



Principles for Looking at Student Work

Developed through dialog among participants in the Looking at Student Work association of educators.

1. Student work is often **serious work**; it is, like the work of adults working in various fields and disciplines, intentional: It demonstrates the effort to understand and master the nature, possibilities, and challenges of particular genre and/or media, it demonstrates understanding of significant ideas and concepts, and it is meant to communicate to an audience. This work can take many forms.
2. When looking at children's work, **an inquiry "stance" is key**; in other words, it is important to look for what it is one can learn, rather than to try to see what one already thinks one knows. Children's work is key data about the life of a school.
3. The work of children and adults in schools can and should be **public**. Schools tend to be isolated and isolating places. Looking at work collaboratively can break down this isolation and reverse the norm of "privacy" often found among school people.
4. It is important to look at children's work **in depth, with others, over time** and to engage in reflective dialogue about the work, the child(ren), and teaching and learning.
5. When looking collaboratively at children's work, it is important to **"match"** the purpose for looking, the form [and function] of the work, and the protocol used.
6. When looking at and discussing children's work, the development, consideration, and negotiation of **standards** at all levels — personal, local, community and national — must be important elements of the conversation.
7. Looking at children's work can be one way to **strengthen connections** between children's learning and changes in instruction, curriculum, or other aspects of school life.