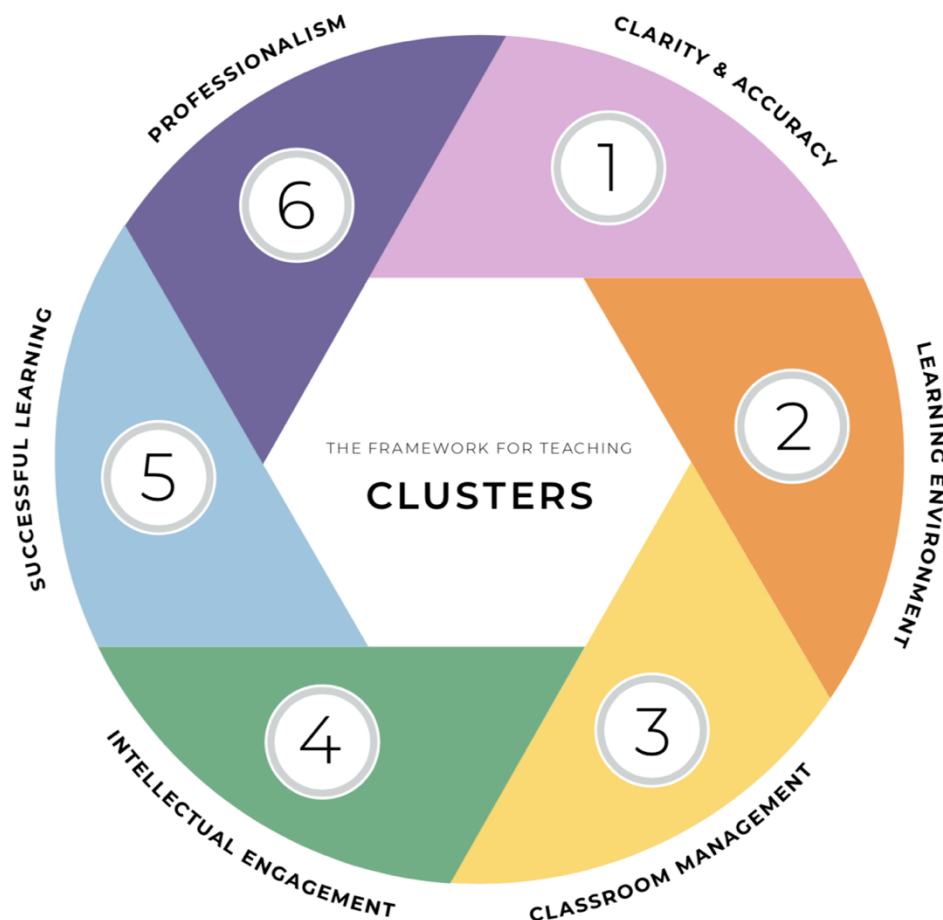


THE FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING CLUSTERS



Six Clusters to Support Teacher Growth
and Student Learning

*A tool for collaborative observation, professional
conversations, and engaged teacher learning*



The Framework for Teaching Clusters, Version 2.3

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The Framework for Teaching Clusters

Six Clusters to Support Teacher Growth and Student Learning

The Framework for Teaching Clusters (FFT Clusters) describe skills demonstrated by accomplished teachers in promoting high levels of student learning—skills based on foundational knowledge and dispositions, grounded in a deep understanding of how people learn, and enacted through principled decision making.

The FFT Clusters are a companion tool designed to complement the Framework for Teaching (the Framework), originally developed in 1996. The Clusters distill “big ideas” of the Framework’s four domains and 22 components into an efficient tool (composed of six large concepts). This multi-use tool can serve as the foundation for professional growth by teachers, both through their own reflection on practice and their conversations with colleagues, mentors and coaches, and supervisors.

An important source of power of both the original Framework and the FFT Clusters is their use of a common language of practice. This common language permits both the development of shared understandings and meaningful professional conversation. Assumptions about the nature of learning and a specific understanding of how to promote it are implicit in both the original Framework and the FFT Clusters. Namely, they promote a constructivist view of learning. It is the learner who does the learning, and it is the job of the teacher to arrange for that learning to occur.

Utilized together, these tools support various aspects of teacher growth, system-wide school improvement efforts, and coherent approaches to understanding teacher knowledge and skills across all stages of the career continuum. Like the original Framework, the FFT Clusters are “generic” in nature; they apply to all teaching situations, in all disciplines, and at different student ages and levels. This feature promotes broad professional conversations and ensures that the tool is responsive to the needs of educators.

The FFT Clusters reflect teaching to high standards of student learning. Principles of teaching for engaged and important learning and whole-child development are, to some degree, generic. For instance, all teaching

THE COMMON THEMES

Equity

Equity is the primary Common Theme and is supported by the others. Teachers strive for excellence, but “a commitment to excellence is not complete without a commitment to equity.” Each student deserves access to world-class teaching and to learning environments that promote joyful inquiry, intellectual rigor, and reflection.

Cultural Competence

Culturally competent teachers create culturally responsive and inclusive learning environments that move beyond surface level attention to cultural differences and foster a sense of belonging by embracing and giving power to diverse points of view.

High Expectations

Excellent teachers hold and communicate high expectations and ensure access to rigorous content for all students. Teachers also demonstrate high expectations by encouraging productive struggle and tenacity.

Developmental Appropriateness

Learners do the learning, and excellent teachers understand the cognitive and social-emotional development of students in ways that support their creation of appropriate learning environments and opportunities.

Attention to Individual Students

Classrooms are comprised of individuals with unique characteristics and needs. For this reason, excellent teachers ensure that goals and tasks have to potential to challenge students at different levels and with different needs.

Student Assumption of Responsibility

Excellent teachers create the conditions for students to assume responsibility for their own learning. Student agency may be fostered through a variety of different school models and instructional approaches but is essential to successful teaching and learning.

for deep conceptual understanding requires the use of precise academic language, the skills of argumentation, and perseverance with challenging content. In practice, of course, actual teaching occurs with students in all their diversity – cultural, linguistic, and developmental. Hence, accomplished teachers must be familiar with students’ individual characteristics, mindsets, and needs and arrange for learning and growth accordingly. When the language of the FFT Clusters refers to attending to individual students, it is to this full range of learners that it

applies. These principles are described in the Common Themes of the Framework, which permeate all its components and the FFT Clusters. These aspects of teaching are not discrete, observable practices but rather beliefs that are evident in how teachers engage in those practices. Understanding the Common Themes and their implications is essential to understanding the details provided within the Clusters.

When grounded in an understanding of how we learn and a commitment to excellence and equity, the six Clusters provide a roadmap for student learning through active, intellectual engagement, which has always been the heart of the Framework and is the ultimate goal of instruction.

If (1) Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content, (2) A Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment, and (3) Classroom Management are in place, then the conditions exist for

(4) Student Intellectual Engagement with important content to occur, which is necessary to reach the ultimate goal of (5) Successful Learning by All Students. Teaching rests on a foundation of (6) Professionalism and must be supported by teacher-centered professional learning systems and teacher-powered school improvement efforts that honor and reflect the needs of the whole teacher.

Each cluster includes three focus areas to support professional growth and deepen understanding. In addition, indicators and considerations prompt reflection, analysis, and goal setting. Rubrics provide a more detailed description of practices that might be cultivated. Together, these elements provide a high-level and practical overview of the big ideas represented by each Cluster.

Further understanding can be achieved through exploration of components from the original Framework related to each Cluster (see Appendix A for a complete alignment of components and elements to the Clusters). The indicators for the Clusters include parenthetical reference to the FFT components. Educators can refer to the Framework for further descriptions and rubrics for these components.

