

Tips for Observing

- You might ask the school to identify special events during the day so a VC member can observe at that time. Play practice? A debate or mock trial? Oral presentations of student work by students?
- Note both the location and the time of the visit. You'll need to ensure that the VC members are seeing the "entire program" for "all students."
- Look around. What can you learn about the culture of the school/classroom from what you see? Available instructional materials? Room arrangement? Technology? Student work? Respect for and/or honoring of students? Range of activities taking place?
- Go everywhere. Check the library during lunch and a class period. Spend time in the Career Center, nurse's office, counseling office, attendance windows, nutrition, playing fields. Eat lunch with students. You might even choose to eat what they are able to purchase. See before and after school. See the beginning, middle, and end of class. What happens in between classes?
- What are students doing? Receiving information? Applying skills? Practicing newly acquired skills? Synthesizing and evaluating information? Are the students task-oriented? Are they engaged in their work?
- What's the range of activities taking place from acquisition of factual knowledge to the use of higher level thinking skills?
- How are instructional settings varied according to the needs of the students and/or what is to be learned?
- What's the interaction among and between staff, students, and parents?
- What more can you learn about identified critical academic needs? Do you see evidence of schoolwide commitment to improving these areas for improvement?
- How are students with special needs (special education, English learners, blind, gifted) participating in the classroom activities?
- How does what you see and hear match with the self-study?
- If asked to speak in a class, identify yourself as one of several visiting educators working with the school on how the school can improve learning for students. Acknowledge that you and the staff of the school are working together on this. Praise the school for its work. Invite all to the public presentation at the end of the visit.