
Effective Learning Environments Observation Tool® (eleot®)

Environment A: Equitable Learning

Why It Matters: Most learning occurs in a social context (Vygotsky's Theory of Learning) when interactions between students and adults occur informally and formally. Since learning environments are social systems, student interactions and exchanges during conversations, discussions, and other activities greatly impact their overall learning process, social development, and respectful acceptance of others.

What to Understand

- The term, equitable, is often thought of as meaning, "the same," which is the definition of equality. An equitable learning environment describes an environment where each student's individual needs are met and he/she is valued for her or his uniqueness, not sameness (Jamieson, Roberta, 2000).
- Although students should have equal access to the learning at hand, their experiences or activities can differ depending on their prior knowledge, interests or understanding of concepts.
- The essence of this environment is concentrated on the individual student. In highly rated equitable learning environments, the individual student is progressing and learning at his own rate and showing respect toward other individuals.

What Learners Do

- Work in small groups, whole groups or individually.
- Engage in activities/experiences that are varied depending on needs or interests.
- Access resources (material, digital and human) to attain understanding of the concept(s).
- Ask questions to understand other cultures, differences and backgrounds.
- Show compassion toward their peers or convey compassion during discussions.
- Demonstrate a desire to understand others through conversations and questions.

What Observers Do

- Look for small groups of students working together to determine if they are completing the same or different activities from other groups.
- Listen for students' questions about what resource /materials they need to complete their work.
- Find out in advance of the observation if the students have playlists or pathways that give them choices for their activities.
- Listen to the words and tone students and the teacher use among each other during conversations and questions.
- Listen for words and watch for nonverbal behaviors that reflect acceptance and respectful curiosity about others' cultures, backgrounds and differences.