Establishing Context for Discussion of Classroom Factors

Curriculum and Instruction
1. Are individual student’s literacy needs in balance with national, regional, and community mandates? If not, how can balance be restored?
2. How much class time is allocated to reading? How does that compare to international averages?
3. Is whole-class reading instruction commonly used?
4. Are most students using the same books? What are the advantages and disadvantages of this? For which students?
5. Do students read a good balance and variety of reading materials?
6. What is the typical balance between direct teacher instruction, independent silent reading, reading aloud to the class, and reading in groups or pairs?
7. How are students encouraged to choose and manage their own reading? Is teacher direction of student reading overly emphasized?
8. What systems are in place to check on the effectiveness of student self-management efforts?

Resources and Their Use
1. What reading resources are available in the classroom?
2. Are we giving students regular access to the books we have? How do we know?
3. In how many different places are these books? How do we know?
4. If we don't know, how can we find out?
5. Do we use the computers we have effectively and efficiently for reading-related activities?
6. Do students have regular and frequent access to computers for reading-related activities?
7. To what extent should we target available computers on groups who might benefit most?

Assessment
1. Are formative and summative assessments in use?
2. Is demographic, organizational, and resource information collected and accessible?
3. Are whole school/regional development plans informed by the management information system? Is assessment balanced among oral and written questioning, diagnostic tests, classroom tests, standardized tests, and national/regional exams? Are there additional assessments?
4. Which tests are formative? Summative? Do some serve both purposes?
5. What are the relative advantages, disadvantages, and unintended consequences of various assessments?
6. Are there regional differences concerning test sophistication or practice? Urban/rural differences? How do these compare to international averages?
7. What do literacy assessments suggest about instructional focus on reflection and evaluation as well as information retrieval and comprehension?
8. Are students pressured by excessive emphasis on the results of externally-imposed summative tests?
9. Are teachers pressured by excessive emphasis on the results of externally-imposed summative tests?
10. What might be an unintended consequence of too little accountability or too little consistency?
11. Where are benchmarks for grading students derived?
12. How does the grading system correlate with other assessments? Does the grading system take into account all pertinent assessment issues?