The FFT Clusters promote teaching to high standards of student learning reflected in high-level, college- and career-readiness standards. By focusing on the FFT Clusters, teachers, teacher leaders, and those who support their learning can promote a growth mindset while engaging in professional conversations around these six major areas of instructional practice. Use of the Framework Clusters can transform casual or formal conversations about teaching practice into opportunities for authentic and purposeful dialogue to enhance student learning.



THE SIX CLUSTERS & FOCUS AREAS

1 CLARITY & ACCURACY

- LEARNING OUTCOMES
- INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING
- CONTENT EXPERTISE

2 LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

- POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS
- INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE
- SUPPORT & PERSISTENCE

3 CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

- ROUTINES & PROCEDURES
- COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY
- PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

4 INTELLECTUAL ENGAGEMENT

- LESSON STRUCTURE & FLOW
- RICH LEARNING TASKS
- STUDENT COLLABORATION & DISCOURSE

5 SUCCESSFUL LEARNING

- EQUITABLE ACCESS
- ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK
- SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

6 PROFESSIONALISM

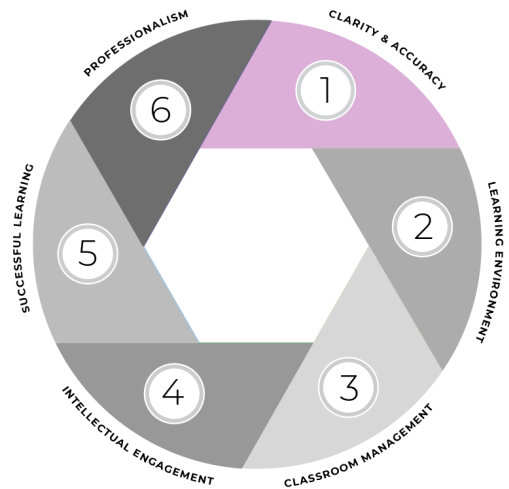
- CONTINUOUS LEARNING
- COLLABORATION
- PRINCIPLED DECISION-MAKING

Cluster 1 – Clarity & Accuracy

Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content

Teaching is a purposeful activity; it is goal-directed and designed to achieve particular, well-defined ends. Even when high-quality instructional materials are available, teachers must determine the purposes for a given class on a given day. In all disciplines, daily purposes are embedded in larger goals that develop over time. That is, important understanding of complex concepts (such as the distinction between democratic and republican forms of government, or the behavior of prime numbers) and the skills of constructing paths of reasoning, do not lend themselves to a single day's lesson, and are not "checked off" as complete. They develop slowly, with the purpose for a given day anchoring a longer sequence of lessons. In fact, the very phrase "habits of mind" suggests that it takes time to develop such understanding and skill, and increased sophistication in content. Therefore, although it is essential for teachers to demonstrate clarity of instructional purpose, those purposes may not be able to be considered "finished."

Clarity of instructional purpose is essential to good teaching; classroom time is, after all, limited, and available time must be used wisely. Instructional purposes are statements not of what the students will do, but of what the teacher intends for students to *learn*; they should be clear and appropriately challenging for the students in the class. It is not



sufficient for a teacher to state what the students will do during a lesson; he or she should also be clear about what they will learn. Although students learn through tasks and investigations, and reflection on those activities, the tasks must be designed to serve the teacher's instructional purpose and be suitable to the students in the class.

Clarity of purpose implies alignment with 1) high-level standards and curriculum outcomes, including factual, conceptual, and procedural knowledge, skills, and understandings and 2) strategies and processes relating to and underlying these skills and understandings. The content should be challenging and rigorous, and appropriate for students in the class; this suggests that learning

Cluster 1 Focus Areas

LEARNING OUTCOMES

are clear and ambitious, reflect important content knowledge, and address the social, emotional, and intellectual development of students.

INSTRUCTIONAL DECISION-MAKING

is guided by the instructional purpose and focused on student engagement in the intellectual work of learning.

CONTENT EXPERTISE

is evident in the teacher's presentations, explanations, and responses to students.



outcomes may be individualized, to some degree, by enabling all students access to the curriculum and to accommodate different students' backgrounds, prerequisite understanding, language proficiency, and special needs.

Teachers demonstrate deep knowledge of content and pedagogy in many ways, including planning and presentation of content, and responses to student questions and comments throughout the lesson. A knowledgeable teacher will know whether a student's question is important to the discipline and therefore worth pursuing in depth, or whether it represents a sidebar and can be answered immediately and the lesson moved along.

A lesson's activities, as revealed both in the planning documents and in their execution in the classroom, must serve to achieve the lesson's purpose. In a well-designed lesson, these tasks and activities are sequenced and designed to engage students in the intellectual work of learning. Furthermore, "clarity" extends to the activities themselves. Students should not be in the dark about how to complete an activity, what steps they should take, whether it's to be done on their own or with classmates, and how learning will be assessed. Instructive assessments will be grounded in the clarity of instructional purposes and the accuracy of content.

Well-run classrooms are purposeful and joyful. Students and teachers are clear in what they are doing and what desired learning is being pursued. There is a sense conveyed, through both words and actions, that the lesson is important and learning is exhilarating and empowering. Serendipity may permit the extension of learning into other areas, but the fundamentals are clear and grounded in the teacher's deep knowledge of content and ways to engage students in that content.

Teachers also demonstrate their knowledge of content through reflection on and analysis of the lesson. By identifying successful portions of the lesson (while other portions were less so) and the reasons for these discrepancies, they demonstrate understanding of internal connections between different aspects of the content and how student learning can be assured.

Another way teachers exhibit mastery of content is through imaginative use of metaphors and analogies, illustrating points they are making as they explain concepts and relationships among concepts. Such visual images often bring content to life in new ways for students, and help students develop their own flexibility with the content.

Considerations

- In what ways do the learning outcomes challenge students to think critically?
- In what ways are learning outcomes reflective of the standards of the discipline and appropriate to the students' levels of knowledge and skill?
- What examples do you see of congruence between the activities and instructional outcomes?
- How do the tasks engage students in high-level learning in the discipline?
- How does teachers' deep understanding of the content support intellectual work by students during lessons?

Indicators

- Clarity of instructional outcomes, reflecting not only knowledge of content and of CCSS or other high-level standards and practices, but also suitability for the students in the class (1a, 1b, 1c)
- Instructional outcomes reflecting the range of important types of content represented in the discipline: for example, factual and procedural knowledge, skills of reasoning and group work, analysis (1c)
- Planned resources and activities aligned to the instructional purpose (1d, 1e)
- Expectations for learning, accuracy of content, clarity of explanations, and use of academic language (3a)
- Activities and assignments, questions and student discussion, all aligned to the instructional purpose (3b, 3c)



