



The **2021-2022** Skyrocket Teacher Coaching Manual

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by Michael Sonbert
with Matthew Glass and Jess King



Thank you for downloading the 2021-2022 Skyrocket Coaching Manual. I was inspired to create it and the corresponding framework after observing thousands of lessons in dozens of schools around the country and after visiting with so many passionate and intelligent leaders who knew their schools needed to improve, but who often struggled to land on precisely what they needed to do to make things better.

Many of the techniques in here will be familiar to you. And they should be. They're what so many of the best educators in the country are using/doing to engage students. What will be unique will be the simplicity, both of this manual, the framework, and the step-by-step process we use.

So please use this manual and the corresponding Skyrocket Framework for Teacher Coaching and Evaluation to move your teachers forward while increasing student outcomes as quickly and efficiently as possible.

And, thank you to the hundreds of teachers and leaders who've allowed me to learn from you. This manual exists, in part, because of what you've taught me. Your great work is in here, on every page, for all to see. In particular, Matthew Glass and Jess King, both of whom contributed greatly to the creation of this manual.

Before you dive in, I'd like to give some more rationale for why I wanted to create both the framework and this manual as well as explain what, exactly, you'll find inside.

THE WHY?

In my observations at schools around the country, three trends emerged.

The first trend exists in schools where school leaders don't have any grounding documents or shared language around instruction and teacher coaching. There isn't anything they can point to that lays out precisely what excellent teaching or excellent coaching looks like. So, often, after an observation, leaders speak to teachers from a place of what they like or think or feel versus using unbiased data and proven best practices to drive their feedback. Meetings often sound like, "I really like the way you did X. Maybe next time you should try Y." In these schools, there's little to no mention of student data, very little modeling or training, and the feedback is either acted upon or not. Because shared language is lacking, even the most well-intentioned and passionate leaders can't talk succinctly with other leaders about teachers, students, or their progress; and, because teachers aren't clearly being told what to do to be more impactful, some teachers are frustrated. However, most simply have an inflated sense of their skill level and effectiveness. Which makes sense as their "coaching" meetings are usually very general. The leaders talk a bunch about what they like and make a few suggestions, but they rarely give any actionable next steps. As a result, teachers think they are excelling, when in fact they would benefit from intense training on basic to advanced skills. But the truth is, in many of these schools, observations and feedback rarely happen anyway. These leaders spend most of their days in their offices responding to emails, organizing field trips, handling operations' issues, and meeting with parents. And often, poor instruction is accepted as the norm.

The second trend exists at schools that do have certain frameworks or rubrics around teaching and coaching. In many cases, leaders attended trainings on those models and in other cases, the trainers came to them. The problem here is that these frameworks and rubrics are very dense. And much of the language is gray ("most students, some students"), so often, the leaders aren't experts at the very thing they're attempting to train their teachers on. They have these impressive frameworks and they're barely being used; and, when they are being used, they aren't being used effectively. I observe leaders from all around the country speaking very generally and hesitantly about instruction while flipping through multiple page documents that not only haven't they fully internalized, but their teachers haven't either. Leaders in these schools try to observe teachers and provide meaningful feedback, but it's so broad and across multiple domains so their meetings aren't as intentional as they can be. Also, teachers can feel totally overwhelmed by the amount of feedback they receive, sometimes being told they need to tighten up their entry routine, write more meaningful objectives, and have students working in groups all in one meeting. I call this feedback shrapnel. It doesn't make teachers better. They just duck to get out of its way. All while potentially feeling like they're failing miserably because they're getting feedback on so much at once. Without leaders and teachers hyper-focused on what good instruction is, without leaders narrowing in on every teacher's most important next step, and without significant training and follow-up on those next steps, these docs (which I do believe contain a lot of the "right" stuff) are as useless as the most decadent cheesecake is to a person who is lactose intolerant.

The final trend is around the cherry-picking of skills by leaders that aren't the most important next step for their schools. A powerful example of this occurred at a school I visited in Detroit. The leaders had just run a training on Cold Call that they were very excited about. They'd read about it in a text and decided that Cold Call was exactly what their school needed. The problem was, they missed the mark. This wasn't the school's most logical next step. Because when I asked teachers in the building if it was an effective training and if they felt like it was what they needed, many responded that they simply wanted to know how to get their students to sit down. I get that no one becomes an educator so they can practice giving directions or designing routines for handing out papers. They get into it so they can ask deep questions and share their passion for their content with young people. So I get why these leaders defaulted to Cold Call before some of the more foundational classroom culture skills. But in doing so, they risked totally disinvesting their teachers and their students. Think about a teacher who's having trouble building a strong culture in his class, asking a question that no one is listening to, and then cold-calling on a student who likely didn't even hear the question, to respond. I witnessed this. As you can imagine, the more the teacher pushed, the angrier the student got. Until he eventually erupted and stormed out of the room. Interactions like this lead teachers to lose faith in their leaders and students to lose faith in their teachers. And then, in some cases, teachers default to saying toxic things like, "That doesn't work with my kids," when it's time to try it again.

