

Guiding Questions for Visitations*

Personalization

Describe the schools' efforts (instructionally, architecturally and/or with furnishings) at personalizing the environment. Locate and describe evidence of personalized spaces for students. How does the physical space promote strong relationships between teachers and students?

Continuous Relationships

Describe how continuous relationships positively impact students, staff, parents and community. Where do advisories take place? Where do parents feel welcome? How do community members interact with the school?

High Standards and Performance-Based Assessments

What obvious belief statements about school program delivery are immediately apparent in the educational design and/or layout of the facilities? Locate examples of high academic expectations in the design and operation of the school, as well as in the delivery of programs. Describe the locations where student work is exhibited, performed and displayed.

Authentic Curriculum

Describe how curricula based on real-world contexts, higher-order thinking, the consideration of alternatives, project-based learning, community service and internships and preparation for higher education. Where and how is student work exhibited?

Adaptive Pedagogy

How does the environment provide for a range of opportunities for success? Describe places that support multiple instructional strategies, e.g., guided inquiry, small group work, discussions, independent work, projects, experiments, book and internet research, construction of models and products, use of technology and the arts for expressing ideas, and adult interactions with individuals and small groups.

Multicultural and Anti-Racist Teaching

How does the environment reflect diversity in people, perspectives, ideas and experiences? What examples do you see of anti-racist teaching? How does the building allow for opportunities for diverse groups to share interests and build associations? How is multiculturalism reflected in the design, furnishing and decoration of the physical environment?

Knowledgeable and Skilled Teachers

Do teachers have a wide repertoire of tools and methods at their disposal? How does the physical space support their use of variety of tools and methods? What evidence do you see of design elements and structures that allow for flexibility and adaptability of spaces?

Collaborative Planning and Professional Development

How does collaborative adult learning play out in this space? What evidence do you see of positive associations and teamwork? How does the facility support joint effort and accountability?

Family and Community Connections

Describe examples of authentic family involvement in the school. How are families involved in the design and use of the space? What evidence do you see of learning partnerships that display the community's connection with the school and school's connection with the community?

Democratic Decision-Making

What evidence do you see of democratic decision-making? How are students, teachers and parents involved in making decisions? Do you see any design elements that support democratic practices?

* *Guiding Visitation Questions* courtesy of *Architects of Achievement: Designing Schools that Work for All Students* © 2003
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