Cluster 1 – Clarity & Accuracy

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The instructional purpose and learning tasks are unclear; the information presented is inaccurate or inappropriate and unsuitable to the students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher’s plans indicate weak content knowledge.</p> <p>The teacher does not try to ascertain varied skill and ability levels among students in the class to use in planning.</p> <p>Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are poorly aligned to the learning standards and either lack clarity or are stated as activities. They are unsuitable for many students in the class.</p> <p>Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences are of low cognitive challenge, are unrelated to the lesson’s stated purpose, or are unsuitable for many students.</p> <p>At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to the students what they will be learning.</p> <p>The teacher makes a serious error of content or academic language that will affect students’ understanding of the lesson.</p> <p>Students indicate through body language or verbal exchanges that they don’t understand the content being presented.</p> <p>Students appear confused about the learning task.</p>	<p>The instructional purpose and learning tasks are somewhat clear; the information presented is primarily accurate and partially appropriate to the students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher’s plans reflect rudimentary understanding of the content.</p> <p>The teacher is aware that there are different skill and ability levels in the class but does not use this information in planning.</p> <p>Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are a combination of outcomes and activities or lack clarity; they are only partially aligned to the learning standards and are unsuitable for some students in the class.</p> <p>Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences are of moderate cognitive challenge or are only partially related to the lesson’s stated purpose, or both. They are unsuitable for some students.</p> <p>The teacher refers in passing to what the students will be learning, or it is written on the board with no elaboration or explanation.</p> <p>The teacher makes no serious content errors but may possibly make minor ones, including imprecise use of academic language.</p> <p>The teacher’s explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.</p> <p>The teacher finds it necessary to clarify the learning task so that students can complete it.</p>	<p>The instructional purpose and learning tasks are clear, the content presented is accurate and suitable to the students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher can identify important concepts of the discipline and their relationships to one another.</p> <p>The teacher has identified broad skill groups of students within the class and uses this information in planning.</p> <p>Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are expressed in the form of student learning and are aligned to the learning standards. They are suitable for the groups of students in the class.</p> <p>Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences support the lesson’s purpose; they are well sequenced, provide cognitive challenge, and are suitable for most students in the class.</p> <p>The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students are learning.</p> <p>The teacher makes no content errors and models the correct use of academic language.</p> <p>The teacher’s explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.</p> <p>Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do; if modeling the process to be followed in the task is appropriate, the teacher does so.</p>	<p>The purpose and learning tasks of the lesson are very clear, and the content presented is accurate and accessible to the students, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>The teacher cites intra- and interdisciplinary content relationships.</p> <p>The teacher knows the proficiency level of each student in the class and incorporates this understanding into plans.</p> <p>Learning outcomes are written in the form of student learning and are aligned to learning standards. They allow for all students in the class to be suitably challenged.</p> <p>Planned learning tasks and materials permit advanced students to extend the lesson’s purpose and provide students who require it with more time, attention, and supports.</p> <p>The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students are learning, and invites students to connect this learning to the broader outcomes of the curriculum.</p> <p>The teacher explains content clearly, using metaphors and analogies or inviting student predictions to connect content to real life experiences.</p> <p>The teacher’s carefully-crafted questions enable students to extend the lesson objectives for deeper understanding.</p> <p>Students have the opportunity for reflection and closure on the content being learned, especially its relation to the unit or broader purposes.</p>

Cluster 2 – Learning Environment

Safe, Respectful, Supportive, & Challenging Learning Environment

To do their best work and commit to the activity called school, students must feel respected and honored as people. They must sense their teachers believe in their capabilities; many adults can trace their success in school and in later years to a teacher who believed they could be somebody. For some students, the experience of an adult who conveys such confidence can be life altering.

Teachers convey respect and caring for students through myriad verbal and nonverbal cues: listening carefully to students' ideas, asking for clarification and elaboration, or displaying sensitivity to students' feelings. A teacher's attitude may be outwardly friendly or stern, but beneath even a stern demeanor a teacher conveys an essential *caring*, a sense that each student, regardless of background or family circumstances, is important and has potential. In such an environment, students need not fear they will be belittled by the teacher or demeaned in front of their classmates.

The atmosphere of support and respect is not confined to students as people but extends to them as learners. Many adults are convinced that they "can't do math" or "were never good at reading poetry." Although it's difficult to know the origin of such sentiments, teachers should never convey



them. When teachers indicate that they sincerely honor all students in their journey for understanding, students can engage in that quest assured of deep support by the teacher. It's a safe environment, in other words, for students to take intellectual risks, to try out ideas, to question the teacher's—or the book's, or another student's—account. Students know they need not fear ridicule or unkind sarcasm from the teacher or from other students. As the emotional environment signals support and respect, the physical environment conveys learning is important and is rich and inviting.

In feeling safe with the teacher and other students, students must also feel challenged, and they must be willing to rise to that challenge. This is partly through the nature of the work itself; that work must be rigorous, engaging, and meaningful. But in addition, students must be willing to make a commitment to it. There must be, in other words, a prevailing norm of student commitment to high-level work; those who engage in such work must not be regarded by their classmates as "geeks," or "nerds," or some other term that, in student culture, denotes "un-cool." Furthermore, just as a classroom culture should honor intellectual work, that same culture should insist that students persevere in challenging content, sticking with it until they "get" it and have achieved a higher level of understanding.

Student cultural attitudes toward work vary profoundly from one age group and from one school to another. Overwhelmingly, young children are keen to learn and to explore the world; if instructional tasks are interesting, then they participate willingly and aim to excel. With older students, the situation

Cluster 2 Focus Areas

POSITIVE DEVELOPMENTAL RELATIONSHIPS

characterized by care and respect between teacher and students and among students, support a sense of safety and belonging.

INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

is evidenced by high expectations, high levels of cognitive energy, and risk-taking.

SUPPORT & PERSISTENCE

are demonstrated in the classroom environment; students persevere through challenges in their quest for mastery.



is more complex; most efforts students make to succeed in school, after all, take place in private—for example, completing their homework assignments and studying for tests. But other actions occur in public, in front of their peers, such as participating in class discussions and engaging in group work. Thus, students who decide to make a commitment to high-level work in school are making a public declaration of that commitment. It's essential that they not become isolated or “punished” by their peers for that commitment.

Educators are aware of research regarding student mindsets, that is, how students view the role of intelligence in learning, (whether it's regarded as fixed or malleable), and the extent to which student success is a function of their views on the intersection of intelligence, on the one hand, and hard work on the other. Researchers and teachers find that when students acquire a growth (rather than a fixed) mindset, the more capable they are of persevering through the inevitable difficulties all learners encounter in mastering complex material. Thus, teachers have an obligation to encourage such a growth mindset in their students.

Teachers whose classrooms are safe and challenging environments for student learning have artfully combined challenge with support. They know their students well enough to know when a student has “blown off” an assignment, or when, in contrast, the student simply does not understand a concept well enough to complete high-quality work. When it comes to student commitment to learning, teachers don't take “no” for an answer, and are ready to provide assistance when needed. This teaching is not formulaic; it is a high-level professional enterprise in which teachers know when to cajole, when to reteach, when to praise, and when to enlist the participation of other students—all in the service of high-level learning within an environment of challenge and support. Within this environment,

Considerations

- In what ways do classroom interactions demonstrate genuine caring and a safe, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environment?
- How do teachers convey high expectations for student learning and encourage hard work and perseverance?
- In what ways do teachers create classrooms that are safe for risk-taking?
- How do students take ownership of their work and demonstrate a commitment to mastering challenging content?
- How do teachers establish environments that recognize and value students' identities as well as their social, emotional, and intellectual needs?

Indicators

- Language of caring and respect between teacher and students and among students, and teacher's awareness of students' interests in and beyond school (2a)
- High levels of cognitive energy (2b)
- A safe environment for student risk taking (2a)
- High expectations for students' capabilities for learning (2b)
- Productive student engagement in small group work (2c)
- Student perseverance, even in the face of challenges (2b)

students persevere in their quest for deep understanding and mastery.

A specific tool used by many teachers for ensuring high-quality work, and for enlisting students in the effort to engage everyone in the work at hand, is teaching students the skills of group work. After all, much important academic work is best done in small groups - discussion, solving problems, completing projects - and such group work, in order to be productive, requires listening to and/or respectfully disagreeing with others, assuming tasks for completing work, or summarizing the status of a project. Furthermore, students must be able to engage in such work even when not under the direct supervision of the teacher. These are specific skills and reflect a more general classroom culture of productivity. Students are not born with such skills; they need to be explicitly taught and practiced. When they are, these skills make a material contribution to the culture of productive engagement with high-level work and learning.