These three trends led me to create The Skyrocket Framework for Teacher Coaching and Evaluation. It's three strands on a two-sided document. Classroom Culture is first, Content Mastery is next, and Rigor is last. The student outcome goals and teacher actions are provided and the language is simple and easy to digest. And, perhaps most importantly, the framework is hierarchical so leaders are only observing, training, and providing feedback on the most important next steps for that teacher. This way, we're not talking about Cold Call with a teacher who can't get his students to sit down.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

What we've created here is a step-by-step guide to training your teachers using The Skyrocket Framework. Each teacher action inside includes real-world rationale that you can share with teachers that explains why this TA matters. There's a section on what each TA looks like when done with fidelity; and, there is at least one - and sometimes multiple - practice activities for each action. So as a leader, you can observe a teacher and use the framework to land on exactly what they can do more effectively. Then explain to them why that thing is important, share what it looks like when done really well, and then train them on how to do it really well. And each teacher action has a nickname so you and your teachers are always speaking the same language.

I hope you find this to be a useful tool. If you need anything or have any feedback for us, please reach out.

We'd love to hear from you.

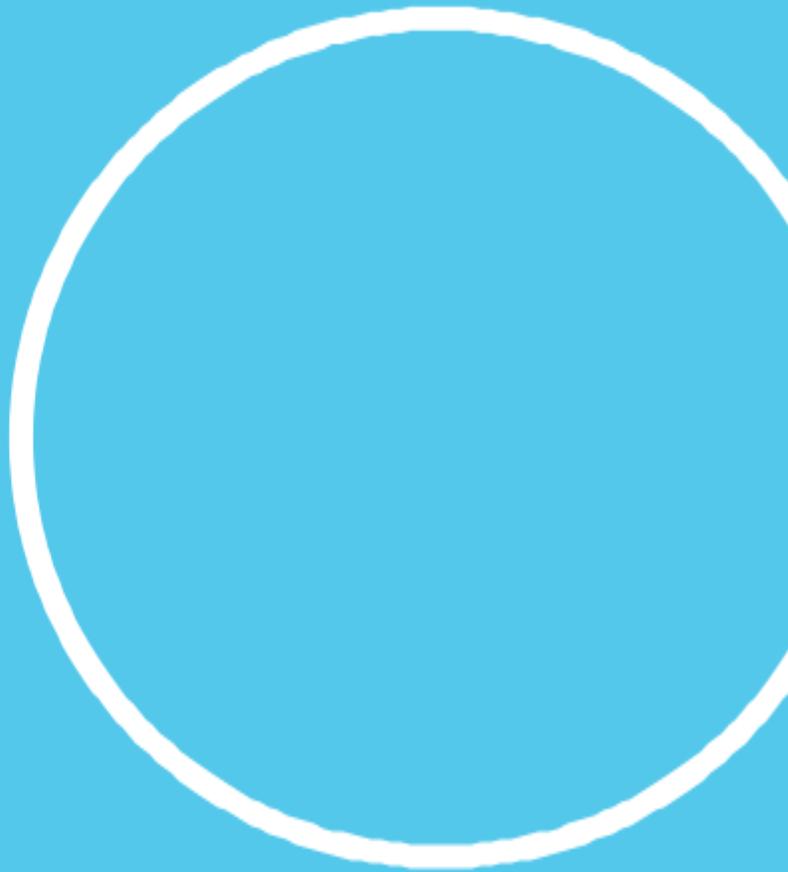
- Michael Sonbert

Michael Sonbert is the founder of Skyrocket Educator Training. He's trained leaders from over 100 cities around the world. His Skyrocket Framework for Teacher Coaching is currently being used in over 500 schools nationally, and his first book, "Skyrocket Your Teacher Coaching," was released by Dave Burgess Publishing in early 2020.. He started his career in education at Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, first, as a literature and composition teacher, then as an Instructional Coach, and finally as the Director of Strategic Partnerships. In his spare time, Michael likes to write, play music, and wrestle with his children, Max, Teddy, and Penny.

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STRAND 1 CLASSROOM CULTURE

STUDENT OUTCOME GOAL :
STUDENTS ARE ON TASK THROUGHOUT THE LESSON.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 1 - Classroom is neat, clean, and organized. Classroom layout (desks, whiteboard, projector, etc.) is most conducive to student learning. Teacher and student materials are prepped in advance (handouts, guided notes, PPTs, etc), and all lesson components are logical and accessible for students.

Nickname – Clean, Organized, and Logical

Rationale – While many people probably think the appearance of a classroom lies squarely in teacher preference, there are actually a number of reasons why a well-kept classroom matters. A clean, organized, and logical classroom allows both teacher and students to operate efficiently and preserve instructional time. A disorganized teacher could easily lose five minutes throughout the day as she looks for the missing copies or tries to straighten student desks to move throughout the room. Over the course of a single week, the 25 minutes the students have lost may not seem particularly consequential, but it adds up to 15 full hours of instructional time over the course of a school year! A clean, organized, and logical room not only supports efficiency, but also communicates respect and professionalism. If you walked into a doctor's office to find newspapers strewn about and trash left from previous patients, chances are you'd promptly turn around and find a new doctor. Professionals take care of their space. Students spend more time in their classroom than nearly any other place and deserve a space that reflects the respect they deserve.

In addition to the physical space, it's integral that what's being asked of students is logical and accessible. This does not mean that coaches should lesson-plan with Strand 1 teachers; it does mean, however, that if a Do Now is 27 minutes long or the teacher is writing in ink so light the students can't read it, or if students are watching a 14 minute video-clip without a task, or if the teacher is writing notes on the board for large portions of the lesson and asking students to copy them down (when a handout would suffice), that the coach can tell the teacher to make these quick corrections.

