



## What a Model!

When you walk into a classroom can you hear collaborative discourse between the teacher and student, as well as, rich discussion among the students? Does the teacher ask one question, followed by another question to counter each student's response to her previous question? Is she asking, instead of telling; modeling rather than explaining? The lesson is student-centered, rather than teacher-led. The learners are seated in cooperative groups with 3 or 4 other students with each having very specific roles; one reporter, a technician, a materials manager, a recorder, and in some cases an administrative assistant. Everyone is actively engaged in learning. The girls are as equally involved as the boys. Computers line the perimeter of the room, as well as, word walls about safety. The atmosphere is "high tech and high touch." There are no desks in rows, no books atop desks, and few questions are raised from the lower level of Bloom's Taxonomy. Higher-level thinking and problem-solving are encouraged. Students construct their own knowledge and understanding based on their prior knowledge and experiences. What kind of classroom is this? A **science classroom** filled with all of the necessary ingredients for high academic achievement.

In this classroom the curriculum is based on the standards: local, state, and national. Attention is given to diversity as evidenced by the teachers' creation of lessons that address learning, language, and cultural differences. There is adequate wait time after asking probing questions to allow all learners ample time to respond. The learners are given opportunities to work individually, as well as, in small and large groups. The lesson format varies to consider different learning modalities. Strategies include:

- graphic organizers such as concept mapping,
- incorporating verbal/linguistic cues,
- logical/mathematical,
- body/kinesthetic,
- visual/spatial, and
- musical/rhythmic activities.

Decisions about the instruction in this classroom are data-driven by on-going assessment. Observation of student portfolios reveals adjustments in instruction and evaluation. For example, when a student's performance does not meet the teacher's expectations, alternate assessments are given. In most cases, student performance improves. It is apparent that the instructor has a willingness to afford students with every opportunity to perform at their maximum. Examples of alternative assessments include: performance tasks, essays, portfolios, video presentations, research-based projects, and demonstrations. Assessments reflect how and what is being taught. There is clear alignment between curriculum, instruction and assessment.

Upon entrance into your classroom, will a visitor be able to observe these strategies being utilized?