Cluster 2 – Learning Environment

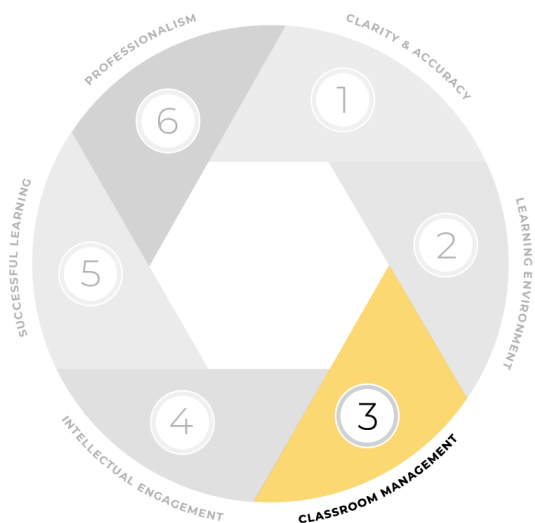
UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>Interactions between teacher and at least some students and among students are characterized by negativity, lack of support, low expectations, and low levels of student perseverance, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher uses disrespectful talk toward students and does not address disrespectful interactions among students.</p> <p>The teacher displays no familiarity with, or caring about, individual students' interests or personalities.</p> <p>The teacher conveys, to at least some students, that the work is too challenging for them.</p> <p>Students exhibit little or no pride in their work; they abandon their efforts in the face of difficulty.</p> <p>Students participate in only routine responses and tasks that require only low levels of risk taking.</p> <p>Students receive no support from their classmates.</p> <p>Students show no signs of active collaboration.</p>	<p>Interactions between teacher and students and among students are a mix of high and low support, moderate expectations, and modest levels of student perseverance, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The quality of interactions between teacher and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect; the teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students, with uneven results.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that the efforts are only partially successful.</p> <p>The teacher conveys only modest learning expectations for most students.</p> <p>The teacher encourages students to persevere with challenging work; but only some do so, or they do so in a desultory manner.</p> <p>Few students offer their ideas on questions that seem to entail intellectual risk.</p> <p>Students offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner when prompted by the teacher.</p> <p>Group work is sometimes collaborative, sometimes not.</p>	<p>The classroom is characterized by interactions that are both supportive and challenging, with student perseverance in challenging work, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Interactions between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with little to no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.</p> <p>The teacher makes connections with individual students.</p> <p>The teacher has high expectations for most students and conveys high regard for students' abilities.</p> <p>Student work and conduct during a lesson indicate a commitment to high quality; students persevere in understanding challenging content.</p> <p>Students participate willingly and appear confident in offering their ideas in front of classmates.</p> <p>Students spontaneously offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner.</p> <p>Students are productively engaged collaboratively with a partner or during small-group work.</p>	<p>Classroom interactions indicate high levels of caring and respect, student assumption of responsibility for the culture of civility, mutual support for work of high quality, and perseverance in achieving that quality, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>Interactions between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.</p> <p>The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about the lives of students beyond school.</p> <p>Students' questions, comments, and writing indicate high expectations for self and a desire for deep understanding of the content.</p> <p>Students engage in productive struggle, take initiative to improve the quality of their work, and look for ways to extend their learning.</p> <p>Students volunteer ideas, even when these ideas might seem to be unpopular among classmates.</p> <p>Students recognize and express appreciation for the efforts of their classmates.</p> <p>Group work is productive; groups take shared ownership of, and pride in, the products of their work. All members contribute to the group's work.</p>

Cluster 3 – Classroom Management

Classroom Management

A fundamental requirement for any productive classroom is that it runs smoothly. Teachers must establish efficient procedures for the completion of routine tasks, such as taking attendance, guiding transitions into work groups, distributing and collecting materials, and handling end-of-class dismissal. These procedures accomplish several essential purposes, are taken care of with a minimal loss of instructional time, and provide the security of familiar routines for students. Efficient routines convey to students that the teacher is in charge, though not a dictator, thus assuring them that they need not fear chaos.

Classrooms are, after all, crowded places; there are typically over 25 students (and sometimes more), plus a teacher, in a relatively small space. This fact is a source of anxiety for many new teachers; they fear the class size will overwhelm them, particularly if the students are physically larger than the teacher. What is to prevent students from simply refusing to comply with the teacher's directions? How will they avoid chaos, with students doing whatever they choose, perhaps causing harm to themselves or other students? How can a teacher ensure that students actually *learn* anything? What is to guarantee that students will follow the rules, rather than take charge themselves? These are not unreasonable questions, and a new teacher's anxieties are understandable. In creating and then promulgating classroom routines and procedures, including behavioral



norms, a teacher should keep in mind the following principles:

Routines and norms should be created with student participation.

Students need to feel in control of their lives; they are quickly alienated by a teacher whose approach to classroom management is one of “This is how it is because I say so.” Moreover, classroom routines are established not only to maintain an orderly environment, but to solve real or potential practical problems. Students like having a chance to speak in a discussion, the challenge is working out an approach allowing everyone the opportunity to be heard. The same thinking applies to virtually all routines: the question “What would happen if we all just went for the door at the same time?” will elicit, even from young children, the recognition that the result would be chaotic—chairs could be overturned or some students knocked over. Next can come the question, “What might be some reasonable procedures for leaving the room?”

The teacher's attitude in establishing routines and procedures is all-important. It's essential for teachers to establish, with students, an environment in which important and interesting work can be accomplished. Therefore, routines and norms are needed for many activities: distributing and collecting materials, keeping a neat classroom, moving between large- and small-group activities, and so on. The purpose of routines is to maximize student learning; it's not because the teacher insists on control. This attitude permits the teacher to sincerely elicit student contributions. *Routines must be taught.*

Cluster 3 Focus Areas

ROUTINES & PROCEDURES

create efficiency and clarity to support joyful, productive engagement in learning activities.

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY

is shown by all members of the classroom community through monitoring of the standards of conduct, execution of procedures and routines, and productive contributions to learning.

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

is supportive of learning and appropriate for the social, emotional, and academic needs of all students.

But even after students and the teacher have developed routines and norms for classroom operations, those routines must be taught and practiced. Teachers cannot assume students will automatically know what is intended by a direction such as “Move into your small work groups.” Unless students have practiced a routine to accomplish such a task, the alternative, given the crowded nature of many classrooms, can be chaos. Experienced teachers devote some time at the beginning of a year to *teaching* routines for all sorts of everyday classroom procedures: distributing and collecting materials, pushing chairs in at the end of class, and so on. Teaching routines is the same as teaching other skills: the routine is described, then students have a structured opportunity to practice it and do it again, incorporating feedback about the success of the first attempt. The same also applies to norms of behavior; they can be isolated, and role-played, so students know what to expect when involved in a situation calling for a teacher to take corrective action. In this way, students are not caught off guard, or unprepared, by events.

Furthermore, unless they are obliged to teach “from a cart” or for other reasons have no consistent use of physical space, teachers exercise a lot of control over the physical environment in which they work. That physical environment can itself exert a powerful influence over what takes place in a classroom: the nature of teacher-student and student-student interactions, the success of large and small group discussions, and the like. As with

other aspects of the classroom environment, students can (and should) play a role in maximizing the contribution of the physical space for their learning. This influence can take the form of suggesting revisions to the arrangement of classroom furniture, to ensuring that traffic patterns support maximum student engagement.

An observer can only infer from teacher directions and student actions whether routines were, in fact, established earlier in the year. Moreover, teachers who are fortunate enough to have the assistance of volunteers or paraprofessionals in their classrooms have the additional challenge of ensuring those individuals are productively engaged in making a substantive contribution to the life of the class.

Considerations

- In what ways are classrooms well run and organized?
- How might classroom routines and procedures be clearer or carried out more efficiently to prevent loss of instructional time?
- How might students themselves take a more active role in ensuring a productive classroom?
- In what ways do students not only understand and comply with standards of conduct but also play an active part in setting the tone for maintaining those standards?
- How does the physical environment in classrooms support learning and engagement?