What it looks like – There is a place for everything and everything has a place. Bulletin boards are well-maintained, teacher and student desks are free of clutter, and there are clear pathways for student and teacher movement. Instructional areas (classroom library, small group tables, computer areas, etc.) are organized with only the necessary materials. Items used daily are in the most logical location for ease of use. Projected materials are easy for all students to see, and the teacher is able to switch slides/docs both quickly and without needing to move too far front the front of the room (example – using a PPT clicker vs. needing to walk back to the computer every time she needs to change slides). Materials are prepped in advance and all lesson components are logical and accessible for students.

Practice

1. On a prep time, meet with the teacher in her empty classroom and physically walk through a class period of her day. Take notes of daily use items (handouts, manipulatives, etc.), instructional displays, and instructional areas that are required for that period. Together, make a plan for where materials should be kept for ease of use as well as criteria for what a work area looks like when it is clean, organized, and logical. Ask the teacher to go through this process again with her other class periods. Set a deadline for the teacher to put her plan in place.
2. Record a lesson or lesson portion and review with the teacher. Ask her to make note of anything that's not clean, organized, and logical. Also, using a timer, ask her to time how much instructional time is lost by searching for papers, getting makeup work for students who were absent, passing back student work, etc. After calculating the total amount of lost instructional time, set a target number for the next lesson (ex – "We lost 7 minutes today. While we don't ever want to lose any instructional time, let's set a goal of cutting that in half by tomorrow.") Then action plan, come up with new strategies, and practice those new strategies for the current biggest time-stealers in the lesson.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 2 - Classroom norms and academic expectations/anchor charts are posted and visible to all students.

Nickname – Posted expectations

Rationale – People feel confident, safe, and are likely to succeed when they can easily determine what is expected in a situation. You can go to an airport in nearly any city in the world and successfully navigate because expectations are posted. The line for check-in begins here for regular passengers and there for first class. Beverages and liquids must be emptied prior to passing through a marked threshold. Empty your pockets and take off your belt before entering the metal detector.

Expectations for behavior and operation are posted nearly everywhere in our daily lives—the doctor’s office, restaurants, even the gym. When we need to be reminded of what to do or how to do it, we don’t have to rely on being given a verbal direction because the information is posted for us to see. When we need clarification or help with something specific, we ask. The same should be true in a classroom. All students should be able to easily see the posted expectations and anchor charts in the room. The information students need to be successful at any given point should always be available to them.

What it looks like – At the beginning of the year, classroom norms and academic expectations are posted in a prominent place for quick reference. As the year progresses and norms and expectations need to be referenced less frequently, they can be moved to a less prominent position, but should still be visible to all students. Relevant anchor charts and other timely reference materials should hold the most prominent location to ensure students can access them with little reliance on the teacher.

Practice

1. The Test of the Unknowing Guest: Explain to teachers that their classroom environment should be useful to the students. The walls should tell the story of what is most important at any given time. With the teacher, view the room from the perspective of an unknowing guest and note what the room communicates, what’s prominent, missing, incomplete, or obsolete. Compare your notes with the teacher and then ask the teacher to revise the posted expectations and norms based on the discussion (note: this can be done at any point during the year, since norms, expectations, and anchor charts may shift).
2. Sit at a variety of student desks throughout the classroom and note the visibility of the posted materials. Provide suggestions for how they should move/be adjusted as necessary.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 3 - Student work is displayed. It is recent and includes detailed feedback that celebrates students' effort, improvement, and success.

Nickname – Meaningful Feedback

Rationale – In my experience in college and the professional workplace, I've never had my work posted on the wall boldly displaying a "98%" or a "Great work!" That, of course, is not to say that my work has never been reviewed or that it wasn't good. When working with adults, we understand that the point of reviewing work is to provide useful feedback that will inform the next product produced. Often, we miss the mark a bit with students by scoring and posting work without including the most important information—the feedback.

Student work is not simply a classroom decoration. It's an opportunity to acknowledge the effort, improvement, and success of every single student in the room. We have to shake ourselves out of the mindset that we post the top scoring work and begin to understand that stapling a paper to a bulletin board provides us a platform to celebrate, teach, and unify our students. In fact, one could argue that a score never needs to be posted. A score isn't useful. A note to a student acknowledging the time and effort they put into learning something increases the chances that they'll put the effort in again. Noticing the improvement a student has made tells the student and his classmates that you see the most important thing a student needs to succeed—effort! When you post only top scoring work, the biggest message you are sending is to the students whose work is not posted-- that no matter how much they try and improve, that doesn't matter to you and it isn't success (note – we'll talk more about growth mindset and social belonging – which is an important component of this – in S1.TA12).

The inspirational educator Rita Pierson said, "I gave a quiz; 20 questions. A student missed 18. I put a plus two on his paper and a big smiley face... You see, minus 18 sucks all the life out of you. Plus two says, 'I ain't all bad.'"

What it looks like – Over the course of a report period, notable work from all students in the class is posted. This does not mean every student needs to have something posted at all times, but that the work of all students is displayed at some point. Posted work includes meaningful feedback, not limited to absolute scores and generalized statements of success. Feedback speaks to effort, improvement, and/or student success on a given assignment. Posted student work should be recent - within the last month - to increase student buy-in and excitement.

Examples:

"I can tell you've been working on transition statements. This piece of writing really flows!" "Your score increased by 15%! Your participation in class is paying off!"

"Kendall, you are doing an excellent job solving for unknown variables. Make sure you offer support to others in the class!"

