

Defining a Quality School

Activity 3: “A Vision of Quality”

Parent Edition

What do you see in your mind’s eye?

1. Have room set up with rows of chairs.
2. Have participants sit and get comfortable.
3. Turn down the lights and ask participants to close their eyes.
4. Begin providing a narrative of a visualization that has the participant walk into a school as a teacher new to that school environment.
5. Following first half of visualization, allow 5 minutes to write what was seen on note cards.
6. Have participants turn to partner and share examples of what they saw, heard, felt.
7. Conduct the second half of the visualization and repeat #5 and #6.
8. Have participants leave the note cards in a box on the way out.

NOT TO BE SHARED WITH PARTICIPANTS IN ADVANCE OF THE ENVISIONING EXERCISE.

STATE: *We will be engaging in a visioning exercise for the next 10-15 minutes. I will ask you to close your eyes then at least twice we will pause so that you can write what your mind’s eye imagines. There will be a lot to think about, so simply let yourself following along and try to recall images, sounds, and feelings. In the end we will share with a partner and then popcorn style, we will share out to the group. Now close your eyes. Have your pen and notecard nearby. Now relax everything and close your eyes.*

Imagine you have looked at many schools for a child, niece, nephew, friend, grandchild, brother or sister and you have been dissatisfied with what you’ve seen. You have finally enrolled your child, niece, nephew, brother, sister, grandchild in a school that you’ve been told is a quality school. A great school. A school that has a long waiting list and that you’ve been told you are lucky to have gotten this child into. A school that is considered of the highest quality.

You arrive at the school and park a few doors down from the school. You get out of the car, go to the other side and let your new student out of the car and you head to the school. Imagine how you would be feeling. Nervous? Excited? Worried? Anxious? You arrive at the front of the school. What do you see? What do you hear? What is happening there? You enter the main building and you come to the main office. You look inside. What do you see? How are people interacting with one another? What do you hear people saying?

You pass on down the hall. What do you see on the walls? What does it feel like? What do you notice? You get to the classroom door that your child has been assigned to. What is happening there? Is the teacher there? What does he or she say? How are you greeted? How is your child greeted? As you walk into the classroom, what do you notice first? What do you see on the walls? How is the room arranged. What types of things are in the classroom?

PAUSE: *Participants are given 3-5 minutes to write what they saw, heard and felt thus far in this quality school.*

What does your new student do? What are other parents and children doing? The teacher calls the students to the rug and then proceeds to speak to the parents in the room. What does he or she say will be the focus for the

year? How do they describe the learning experiences your child will have? How do they describe their expectations for parent engagement and involvement?

Its time to leave. You go. Later you return to pick your new student up. You arrive early to see how things go. You walk down the hall to the classroom. The door is open and you can look in without being noticed. What do you see? What is happening in the classroom? What are students doing? What is your new student doing? What is the teacher doing? What is he or she saying? What expression is on his or her face? What are students saying?

The bell rings. You receive your new student and proceed to walk to the car and ask how their day was. What do they say they did? How do they describe their day? How do they feel? How do you feel? Now open your eyes.

PAUSE: Participants are given 3-5 minutes to write what they saw, heard and felt thus far in this quality school.

DEBRIEF: Now find a partner. Someone ideally you do not know well. Introduce yourself and then share up to five things that you either saw, or heard, or felt during this exercise. Afterwards, we will have a few of you share some examples. PAUSE 3-4 minutes. STATE: Now thank your partner. Who can share an example of what came up for you in that envisioning exercise? (Validate with enthusiasm what is shared. State back what you heard so others hear it and they know you were listening.) End by stating that we will collect their index cards as they exit and that we will add their visions to the growing body of quality school descriptions.