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# Wishes, Challenges, & Opportunities

## Purpose of the Tool

Opportunities for innovation are all around us in the teaching and learning contexts in which we work. This tool is designed to help you share and take stock of some of the documentation you've been collecting in your own context, and help guide your study group toward a long-term inquiry focus that can guide your work throughout the coming months.

A green rounded rectangle containing the text "GATHERING INSPIRATION" in a light green, sans-serif font.

## Suggested Time Commitment



You'll probably need at least an hour to engage in this activity, and you'll likely need to return to this conversation multiple times.

## When & How

Use this tool after you've done some initial exploration of your home teaching and learning context (for example, observing classes, talking to students and colleagues about their experiences, collecting classroom documentation, slow looking, etc.) and feel ready to work with your group to hone in on an initial inquiry focus that will guide your work together.

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## Steps

### 1. Prepare

Study group members should reflect back on the in-school explorations that they've done so far (observing classes, talking to students and colleagues about their experiences, collecting classroom documentation, slow looking, etc.) and select one piece of documentation from these explorations that feels significant. A piece of documentation might include a photograph or short video clip, a piece of student work, handwritten notes, an interview transcript, etc. Study group members should be prepared to talk about why the documentation they selected feels significant.

### 2. Share documentation and headlines

In no more than five minutes each, study group members share a) one piece of documentation from his/her explorations within the school, and b) any "headlines" or take-away thoughts that came out of his/her explorations. Following each group member's presentation, all group members should individually take a few minutes to note:

- *Wishes:* What is an aspirational or long-term goal for teaching and learning in your context that comes up as you listen?
- *Challenges:* Are there any explicit or implicit challenges suggested by the documentation shared by your colleague?

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- *Opportunities:* Are there any explicit or implicit opportunities suggested by the documentation shared by your colleague?

### 3. Share highlights

After all group members have shared their documentation, go around the circle one more time and have each group member share the one or two Wishes, Challenges, or Opportunities that are most exciting or compelling to him/her. Elect a scribe to keep track of what is discussed.

### 4. Synthesize to draft your inquiry focus

As a group, talk about an inquiry focus that you might want to pursue over time together. Similar to a research question, an inquiry focus is a question about teaching and learning in your context that:

- Is personally important to the members of the study group
- Has relevance and importance for the broader teaching and learning community outside of the study group
- Poses a problem or puts a new spin on an old issue
- Is not too broad – contains some specifics
- Exhibits complexity and warrants “slow looking”—in other words, it will not be easily answered in a few sentences or a quick Internet search
- Encourages (or at least leaves the door open to) trying out new practices, strategies, resources, or tools

It will likely take multiple study group sessions to frame an inquiry focus that feels right for your study group. Over time, you’ll work to develop one or more innovation projects—new practices, strategies, curricular approaches, resources, etc.—that address a wish, challenge, or opportunity from your group.