Practice

1. The Test of the Unknowing Guest: An unknowing guest will be able to tell you what your room environment communicates to your students. Take 10 minutes of a prep period to stand with the teacher and look at his student work. Read through the feedback posted and tell the teacher what is being communicated to the student and her peers by what is posted. Provide feedback to the teacher around how to make feedback stronger to improve academic performance as well as mindset.
2. Review student work in advance and provide sample feedback for the teacher that includes information on effort and success (you likely won't be able to provide feedback around improvement unless you know the students/their data very well). Ask the teacher to review and then provide their own feedback on additional pieces of student work. Ask the teacher to complete this for all of his classes as a deliverable for your next coaching meeting.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 4 - Teacher has created, modeled, and habituated expectations for all class routines (classroom entry, homework submission, share outs, partner work, etc.)

Nickname – Show and Tell

Rationale – Have you ever been to yoga? The instructor is positioned at the front of the room and models every pose while explaining exactly how your fingers should be rooted and your hips should be angled. She doesn't do this because she thinks you don't understand her words. She does it because she knows that showing and telling is far more effective than simply telling. What happens after the class is in the pose? She walks around to individuals to make adjustments and give feedback. When it comes to teaching routines in our classroom, we should all aim to be yoga teachers. Show students what is expected while explaining the routine, then make adjustments and give feedback while students practice.

Of course, you can't model something clearly if you haven't thought through all the possible blips and blunders. Classroom routines don't just occur, they are composed. With thought on the front end, the adjustments and feedback that come in practice will be for the students and not of the routine itself. When composing a routine, the teacher should consistently ask herself, "Will this still work if?" What if students are absent? If the teacher is absent? If it's just a generally frantic day? Does this routine make the classroom move more smoothly? You can tell a routine is strong if it happens with minimal teacher guidance.

What it looks like – When introducing a new routine, the teacher should physically demonstrate that routine while students watch. This demonstration might include students, if necessary. After the model, the teacher watches small groups of students practice the routine, while giving feedback and making adjustments. The show and tell phase of classroom routines should be repeated many times at the introduction of a routine and should be revisited as needed. This added time spent on solidifying routines on the front end can save hours, days, or even full weeks of instructional time over the course of the year.

Practice

1. Model introducing a routine to students, providing the rationale and the precise, efficient steps students need to take to do it well. Have the teacher note how this routine would set students up for success. Then have the teacher script out the rationale and steps for success for a routine in their classroom. Provide feedback on the efficiency, student friendly language, and conciseness.
2. Do you remember being in 3rd grade and being asked to explain how to make a peanut butter and jelly sandwich while your partner was made to do only exactly what you said? That assignment was preparing you to coach classroom routines! To practice the strength of a given routine, ask the teacher to become the "sandwich maker" from all those years ago. Have the teacher teach you the routine and do only what he says. This should highlight anything missing in a typical routine. You might also find it helpful to run through the same practice imagining normal circumstances that occur in a given day, like a student getting makeup work.
3. Clarity of explanation is key to establishing strong routines. Provide the teacher with an example of teaching phrases on an index card. Have the teacher make their own phrases and then provide feedback on succinct phrasing. With the index card in hand, the teacher should practice delivering the instructions until she no longer needs the index cards and can remember the precise phrasing. Provide feedback on clarity and presence.
4. Provide a list of some potential routines that teachers need to have and then have the teacher add on, thinking through all aspects of a period or day. Pick one and, together, design a routine that's clear and succinct, hitting on every possible thing that could come up (where should students stand, what should it sound like, what should the student who walks in late do, etc?). Then ask her to do one or two on her own and present it to you for feedback. Finally, add to the teacher's list as she'll likely have missed a few (or more) things. Then ask her to design routines for the most important (provide feedback here) things students will need at the beginning of the year (it's hard to prioritize but think, homework submission should be taught week 1. A routine around responding to other students using academic language can happen later).

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 5 - A signal (hand raised, countdown, claps, etc.) is used to achieve and maintain One Voice when appropriate.

Nickname – The Signal

Rationale – Attention signals aren't limited to classrooms. Have you ever been to the theater? Just before the show is about to begin, the auditorium lights are dimmed for a moment, signaling to audience members that it's time to get back to your seat and settle in for what is to come. Signals are part of our world because they alert us to things we shouldn't miss. It's important to also note that when that initial signal is given, you're still being given a reasonable amount of time to wrap up what you're doing so that you and others can focus on the reason you're there.

The same thing is true in a classroom. A teacher gives a signal to get the attention of students so they can focus that attention on what is necessary at that time. When a teacher gives a signal like a clap or a raised-hand, it's likely that only a handful of students will respond immediately. After all, the reason the teacher is giving it is because attention is not currently on the teacher. As one or two students see the signal, word should begin to spread—just like in the theater. As more and more students realize that the proverbial show is about to begin, the teacher attains the attention of the class.

What it looks like – The teacher delivers the chosen signal (hand raised, countdown, claps, etc.) from a place in the room where she is visible to as many students as possible (likely, not the back left-hand corner of the room). As students see/hear the signal and become quiet, the teacher acknowledges this in some way (eye contact, head nod, silently mouthing “thank you,” table points, etc.) The teacher should continue the signal as she gains the attention of the remaining students, consistently acknowledging their appropriate response (note – we'll talk more about praise and acknowledgement in S1.TA9).