Indicators

- Efficient procedures for non-instructional activities: taking roll, distributing and collecting materials, making transitions, etc. (2c)
- Clear guidelines for student work when it is unsupervised, e.g., in small groups (2c)
- Evidence of clear standards of conduct, understood by the students, monitored by the teacher, corrected successfully (when necessary) by teacher or students, or both (2d)
- Physical environment supportive of learning activities (2e)
- Productive contribution to the class by volunteers and paraprofessionals (2c)



Cluster 3 – Classroom Management

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The classroom environment is disorganized and chaotic, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Classroom procedures for transitions and other non-instructional activities are either absent or ineffective, resulting in the loss of significant instructional time.</p> <p>Small groups not working with the teacher are not involved in productive work.</p> <p>No standards of conduct appear to have been established, the teacher does not monitor student behavior, or, when noticing student misbehavior, appears helpless to do anything about it.</p> <p>There are physical hazards in the classroom, endangering student safety.</p> <p>Volunteers and paraprofessionals have no defined role and may be idle much of the time.</p>	<p>The classroom is at times disorganized, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Procedures for transitions, materials, and other non-instructional duties seem to have been established, but their operation is rough or inconsistent, resulting in some loss of instructional time.</p> <p>Small groups are only intermittently engaged while not working directly with the teacher.</p> <p>Standards of conduct appear to have been set, but the teacher's attempts to maintain order are uneven, or the teacher's response to student misbehavior is inconsistent.</p> <p>The physical environment is not an impediment to learning but does not enhance it.</p> <p>Volunteers and paraprofessionals participate but require frequent supervision, or their work is not well integrated with classroom activities.</p>	<p>The classroom functions smoothly and efficiently, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Effective and efficient procedures have been established for non-instructional activities, such as distribution and collection of materials and supplies and transitions to other grouping patterns, resulting in minimal to no loss of instructional time. Students carry out procedures with little or no teacher direction.</p> <p>All students are productively engaged during small-group work, indicating established procedures.</p> <p>The teacher regularly monitors student behavior; student behavior is generally appropriate. When needed, the teacher's response to misbehavior is effective.</p> <p>The classroom is arranged to support the instructional goals and learning activities.</p> <p>Volunteers and paraprofessionals work with minimal supervision in sync with classroom goals.</p>	<p>The classroom functions seamlessly, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>Students take the initiative with their classmates to ensure non-instructional routines run smoothly; productive classroom norms are well established, and students as well as the teacher act to maintain them.</p> <p>Students ensure productive small-group work by, for example, assigning roles.</p> <p>The teacher's monitoring of student behavior is seamless and preventative, accomplished largely through nonverbal means; student behavior is entirely appropriate.</p> <p>Students take the initiative to contribute to and adjust the physical environment to support learning for all students.</p> <p>Volunteers and paraprofessionals understand their roles and responsibilities and take initiative in their work in the class.</p>

Cluster 4 – Intellectual Engagement

Student Intellectual Engagement

Student engagement is at the very heart of good teaching; it is typically the first item educators identify when invited to describe the classroom of a teacher whom they consider an expert.

However, the term *engagement* does not have a single, or a simple, definition. First, intellectual engagement is not the same as being busy or on task; it's quite possible for students to be occupied doing work—for example, completing a worksheet—that does not represent new learning. Furthermore, physical activity is not sufficient; an activity might involve students in working with physical materials but doing so in a formulaic manner. The key to student engagement is not physical, but mental, activity. A task might be “hands-on,” but to qualify as intellectual engagement, it must be “minds-on.” School, in other words, from the point of view of students, is not a spectator sport. It's essential to maximize the extent students are involved in intellectual activity, such as exploring new ideas, making connections, or formulating and testing hypotheses.

A useful indicator of student intellectual engagement is the answer to the question, “Who’s doing the work?” When students listen while the teacher makes a presentation, demonstrates a procedure, or applies a rule, their role may be entirely passive; they may be simply watching while the teacher performs. However, a teacher may present new material in such a way that students are invited to connect new information with prior understanding or predict outcomes of a scenario. When teachers structure lessons in ways that invite students to be intellectually active, those students



explore the nuances of meaning of various concepts and generate new understanding. This process involves thinking. Thus, a variation on the maxim “Who’s doing the work?” is “Who’s doing the thinking?” Only when students are actively thinking can they be said to be intellectually engaged.

In addition to students engaging in thinking, they can become aware of their own cognitive processes; that is, teachers can engage students not only in cognitive work, but also in *metacognitive* work. How did they arrive at a certain conclusion? What’s the evidence for it? In making an error in solving a problem, what was the trajectory of their thinking? Where did it go off track? Can they retrace their steps and find the error? The latter questions deal with the process of thinking and are highly transferable to other situations, and indeed to other subjects. They enable students, when they encounter difficulty such as arriving at a false conclusion, to retrace their steps and take corrective action.

It should also be noted, student engagement in learning does not always appear tidy; when students are wrestling with a new concept or making connections between new content and previously learned material, they may make a few false starts or pursue what turns out to be a dead end before making a course correction. It’s challenging for some teachers to allow their students to engage in this *productive struggle*, but the resulting understanding is satisfying to students, empowering them as learners, and solidifying their comprehension.

A lesson in which students are engaged usually has a discernible structure (a beginning, a middle, and an end) with scaffolding provided by the teacher or by the activities themselves. The teacher organizes student tasks to provide cognitive challenge and encourages students to reflect on what they have done and what they have learned. That is, the lesson has closure, in which the teacher encourages students to derive

Cluster 4 Focus Areas

LESSON STRUCTURE & FLOW

allow for and support intellectual engagement and productive struggle; students are given time to think, develop ideas, and reflect on their learning.

RICH LEARNING TASKS

engage students in important learning through well-designed activities, questions, and discussion.

STUDENT COLLABORATION & DISCOURSE

invite higher-order thinking, develop reasoning skills, and create the opportunity to engage thoughtfully with others’ thinking and ideas.



important learning from the learning tasks, from the discussion, or from what they have read.

Visitors have no difficulty recognizing a classroom with high levels of student cognitive engagement. There is palpable (almost electric) energy in the room, as students display commitment to their work and are eager to explain their accomplishments to visitors. This is not the busywork of students complying with a teacher's requests for them to complete assignments; in a classroom in which students are pursuing their own goals, their work is self-directed, and the environment is vibrant.

For teachers, there are two critical aspects to teaching for student intellectual engagement: designing (or locating) and managing rich learning tasks and skillfully using student discourse.

Rich learning tasks

Designing (or identifying) suitably demanding learning tasks for students is one of the most challenging aspects of teaching, since a task that is challenging for one student may be routine for another. One can analyze the cognitive demand of a task; whether the task is suitably rigorous, or appropriate, for an individual student is determined by the level of knowledge and cognitive development of the student. A task, in and of itself, is not rigorous or routine; what makes it rigorous or routine is the gap between the demands of the task and the current capabilities of the students who are asked to complete it. If the gap is small or nonexistent, the task is routine and boring; if the gap is too great, the task may be overwhelming. Like Goldilocks's porridge, the gap should be "just right."

Another characteristic of rich learning tasks relates to being "group-worthy," inviting multiple perspectives from different students working together in groups. Much classroom activity, after all, takes place in pairs or small groups, with the teacher playing a mediating role, rather than directly teaching. Tasks suitable for collaborative work enable students with different strengths to make a contribution to the overall effort.

