

Inquiry Classroom: Fly On The Wall Self-Assessment

Signals of Inquiry

- Are (thoughtful, connected) questions being asked by students?
- Are students' questions visible and valued in the learning space?
- Are students 'doing the learning' rather than having the learning 'done to them'?
- Are students doing the cognitive 'heavy lifting' or is the teacher doing all the hard thinking work?!
- Are students collaborating – teaching and learning with each other?
- Is there movement? Are students free to move around the learning space? Is there flexibility and fluidity here?
- Is the teacher moving around, interacting, observing (opposed to standing and delivering)
- Is technology being used as a means to an end – to gather, sort and share learning?
- Is it clear how this learning moment is part of a 'bigger picture' as opposed to being a fragmented/one-off activity?
- Do the students know why they are doing what they are doing? Is the teacher transparent in her/his discourse?
- Is there a sense of curiosity/wonder/intrigue/anticipation?
- Is the communication between the people in the space (teachers and learners alike) respectful and warm?
- Are the teachers excited/curious/engaged/energized?
- Is there some laughter? (the good kind)
- Does the physical/visual environment tell something about the learning in this space? Are students using the visual environment to support them as independent learners?
- Can the students talk about their learning? Can they articulate not just what they are doing and why but HOW they are learning and why?
- Does this space make visitors curious/engaged/intrigued?

Warning Bells

- Each child doing the same thing, the same way at the same time.
- Total, sustained silence.
- A noise level that makes it difficult to have a one-one conversation with a student
- Teachers doing much more talking than students
- Learning products on display (art work, worksheets, etc) that ALL LOOK MORE OR LESS EXACTLY THE SAME
- Tables in rows
- NO space for students to gather in a circle/group
- The teacher at the desk
- Mess. Just plain old, can't-be-bothered mess. Not the glorious creative chaos that comes with many inquiry experiences but just mess. Sorry...but inquiry requires organization, management a respect for the learning environment. Beauty, even.
- No evidence of any use of digital technologies.
- Worksheets.
- Bright, beautiful, laminated things on walls but NO artifacts that share students' learning
- Lots of commercially produced posters (even if they say good things, if that's all that's on the walls it makes me suspicious)
- No evidence of what the students are inquiring into. The classroom should tell that story in some way.
- Kids checking in with the teacher about everything...'Can I? Is it OK if? What do I do now? I don't get how to...'
- Teachers raising their voice. A lot.