



**NCTE 5.3**

## **Planning a School Visit**

**Below are suggestions for what to observe and ask when you are visiting a school. Be sure to consider how student writing is discussed, taught, and displayed throughout the school. If possible, talk with instructional leaders, teachers, and support staff about the school's writing program.**

### **When Observing a Classroom, Consider the Following:**

How much writing are students doing?

Are students choosing their own topics?

How is writing displayed in classrooms, hallways, bulletin boards, etc?

Is the teacher modeling writing strategies for the students?

Are students given opportunities to work on a writing assignment in class?

Are students sharing, collaborating, and conferring with one another?

Does the teacher make expectations for writing explicit?

### **Questions to ask the Instructional Leader:**

How is your school's writing initiative organized?

What was the response of staff and students when the writing initiative was introduced?

How long has your school been involved in the writing initiative?

What effective professional development activities have been implemented with staff?

What is going well in classrooms?

How do teachers use new technologies to teach writing?

What do teachers struggle with? How are you responding to these struggles?

What do students struggle with? How are you responding to these struggles?

How is the writing initiative connected to the state writing test?

In what genres of writing are students in your school the strongest? The weakest?

Where is funding for the writing initiative coming from?

How is student writing assessed in your school?



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### **Questions to ask the Teacher:**

What writing skills are students learning in this classroom?

In what genres of writing do you have students compose?

How do you emphasize writing process and collaboration in your classroom?

How do you use writing to learn activities in your classroom?

How do you use new technologies to teach writing?

Do you teach conventions of Standard English? If so, how? If not, why not?

What do you struggle with when you teach writing to students? How do you respond to these struggles?

What writing issues do students continue to struggle with in your classroom? How do you respond to these struggles?

What have you learned through the writing initiative or professional development sessions that you have implemented successfully into your curriculum?

### **Questions to ask the Student:**

Can you show me what you're working on today?

Can you show me your writing folder/notebook?

What kinds of writing do you do for this class?

What is helping you to improve as a writer?

What do you struggle with as a writer?

What kinds of things do you write outside of school?

What is your favorite writing assignment for this class? Why is it your favorite?

Do you share your writing in this class? Whom do you share it with?

When do you feel the most confident as a writer?