Practice

1. Often use of the signal goes awry because a teacher feels out of control and hopes or expects the situation to resolve itself immediately. While this is ideal, it's more likely that a teacher will gain attention of the classroom in small groups of students at a time. Practice in the empty classroom to build comfort and muscle memory first. Model for the teacher. Name what makes your model effective: body language, posture, voice volume and confidence, pace, etc. Then ask the teacher to stand in the place she is most likely to signal for attention (more on this in S1.TA6) and have her practice the signal. When giving feedback on the delivery of the signal, focus your feedback on whether the signal will be visible/audible to the students near to her. Ask her to pretend the students are in the room and acknowledge them as she imagines them responding.
2. Some students in the class may not be as willing to respond to the signal quickly. As the teacher imagines groups of students quieting down, have her move her body closer to the students who may be less willing to comply quickly, while continuing the signal. This practice will almost undoubtedly be paired with S1.TA8, Scan for Compliance. Give feedback. Repeat this cycle as many times as possible. The goal is to build comfort and muscle memory. When practicing feels redundant, keep going! The best way to build a good habit is repeated, strong practice!

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 6 - Directions are delivered from the front of the room and/or with the attention of the overwhelming majority of students.

Nickname – Focus from the Front

Rationale – By design, a classroom is oriented such that the front of the room is the most visually accessible space for students. Giving clear directions is arguably one of the most important teacher skills so delivering them from the front of the room just makes sense. After all, the teacher is going to hold students accountable to those directions so he needs to give all students the best chance to see and hear them the first time they are given.

Note – For some self-contained teachers, the “front” of the room may change throughout the day if the room has separate math/literacy instructional spaces. This is fine. The “front” of the room can simply refer to the place where all students can most easily see the teacher.

What it looks like – Each time a direction is delivered to the entire class, the teacher should be standing in the same spot at the front of the classroom – the place that is most visually accessible for students. The teacher will have just used a signal to get student attention, so ideally, students will be attentive and waiting for directions.

Practice

1. Practice in the empty classroom to build comfort and muscle memory first. With the teacher, find the place where all students can see him. Mark the spot on the floor with tape or some kind of visual (not unlike what late night talk show hosts use to orient them as they begin their monologues). This practice can be combined with The Signal (S1.TA5) and/or TTSM directions (S1.TA7). However, you can practice this in isolation by having the teacher “circulate” in the empty room, pretending to check-in with individual students (S2.TA9) while you provide him with directions he needs to deliver to the room. Each time you give a direction, you should coach him to step to his “mark” at the front of the room. Actually delivering the directions will come when practicing S1.TA7.
2. Videotape the teacher delivering directions with students in the room. That same day, or as soon as possible, review that video together and give feedback. Ask the questions, “Where you were standing, could all students see you?” “Did you have their attention?” Note – if the teacher doesn’t have student attention, more skill-building around S1.TA5 will likely need to occur as well.
3. Have the teacher practice in an empty room again, just like the original practice, but this time agree on a signal that you’ll give to alert the teacher to step to the front of the room. Practice giving the signal and having the teacher respond. Repeat this as many times as possible. The goal is to build comfort and muscle memory.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 7 - Major directions include information on time, task, sound, and materials.

Nickname – TTMS Directions

Rationale – Think about a time, likely after a big storm, when you drove up to a four-way traffic light that was malfunctioning. How did you feel as you tried to figure out what you were supposed to do? As you inched out, wondering if it was your turn? Wondering if the person across from you or perpendicular was about to go? I bet you were anxious. I bet you were frustrated. You may have even avoided that street until you knew the light was fixed. And, when it was fixed, I bet it felt great that things “made sense” again. That the directions were clear. Red means stop. Green means go. When the light was broken, you didn’t forget how to drive. You didn’t care any less about making it to your destination. Still, you felt less confident, more nervous, and less likely to return. When we don’t provide clear directions for students, we make them feel this same way. Overwhelmingly, when students are off task, it’s because they don’t know what to do. In some cases, the teacher has relayed what to do, but students aren’t listening. Possibly because students aren’t invested in the class because the teacher doesn’t authentically praise them. Or because they aren’t redirected when they act out so they think what’s being said isn’t important if the teacher won’t insist they listen. There are many different reasons, which is why this strand has thirteen teacher actions and not just one; however, despite all the different reasons students might be off task, it’s often because the teacher hasn’t made explicitly clear for students exactly what they should do and how they should do it. The teacher hasn’t provided clear directions. Directions that include TIME, TASK, MATERIALS, and SOUND (TTMS).

What it looks like – “When I say go” (PREPS CUE), delivers directions, “please take 30 seconds (TIME) to copy today’s objective (TASK) on a clean sheet in your notebook (MATERIALS). Let’s do this silently (SOUND). Go” (DROPS CUE).

You can play with the order as well as long as all 4 components are included.

“When I say go (PREP CUE) in a level 1 voice (SOUND), please take 1 minute (TIME) to share what you wrote to number 3 with your partner (MATERIALS, TASK). Go” (DROP CUE).

Practice

1. After relaying the criteria (TTMS), present your teacher with poorly written directions that are missing one or more criteria. Have them revise them to include all 4 criteria. Then, review an upcoming lesson of theirs, stopping at every place a direction is needed. Script the first one with them. Then ask them to repeat the process for the entire lesson. Review when they’re complete, checking for quality. Provide feedback and then ask them to repeat for multiple upcoming lessons and submit to you.
2. After scripting directions, model relaying 1 set of directions for the teacher. Do this in isolation, without students present. Model the same directions multiple times, pausing at different points to pull-out the criteria (also, make sure you’re standing on the teacher’s X). Then, ask the teacher to practice the same set of directions. The teacher should be focused on practicing the same directions to practice relaying them with all 4 criteria. Ask the teacher to practice multiple times, giving feedback until the delivery is solid. Then ask the teacher to practice that way 5 more times. Next, ask the teacher to deliver another set of directions from their lesson. Again, practice until the directions are solid. Then ask the teacher to practice 5 more times. Finally, present the teacher with different typical classroom situations, give them 10 seconds to think about the directions they’d give, then have them present those directions.