Considerations

- How do the structure and flow of lessons support the development of ideas and opportunities for students to engage in thoughtful discussion and reflection?
- In what ways do instructional activities and questions explored promote intellectual engagement and energy?
- How are students asked to explain their thinking, construct arguments, and question the thinking of others?
- How do teachers create the conditions for students to take responsibility for their own learning?
- How do activities invite students to grapple with challenging content and solve problems in their collaborative and individual work?

Indicators

- The content is seen as worthwhile, important, and interesting (2b)
- Content is presented in a manner that engages students in thinking and reasoning (3a)
- Learning tasks require students to engage intellectually, to think; some may involve productive struggle (3c)
- Questions/discussions involve higher-order cognitive activity; students have time to develop their ideas and productive habits of mind (3b)
- The lesson has a recognizable structure, with time for reflection and closure (3c)
- Students explain their thinking and question the thinking of others (3b)

Student discourse

Questioning and discussion is used to deepen student understanding (rather than serve as recitation, or a verbal "quiz"). Effective teachers use divergent and convergent questions, framed in ways inviting students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views. These teachers are especially adept at responding to and building on student responses and making use of their ideas.

Class discussions should be animated, engaging students in important issues and promoting the use of precise language to deepen and extend understanding. These discussions may be based around questions formulated by the students themselves. Furthermore, when a teacher is building on student responses to questions (whether posed by the teacher or by other students), students are challenged to explain their thinking, to critique the reasoning of others, and to cite specific evidence to back up a position. This focus on argumentation forms the foundation of logical reasoning, a critical skill in all disciplines.

Cluster 4 – Intellectual Engagement

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is low, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher conveys no energy for the importance of the learning goals and assignments.</p> <p>Content is presented in a didactic manner, with no invitation for students to think and make their own meaning.</p> <p>Learning tasks require only recall or have a single correct response or method; students are not invited to stretch their thinking.</p> <p>The teacher's questions are rapid-fire and convergent, with a single correct answer, and do not invite student thinking.</p> <p>The teacher does not ask students to organize their thoughts and formulate ideas.</p> <p>All discussion is between the teacher and individual students; students are not invited to respond directly to one another.</p> <p>The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.</p> <p>Few students are involved in the activities and discussions.</p> <p>The lesson has no recognizable structure; it's a random series of events and activities.</p>	<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is modest, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher displays little energy for the lesson's purpose or assignments.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of concepts includes perfunctory invitations for student thinking.</p> <p>Learning tasks are so highly scaffolded that the result is a single pathway to completion.</p> <p>The teacher's questions are a mix of those with a single correct answer and methodology and other questions inviting student thinking.</p> <p>The teacher attempts to provide time for students to formulate their ideas; some make productive use of this time.</p> <p>The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students do so.</p> <p>The teacher asks students to explain their reasoning and cite specific evidence, but only some students attempt to do so.</p> <p>About half the students are involved in activities and discussions.</p> <p>The lesson has a recognizable structure, although parts of it may be rushed, while others drag.</p>	<p>The classroom is a cognitively busy place, with students encouraged to use their minds, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher exhibits energy for the topic and conveys its importance.</p> <p>The teacher's explanation of concepts invites student intellectual engagement and time to share their thinking with others.</p> <p>Learning tasks demand higher-order thinking, inviting students to take initiative, and may involve productive struggle.</p> <p>Many of the teacher's questions are open-ended, or have multiple correct answers, inviting students to think. (When low-level questions are used, they provide scaffolding for new learning.)</p> <p>Wait time is used productively; students engage in thoughtful reflection during discussion.</p> <p>Students direct their comments to one another during full class discussions; there is lively discussion during small-group work.</p> <p>The teacher asks students to explain their thinking and reasoning, citing specific evidence; many students do so.</p> <p>Virtually all students are involved in the activities and discussions.</p> <p>The lesson has a clear structure, with time for students to engage in thoughtful participation in discussions and learning tasks.</p>	<p>The classroom is a cognitively vibrant place, with students encouraged to use their minds, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>The students exhibit energy for and interest in the topic and associated tasks; they push their classmates' thinking with extended questions.</p> <p>Students are thoughtfully engaged in the teacher's explanation of concepts, as evidenced by their conversations and questions.</p> <p>Students modify a learning task to make it more meaningful or relevant to their needs.</p> <p>Students initiate higher-order questions; they invite comments from their classmates during a discussion and push their classmates with extended questions in both small group and whole class contexts.</p> <p>Students extend the discussion, enriching it.</p> <p>Students build on each other's ideas and make conjectures/connections aimed at either deeper conceptual understanding or connecting procedures to underlying concepts.</p> <p>Students initiate efforts to explore the reasoning that led to a conclusion that warrants revision, identifying fallacies in their thinking.</p> <p>Students themselves ensure that all their classmates are involved in the activities and discussions.</p> <p>Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.</p>

Cluster 5 – Successful Learning

Successful Learning by All Students

It is not sufficient for teachers to engage in an activity called teaching; they must ensure students learn. One way of defining *teaching* is as “that which causes student learning.” While this appears an obvious statement, educators frequently overlook it as they attempt to codify *good teaching* in ways that focus exclusively on actions of teachers without considering success of those efforts in ensuring student learning.

Experienced teachers recognize all learning as complex, involving the interplay of conceptual and procedural knowledge, facts and processes, dispositions and habits of mind. Students don’t “master” all of these in the same way, or in the same sequence, and they enter any lesson with their own strengths and areas for growth. However, every lesson and longer unit has a focus; it’s in that area of focus that teachers must articulate and make specific plans to address what they intend students to learn.

Ascertaining whether students have, in fact, learned what was intended requires the design (or adoption) of summative assessments aligned to those outcomes (so that the teacher can take corrective action before moving on), and formative assessments used during the course of a unit or lesson. This requires sophisticated record-keeping systems. In addition, for teachers to improve their approach, they must not only be aware of resources (in the school or, more broadly, in the district or the community); they must commit to what is needed to help every student succeed.

Cluster 5 Focus Areas

EQUITABLE ACCESS

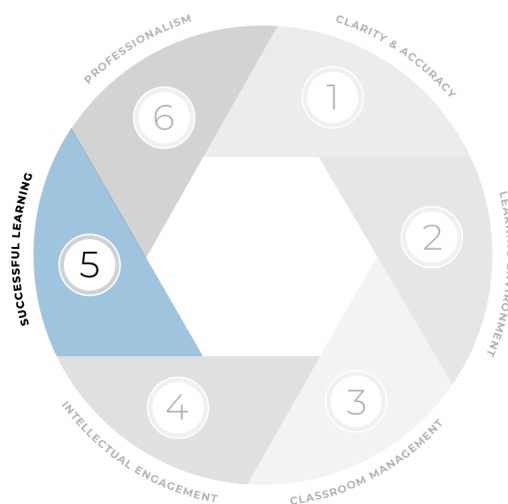
to important and rigorous content is supported for each student.

ASSESSMENT & FEEDBACK

advance learning and inform necessary modifications and additional supports.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

for mastery and growth is established between teachers, students, and families.



Traditionally, teachers did not ascertain the extent to which their students learned the material being taught until they had completed an instructional unit; indeed, the assessment (usually a test of some type) signaled the end of instruction, students’ work was graded, and the class went on to the next unit. In this approach, teachers could know whether or to what extent their students *had* learned but could not ensure that they did so. Many teachers now employ a subtler approach designed to shape instruction during the course of a lesson or unit. Teachers monitor students’ responses and activities constantly, monitoring the “pulse” of the class frequently during a lesson and making revisions when needed. These changes might be a slight modification in the pace of an activity or in an activity itself based on students’ lack of comprehension (too challenging) or boredom (too easy). Such monitoring occurs constantly and is not specifically planned.



