Robinson (2017), based on the work of Allen & Blythe (2004). The facilitation points were also developed by Robinson (2017), based in part on the School Reform Initiative's *Feedback Principles* and *Feedback Provided During Protocols*.
 - a. When **giving** feedback to your partner, keep the following question in mind: Does my tone make it clear that I'm advocating for the success of my colleague?
 - b. When **receiving** feedback from your partner, keep the following idea in mind: People need to move out of their comfort zone (i.e., be challenged, take risks) in order to learn.
- For the instructor who did the observation, facilitate the debrief by sharing:
 - a. What you appreciated about how the instructor conducted the class.
 - b. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about students' participation in the class—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - c. Impressions based on the observation data you collected about the instructor's efforts to engage students in their classroom—first generally, and then by race/ethnicity.
 - d. Wonderings, also based on the observation data you collected, about apparent racial/ethnic patterns in the classroom.

4. SELF-REFLECTION

Once you've debriefed with your partner, engage in a self-reflection process guided by the following questions.

- Do you enact policies as stated in your syllabus? If no, in what ways is the stated policy different from how you implement it in the classroom?
- Are you aware of the rules and/or expectations that you enact in the classroom? Which rules and/or expectations are intentional? Unintentional? What do these rules and/or expectations make you realize about the kind of classroom you're creating for your students? About how you want your students to behave?
- Are there differences in how you implemented a policy or rule/expectation from one student to the next? If yes, what was different between each case? Are the differences in any way associated with students' race/ethnicity?
- Are there patterns by race/ethnicity in terms of who was more or less likely to trigger the implementation or non-implementation of a policy or rule/expectation?
- What did this peer observation make you realize about racial/ethnic patterns in your classroom?
 - Were you already aware of these patterns?
 - What will you do to better understand the nature of these patterns?
- Do you believe these racial/ethnic patterns are problematic? If yes, what do you intend to do to ensure that these patterns do not persist? What strategies might you try out in your classroom? (See the following page for examples of equity-minded actions.)
- How can you involve other instructors in your department in this self-observation inquiry?

EXAMPLES OF INQUIRY-INFORMED, EQUITY-MINDED IMPLEMENTATION OF CLASSROOM POLICIES AND RULES

What

- Equity-minded instructors work for consistency in the way policies are written and implemented. Inconsistencies can confuse or misdirect students regarding the role they're expected to play in the classroom—as well as undermine a student's willingness to follow an instructor's direction.
- Another important consideration is how policies, as written and implemented, help create an instructor's classroom culture. Describing policies in a way that signals an instructor will constantly police student behavior creates an environment in which students will not feel welcomed, respected, or valued. Equity-minded practitioners phrase and enact their policies—as well as rules and expectations—in ways that demonstrate caring and a commitment to student success.

Who

- Policies and rules/expectations can disproportionately impact some racial/ethnic groups over others, even if unintentionally. Equity-minded practitioners pay attention to how policies and rules/expectations impact students by race/ethnicity, and know they have the power to change their policies and rules/expectations to mitigate disproportionate impact, if apparent. For example, if an instructor finds that Latinx and Black students are more likely to receive point deductions due to a “no headphones in the classroom” policy, an equity-minded practitioner would (1) re-evaluate why the policy was implemented (what did it seek to achieve, and why?); (2) refocus on student success and equity as a goal; and (3) change or revamp the policy as necessary to avoid disproportionate impact.

Reaction

- Equity-minded practitioners pay attention to students and their reactions when policies are implemented, and particularly the reactions of students from racially minoritized groups. If these students react with frustration, exasperation, or disengagement, this should trigger instructors to ask themselves: What have I communicated that has led students to this point? And what does this tell me about what's working or not working in our efforts to achieve success and equity?

WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: CLASSROOM POLICIES AND RULES

Instructor Observed:

Date:

Class Observed:

Observation Start Time:

Peer Observer:

Observation End Time:

Diagram of Classroom



REMEMBER to note each students' race/ethnicity, gender, and age.

WORKSHEET

PEER OBSERVATION: CLASSROOM POLICIES AND RULES

WHAT instructor says/does	POLICY or RULE being implemented	REACTION to instructor



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