Example

Coach says, “It’s time to pack up and leave.”

Teacher thinks for 10 seconds and then says, “When I say go, please take 30 seconds to silently place your materials in your binders and then place those binders on your desk. Go.”

Repeat with multiple different scenarios and shorten the teacher’s “think time” each time.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 8 - Teacher scans the room after every direction to determine whether or not behavioral expectations are being met.

Nickname – Scan

Rationale – You hear it over the loud speaker, “Ladies and gentlemen, as we prepare for takeoff, please make sure your seat backs and tray tables are in their full upright position. Make sure your seatbelt is securely fastened and all carry-on luggage is stowed underneath the seat in front of you or in the overhead bins. Thank you.” The direction has been given and we all know what happens next. The flight attendant walks the plane, scanning every single passenger to ensure expectations are met. Giving the direction is the first step, but the next and equally important step is scanning to make sure the directions were understood and carried out. Maybe you didn’t hear the direction, maybe you’re having a hard time getting your seatbelt fastened, or maybe you’re just the passenger who waits until the flight attendant tells you directly; there are plenty of reasons why a direction may not be followed immediately, but scanning the room will allow the person in charge to determine who needs reminders and/or support to meet the expectation.

This same technique works in a classroom. Not only does the teacher’s scan hold students accountable, but it also allows the teacher to clarify any misunderstanding and support students in following directions. This will likely mitigate unnecessary redirections and create a more positive learning environment.

What it looks like – Each time a direction is delivered to the entire class, the teacher scans all students looking for evidence of compliance. If the directions were, “Please take 10 seconds to silently take out your homework and place it on the top left corner of your desk,” the teacher’s eyes should scan each student’s actions while listening for sound.

Practice

1. It is not uncommon for inexperienced teachers to hold their gaze on only one part of the classroom—often the front. Together with the teacher, designate 4-6 places in the room the teacher will scan after giving directions or throughout instruction to ensure compliance (these can be in order to more quickly build the routine). Mark these spots with a visual cue that the teacher will recognize, but will not disrupt the students (for example: a brightly colored sticker on the front of a desk). As with other skills, practice in the empty classroom to build comfort and muscle memory first. Ask the teacher to practice giving directions, immediately followed by scanning each of the designated places in the room. At each designated point, the teacher should pause long enough to make eye contact, nod, or deliver some acknowledgment to students who are complying.
2. After a few rounds of the first practice, videotape the teacher scanning with students in the room. That same day, or as soon as possible, review that video together and give feedback. Have the teacher practice in an empty room again, just like the original practice, but this time video this practice as well. Review the video together and give feedback. Repeat this cycle as many times as possible.
3. Without students in the class, ask the teacher to stand at the front of the room with his back turned to you. Place 5-10 non-classroom items (your phone, car keys, a baseball card, etc) on desks or even on chairs. Have the teacher turn and call out everything he sees. “I see a phone on the third desk in row one. I see keys on the second chair in row two. I see a baseball card on the fifth desk in row three.” Some of the objects should be easy to notice, while others should be harder to spot right away. Time the teacher and share that time for noticing all the items you’ve placed. Then have the teacher turn his back while you move each item to a new spot. Repeat.
4. Once the teacher is pretty skilled at scanning, have the teacher calculate the number/percentage of students not meeting expectations. Stand next to the teacher, and after each direction given, ask, “How many students aren’t meeting expectations right now.” Ask the teacher to do this when you’re not in the room and submit that data to you. Ideally, this hyper-focus on who is and who isn’t doing the “stuff” will become habit whether the teacher officially calculates the number each time or not.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 9 - Teacher immediately and genuinely praises students meeting expectations after every direction is given.

Nickname – Positive Praise

Rationale – Maybe you’ve had one of these experiences: you’re walking into a building, whether it be work, a doctor’s office, the bank, and as you open the door, you see someone walking up behind you. You politely hold the door for the person and they walk right through without saying a word. Or, while you’re fighting traffic on your way home, you let someone who’s pulled up next to you, in front of you. And they don’t give the friendly driver wave acknowledging that you just did something for them. However small it was. Or, your boss asks you to work on a major project. After weeks of sweat and blood and sleepless nights and not seeing your family, you submit it, only to get a response that’s solely focused on the things you missed or that need improvement.

People crave praise and acknowledgement. Whether it’s for small or big things. Praise lets the recipient know that they’ve done the right thing, that the person in charge has noticed and is thankful, and it establishes a positive relationship. Even if it’s for something the person was “supposed” to do like the waiter who places your food on the table or the Uber driver who picks you up. Saying “thanks” goes a long way.

What it looks like – After directions that sound like... “When I say go, please take 30 seconds to copy today’s objective on a clean sheet in your notebook. Please do that silently. Go.”

Teacher scans the room, warmly acknowledging the students who are complying with directions. This could be eye contact with a smile, a thumbs up, a nod, a mouthed “thank you,” etc. Even more effective is verbal praise that includes student names and what students are actually doing: “Thanks, Brianna for getting started right away.” “Thanks, Devon, for writing your objective silently.” “Tyree is almost finished. Thank you for your effort.”