To be effective, monitoring student learning must be addressed to individual students. Global questions, such as “Does anyone have any questions?” are unlikely to yield information on which a teacher can act. Instead, accomplished teachers devise techniques to determine the levels of understanding of individuals. For example, students’ responses to a carefully-crafted question, with their answers written on whiteboards and held up for the teacher to see, provide important information to the teacher about the extent of each individual student’s understanding. If the question is designed to yield diagnostic information, the teacher acquires a fairly specific notion of what needs to be done, ensuring every student understands the content. While not providing such timely information, exit tickets, on which students hand in their response to a carefully designed question as they leave the class, can also supply information on the learning of individual students.

When teachers use such practices, assessment becomes completely integrated into instruction. Teachers are alert to what’s going on during a lesson, watching students for indications they are following the discussion or are acquiring the desired understanding from an instructional activity. Sometimes students provide such indications explicitly; for example, they ask clarifying questions. On other occasions, however, the indications are much more subtle or camouflaged, for example a quizzical look. That said, some objectives are long-term and necessitate more time for students to work toward achieving mastery. Taking into consideration assessment information, the teacher can articulate how students are progressing toward a larger learning goal. In addition, it is important to note students will be engaged in assessing their own progress—working with deliberateness toward goals and aware of how much progress they have made.

Another important mechanism ensuring students’ success is arranging for specific and timely feedback on their efforts. The teacher can provide this feedback, of course. But it can also be supplied by other students (as when they challenge—respectfully—the thinking of their classmates) or by the instructional activities themselves. For example, the solution to a problem in mathematics may simply “not work.” Whatever the source of the feedback, students come to realize that learning is a process of continual iteration; it’s never complete.

Families, too, can be allies in teachers’ quest to ensure student success. They have, after all, known the students for a longer time the teacher has and can provide insight into the students’ lives and interests beyond school. Such information can be invaluable to a teacher in planning instruction and responding to individuals. Skilled teachers keep parents and guardians abreast of students’ success in school and work with families to enhance that success.

Considerations

- In what ways do teachers ensure learning by all students?
- What are some ways teachers monitor student understanding through specifically designed questions or assessment strategies?
- What are some examples of students monitoring their own learning and providing constructive feedback to classmates?
- How can teachers make strategic modifications to their lessons or leverage other sources of support based on student learning and progress?
- When teachers reflect on a lesson or unit, what are some ways they demonstrate awareness of their success in promoting student engagement and learning?

Indicators

- Both summative and formative assessments, aligned to learning outcomes, have been planned and developed (1f)
- The teacher monitors student learning during the lesson (individuals and groups) through a variety of means (3d)
- Students receive specific feedback on their work from the teacher, the activities themselves, or other students (3d)
- If necessary, the teacher modifies the lesson to ensure that students “get it,” drawing on other resources as needed (1d, 3e)
- The teacher’s records permit detailed analysis of learning by individuals and groups of students (4b)
- The teacher enlists, as appropriate, the engagement of families in student learning (4c)
- In reflection, the teacher assumes responsibility for student learning (4a)

Attention to every student’s learning is grounded in important assumptions, namely, that the students are capable of high-level learning and that the teacher has the necessary skill, resources, and attitude to enable them to succeed. These beliefs are fundamental. If teachers lack a strong sense of efficacy, then they will be inclined to give up easily when students experience difficulty (as virtually all students do at some point). In such cases, teachers find other factors on which to place the “blame” for students’ struggles: their backgrounds (“His parents are getting a divorce”), the perceived weaknesses of older siblings (“Her brother never could do fractions either”), the lack of skill of a previous teacher (“They should have learned this last year”), or the inadequacy of the adopted materials (“This textbook is terrible”). Therefore, teachers’ ensuring the learning of every student is a reflection of their confidence that they can teach well and that their students are capable of high-level learning.

Cluster 5 – Successful Learning

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The teacher makes no attempt to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Summative assessments are poorly aligned with the learning outcomes.</p> <p>No formative assessments have been designed for use during the lesson.</p> <p>The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the content of the lesson or ignores indications of student boredom or lack of understanding.</p> <p>Feedback to students is only global, such as, “Good job, everyone.”</p> <p>The teacher makes no attempt to adjust the lesson, even when such action is clearly needed.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to students that when they have difficulty learning, it is their fault.</p> <p>Record-keeping systems are disorganized and incomplete; families are unaware of their children’s progress.</p> <p>In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites the extent to which students were busy or were well behaved, with no comments about the extent to which they achieved the intended outcomes.</p>	<p>The teacher makes sporadic or inconsistent attempts to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>Only some of the learning outcomes are addressed in summative assessments.</p> <p>Plans refer to the use of formative assessments but with no specificity.</p> <p>The teacher requests global indications of student understanding, such as, “Any questions?”</p> <p>Feedback to students is neither specific nor oriented toward future improvement of work.</p> <p>The teacher’s efforts to modify the lesson are only partially successful.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to students a sense of responsibility for their learning but also uncertainty about how to assist them.</p> <p>The teacher maintains school-required record-keeping systems and communicates sporadically with families but does little else to inform families about student progress.</p> <p>In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites only limited evidence of student attainment of the instructional goals with an emphasis on other factors, such as whether students were busy or well behaved.</p>	<p>The teacher makes thoughtful and genuine attempts to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>All the learning outcomes have a method for summative assessment, differentiated, as needed, for students with different learning goals.</p> <p>Plans include specific formative assessments which are used during instruction.</p> <p>The teacher monitors student learning through a variety of means, including using specifically formulated questions, differentiated as needed, to elicit evidence of student understanding.</p> <p>Feedback includes specific and timely guidance on how students can improve their learning.</p> <p>The teacher makes effective changes to the lesson in response to evidence of student difficulties.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to students that s/he has other approaches to try if or when the students experience difficulty.</p> <p>The teacher maintains a coherent record-keeping system on student learning and regularly sends home information about student learning.</p> <p>In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites specific examples of student attainment of the instructional goals or conjectures about why they were not met.</p>	<p>The teacher consistently and successfully ensures learning by all students, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>The teacher’s plan for summative assessment explicitly provides information to students about their progress.</p> <p>The teacher constantly “takes the pulse” of the class; monitoring of student understanding is sophisticated and continuous and makes use of strategies to elicit information about individual student learning.</p> <p>Students monitor their own learning, either on their own initiative or as a result of tasks set by the teacher.</p> <p>High-quality feedback comes from many sources, including other students; it is specific and focused on improvement.</p> <p>When appropriate, students use assessment information to guide their next steps.</p> <p>The teacher conveys to students that failure, persistence, and productive struggle are key aspects of learning and success.</p> <p>The teacher actively encourages two-way communication with families regarding student learning.</p> <p>In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher has specific ideas about how the lesson could be improved. The teacher cites student assessment data that will be taken into account in future planning.</p>

Cluster 6 – Professionalism

Professionalism

Schools are, above all, environments to promote the learning of students; they are also places for the intellectual engagement of teachers, so they can better promote the learning of their students. Schools are, in other words, learning organizations for teachers, with potential realized when teachers regard themselves as members of a professional community. This community is characterized by mutual support and respect as well as by recognition of responsibility to constantly seek improvement within their practice and contribute to the life of the school and the broader professional community. Inevitably, teachers' duties extend beyond the doors of their classrooms and include activities related to the entire school, larger district, or both. These activities include service on school and district curriculum committees or engagement with parent-teacher organizations. With experience, teachers assume leadership roles in these activities or others, and in their school communities in general.

As in other professions, the complexity of teaching requires continued growth and development in order for teachers to keep their knowledge and skills current. Continuing to stay informed and develop skills allows teachers to become more effective, exercise leadership among their colleagues, and constantly refine their understanding of how to engage students in learning. Thus, growth in content and content-specific pedagogy is essential to good

teaching. To the extent technology is an aid to student learning, it's essential teachers stay abreast of developments in that area as well.