Practice

1. Script out multiple go-to lines of praise and model these for the teacher. Share what makes them effective: they’re succinct, they use student names, they name the task the students are supposed to be completing, the specific behavior/action, etc. Have the teacher practice, giving feedback on the criteria throughout. Use the visual cues that were placed in S1.TA8 so that the teacher is practicing praising students in all areas of the room.
2. Review a lesson plan and ask the teacher to identify at key points during the lesson, what precisely students should be doing (what it looks like, sounds like, etc.). Have the teacher script out go-to lines of praise for these and then practice aloud. Incorporate different scenarios, such as when students are working in groups, or individually, while the teacher is circulating, etc.
3. Videotape a classroom from the teacher’s perspective, facing the students. View the video with the teacher and ask her to place herself in the teacher’s shoes while viewing. As you view the video with the teacher, pause as students respond to teacher direction and ask your teacher to step in to acknowledge the students. The goal is to build comfort and automaticity in both seeing and acknowledging behaviors that should be reinforced.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 10 - Appropriate redirection is used and logical consequences are issued for misbehaviors.

Nickname – Redirect Logically

Rationale – You’re walking through the grocery store one day and you unknowingly bump your cart into the corner display of sparkling water. Fortunately only one bottle falls, but the associate has seen this mishap and asks you to stay where you are while she calls the store manager who proceeds to sternly tell you that, “This is a nice store and if you can’t be responsible while in the store you are not welcome back!” Whoa! Chances are you’re never shopping here again, you’re posting on social media, and you’re starting a word-of-mouth campaign to boycott the store. The consequence of your action wasn’t at all appropriate or logical and it has made you feel unsafe, unwelcome, misunderstood, attacked, angry and so on.

When students are redirected in a way that isn’t appropriate or logical, they likely feel the same way, which means they are unlikely to want to comply with your consequence or follow another direction from you in the future. If it happens enough, they might not even want to pass the threshold of your room. So instead of being chastised for breaking the bottle of sparkling water, maybe you’re just asked to pay for it. Or maybe, the manager simply asks you to be more careful going forward. Both of which would be logical consequences. We need to redirect students when they don’t meet expectations. But those redirections must be appropriate and logical to help achieve a well-managed, mutually respectful classroom.

What it looks like – Teacher gives a direction to put all materials in desks in 30 seconds. One student accidentally drops her folder and papers spread across the floor. While picking them up she misses the 30 second mark. Teacher says, “It’s okay. You can finish picking them up,” and moves on with the rest of the class without issuing a consequence because this was simply an accident.

In the middle of a lesson, a student begins gently poking his neighbor with his pencil. Teacher approaches the student quietly, tells the student to put the pencil down and issues a consequence because this was intentional. As the lesson progresses, the same student begins mumbling under his breath and kicking the chair of another student. The teacher approaches the student again and quietly issues the next consequence (note – at this point, the teacher should ask the student what’s going on and should encourage the student to turn their behavior around. We’ll get into this more, though, in S1.TA11).

Practice

1. Model for the teacher what it looks like to redirect students, using scenarios you’ve already created. Ensure that you’re modeling holding a high bar for kids, but also ensure that you’re not sending a student out of the room for laughing during a silent practice. Or, asking a student who just cursed at a peer to, “Cut it out.” Within this, you can create a ladder that matches behaviors with their recommended consequences. And while there will certainly be gray areas here (think of a student who laughingly curses at a classmate he’s friendly with vs a student who angrily curses at a student he’s had conflict with), you will likely be able to bucket most behaviors in a way that allows the teacher to see something happen in the room and almost immediately know how to react. After you model and after you’ve bucketed behaviors, have the teacher practice by giving her different scenarios and asking her to choose what the redirection should be and then implement. Give feedback throughout.
2. After the first type of practice, bring a new set of scenarios to the teacher for the next meeting. This time, have the teacher read the scenario and immediately make a decision on the redirection/consequence. You might even set a timer so the teacher must make a decision without deliberation. The goal is to increase the speed of logical decision-making and allow the teacher to begin to feel confident in his developing instinct. Provide feedback to the teacher for each scenario.
3. Ask the teacher to identify the 3-5 most common misbehaviors in class. For 1 of these misbehaviors, model a standardized redirection that could be used with all students, all the time to ensure equity. For example, if a student calls out and doesn’t raise their hand, the standardized redirection might be, “Reminder _____ (student name), raised hands to share.” Have the teacher script out their go-to redirection phrases for the other misbehaviors and have them practice until she builds muscle memory and comfort.
4. Videotape a section of the teacher’s class where he is likely to give consequences. Review this video with the teacher, providing feedback on the appropriateness of the consequence within the full context of the class. Likely, the authentic context will allow you to see what, if anything, distracts the teacher from maintaining logical decision-making. Provide feedback on each consequence delivered. Then ask the teacher to implement that feedback in front of you. This process may need to be repeated a number of times over the course of days or weeks to develop a new instinct.

Note – if the school has a culture handbook or schoolwide protocols for issuing consequences, please make sure all practice exercises and coaching reinforce these. It can be problematic if one teacher is doing X for a behavior while the teacher next door is doing

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 11 - Teacher is warm and positive while also being strong in presence and tone. Teacher uses the formal register most often.