Networking with colleagues through activities such as joint planning, study groups, and lesson study provides opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. In particular, sharing perspectives while jointly examining student work can provide insight to the cognitive processes of individual students. These activities allow for job-embedded professional development. In addition, professional educators increase their effectiveness in the classroom by belonging to professional organizations (at the regional, state, or even national level), reading professional journals, and attending educational conferences, workshops, or university classes. As they gain experience and expertise, educators find ways to contribute to their colleagues and to the profession.



Cluster 6 Focus Areas

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

and improvement are valued and consistently demonstrated through an inquiry-based, growth-focused, and results-oriented approach to professional engagement.

COLLABORATION

with colleagues occurs frequently, involves active engagement, and is characterized by commitment and trust.

PRINCIPLED DECISION-MAKING

consistently guides practice and interactions with students, families, colleagues, and community members.



Considerations

- How do teachers engage with the professional community (within the school and beyond) and demonstrate their commitment to ongoing professional learning?
- In what ways do teachers collaborate productively with one another?
- How can teachers be supported to contribute to the intellectual life of the school?
- What might be some ways the teacher engages in professional learning and takes a leadership role in the school to promote the welfare of students?
- How do teachers support a strong school culture and a climate of trust for staff, students, and families?

Indicators

- Collaboration with colleagues for joint planning, and school/district and community initiatives (4d)
- Active engagement in workshops, courses, and activities to improve practice (1d, 4e)
- Integrity and honesty in dealing with colleagues and parents on behalf of students (4f)

Expert teachers also demonstrate professionalism in service both to students and to the profession. Teaching at the highest levels of performance requires teachers remain focused on students,

putting them first regardless of how this stance might challenge long-held assumptions, past practice, or simply an easier or more convenient procedure. For example, dialogue around issues surrounding the appropriate use of homework is certain to be spirited and reveal teachers' deep belief about student learning and how best to support it.

Accomplished teachers have a strong moral compass and are guided by the best interest of each student, even when this ethos involves challenging long-established school policies or procedures. They display professionalism in a number of ways. For example, they conduct interactions with colleagues in a manner notable for honesty and integrity. Furthermore, they know their students' needs and can readily access resources that may extend beyond the classroom. Seeking greater flexibility in how school rules and policies are applied, expert teachers advocate for their students in ways that might challenge traditional views and the educational establishment. They also display professionalism in approaches to problem-solving and decision-making, with student needs constantly in mind. Finally, accomplished teachers consistently adhere to school and district policies and procedures but are willing to work to improve those that may be outdated or ineffective.



Cluster 6 - Professionalism

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The teacher makes no attempt to continue with professional learning or engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher's relationships with colleagues are characterized by negativity and lack of trust.</p> <p>The teacher avoids involvement both in school activities and in district and community projects.</p> <p>The teacher ignores or avoids opportunities to participate in activities for professional learning.</p> <p>The teacher declines to participate in team and departmental decision making, except when required by superiors.</p> <p>The teacher does not prioritize the needs of students and operates in a self-serving manner.</p> <p>The teacher ignores school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher makes sporadic or inconsistent attempts to continue with professional learning or engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher has cordial relationships with colleagues and is trusted by them.</p> <p>When asked, the teacher participates in school activities as well as district and community projects.</p> <p>The teacher participates in professional activities when they are required or provided by the district.</p> <p>The teacher participates minimally in team and departmental decision making.</p> <p>The teacher notices the needs of students but is inconsistent in addressing them.</p> <p>The teacher minimally complies with school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher makes genuine attempts to continue with professional learning and to engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following:</p> <p>The teacher has supportive, collaborative, and trusting relationships with colleagues and is known for having high standards of integrity.</p> <p>The teacher frequently volunteers to participate in school events and in school, district, and community projects.</p> <p>The teacher seeks opportunities for continued professional development.</p> <p>The teacher actively participates in team and departmental decision making.</p> <p>The teacher actively addresses student needs and actively works to provide opportunities for student success.</p> <p>The teacher completely complies with the letter, as well as the spirit, of school and district regulations.</p>	<p>The teacher demonstrates a deep commitment to continuing professional learning and engages regularly with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under Proficient:</p> <p>The teacher takes initiative and a leadership role in organizing collaborative projects.</p> <p>The teacher regularly contributes to and leads significant district and community projects.</p> <p>The teacher takes a leadership role in finding opportunities for continued professional development and in contributing to professional organizations.</p> <p>The teacher takes a leadership role in team and departmental decision making and enjoys the trust of colleagues in terms of honesty, integrity, and confidentiality.</p> <p>The teacher makes a concerted effort to ensure opportunities are available for all students to be successful, even when these efforts challenge school or district policies.</p> <p>The teacher makes material suggestions for the improvement of school and district regulations.</p>

Appendix A – Alignment of FFT Clusters to FFT Components and Elements

Cluster	Components	Elements
1 – Clarity & Accuracy	1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content and structure of the discipline • Prerequisite relationships • Content-related pedagogy
	1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and adolescent development • Learning process • Special needs • Students’ skills, knowledge, and language proficiency • Students’ interests and cultural heritage
	1c Setting Instructional Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Value, sequence, and alignment • Clarity • Balance • Suitability for diverse learners
	1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For classroom use
	1e Designing Coherent Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure
	1f Designing Student Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence with instructional outcomes • Criteria and standards
	3a Communicating with Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations for learning • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language
	3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of Questions
	3c Engaging Students in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and assignments • Grouping of students • Instructional materials and resources
	3d Using Assessment in Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessment criteria • Feedback to students
	4a Reflecting on Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use in future teaching
2 – Learning Environment	1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and adolescent development • Students’ interests and cultural heritage
	2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher interactions with students • Student interactions with other students
	2b Establishing a Culture for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of the content and of learning • Expectations for learning and achievement • Student pride in work
3 – Classroom Management	2c Managing Classroom Procedures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of instructional groups • Management of transitions • Management of materials and supplies • Performance of classroom routines • Supervision of volunteers and paraprofessionals
	2d Managing Student Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expectations • Monitoring of student behavior • Response to student misbehavior
	2e Organizing Physical Space	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safety and accessibility • Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources

4 – Intellectual Engagement	1e Designing Coherent Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning activities • Instructional materials and resources • Instructional groups • Lesson and unit structure
	2b Establishing a Culture for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Importance of content and of learning
	3a Communicating with Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Directions for Activities • Explanations of content • Use of oral and written language
	3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality of questions/prompts • Discussion techniques • Student participation
	3c Engaging Students in Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities and assignments • Grouping of students • Instructional materials and resources • Structure and pacing
5 – Successful Learning	1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child and adolescent development • Learning process • Special needs • Students’ skills, knowledge, and language proficiency • Students’ interests and cultural heritage
	1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources for students
	1f Designing Student Assessments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congruence with instructional outcomes • Criteria and standards • Design of formative assessments
	3d Using Assessment in Instruction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring of student learning • Feedback to students • Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress
	3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lesson adjustment • Response to students • Persistence
	4a Reflecting on Teaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accuracy • Use in future teaching
	4b Maintaining Accurate Records	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student completion of assignments • Student progress in learning
	4c Communicating with Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about the instructional program • Information about individual students • Engagement of families in the instructional program
6 – Professionalism	1d Demonstrating knowledge of Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resources to extend professional knowledge
	4d Participating in a Professional Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relationships with colleagues • Participation in school and district projects • Involvement in culture of professional inquiry • Service to the school
	4e Growing and Developing Professionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill • Receptivity to feedback from colleagues • Service to the profession
	4f Showing Professionalism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity and ethical conduct • Service to students • Advocacy • Decision making • Compliance with school and district regulations



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