Nickname – Presence and Voice

Rationale – I was on an early morning flight recently. I don't like sleeping on airplanes as with the lack of distraction from texts, emails, and social media at 35,000 feet, I usually get a lot of work done. But I was exhausted. So I covered myself in the thin, scratchy blanket that was on my seat and closed my eyes before takeoff. But before I dozed off, a flight attendant made an announcement I'd never heard before. The woman, who I guessed was in her early thirties, stood at the front of the cabin, and, with shoulders back and making eye contact throughout, said, "As this is an early morning flight, some of you may want to sleep. If you do, please make sure your fastened seat belt is visible at all times. That means, your blanket needs to be under your seat belt. If I cannot see your seat belt, I will wake you up to confirm it's fastened. Thank you very much." I then watched as everybody around me put their blankets on and secured their seatbelts over them. Myself included.

Here's the thing: she wasn't cruel. She wasn't angry. She wasn't chummy. She wasn't goofy. She was, in presence, voice, and tone, someone who commanded our respect. And in fact, she was very respectful of us. I imagine there are times, on flights or with friends, that she's very casual. But that's not the person we saw. We saw someone who we all happily listened to because of the way she presented herself. Teachers don't have time to waste trying to convince students to listen to them. Through mutual respect, strong presence, and a formal tone, they need to ensure students listen so they can focus on that day's learning.

What it looks like – This messaging is delivered while the teacher is making eye contact with students, with her head up and shoulders back, and projecting her voice through the room without yelling. She refrains from using slang or an overly conversational tone, particularly during instruction. Teacher also refrains from using a panicked or angry tone in non-urgent situations.

Practice

1. If a teacher struggles with presence and register, one of the most effective things a coach can do is model with that teacher's students. With a strong model, the teacher can see how presence and voice impact his students. Before your model, sit down with the teacher and name the specific qualities you want him to observe. He should look for your physical posture, volume of voice, and tone as well. You should also have him look for how your tone shifts depending on the situation. You might consider videotaping your model so you can debrief and point out specific qualities you'd like your teacher to practice.
2. Create three-five scripted scenarios of student actions and the teacher response. Go through a number of cycles of having the teacher read the scenario and deliver the script in the formal register. The teacher should stand and deliver the script as authentically as possible. Between each cycle, provide feedback on posture and tone. Because this practice is designed to create muscle memory, comfort, and confidence in these qualities, you should continue the practice beyond the point of proficiency. This will help build the automatic habit of responding in an appropriate way once students are introduced to the situation.
3. It is very difficult to be present and reflective of these skills in the moment. That is why videotaping the teacher is a very effective way of allowing the teacher to see and hear what his students experience. Videotape a 10-15 minute portion of a lesson and review it with the teacher. When reviewing the video, pause and give feedback on **presence and voice** one-two times, then ask the teacher to be reflective and name what they are seeing as the video continues. The teacher must be able to see/hear the difference themselves in order to recognize it in the moment and make a shift.

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 12 - Teacher uses growth mindset language to both celebrate individual and class achievements and to motivate students after individual and class misses.

Nickname – Growth Mindset

Rationale – Growing up, there was a story about me. The story was that I was “naturally smart.” The people in my life messaged this to me (I’m not sure how it started), and eventually, I began to own it. And while it doesn’t seem like being called smart would be negative, for me, it did have some pretty negative effects on my development. First, I stopped trying in school. I stopped doing my homework, I stopped raising my hand, and I even stopped bringing books and paper to my classes. I realized years later it was because I didn’t want to do anything to disprove what people already thought of me. They thought I was naturally smart. So what if I said or did something that wasn’t smart? Around this time, another story emerged. I was a “natural athlete” (see a pattern here?). So, when all my friends from the soccer team went to soccer camp over the summer, I didn’t. Remember, I was the natural athlete. They all had to try. They all had to get taught how to play better. Me, I was naturally good. Until the other players passed me by and I quit because it got too hard.

This entire TA is about the verbal messages that teachers send to students and ensuring that they motivate and inspire.

What it looks like – The teacher repeatedly sends messages that reinforce a growth mindset. They send messages about students’ effort and about the process they took to get to an answer. “Nice job persevering on that problem. That kind of effort is going to serve you well all year.” Teachers use language to help shape students’ visions of themselves. “We have some serious mathematicians in this room.”

Practice

1. Provide a model for the teacher of five to seven go-to growth mindset phrases she can use. Things like, “Keep working at this” and “The more we try, the more we’ll be successful.” Along with standard responses to students like, “Thanks for your effort” and “Good job working through that” and “That’s a great mistake.” After practice of these phrases in isolation, provide the teacher with multiple scenarios, asking her to use one of the provided phrases. Eventually, have the teacher script out her own and/or ask her to make up her own to additional scenarios you provide.
2. Videotape the teacher and review together for places where **growth mindset** language could have been used or where fixed mindset was used. Have her script out new statements to replace some of the less effective statements from the video.
3. With the teacher, create any exercise-specific or class-specific branding or messaging she can use that will continue to reinforce students’ belief that with effort, anything is possible. Things like “It’s time for Minute-Math. Where your only competition is you from yesterday.” Or, “Let’s see some hands from as many Alton Eagles as possible. Remember, being correct is not what matters as we’re all learning together.”

STRAND 1

Teacher Action 13 - Teachers are aware of student IEPs, 504s, and/or behavioral support plans, and they make the appropriate behavioral accommodations for students based on them.

Nickname – Student Accommodations

Rationale – I just ran my first 5K ever. It was on a Long Island boardwalk in freezing rain. I ran with a lifelong friend who is also a lifelong runner. He was decked out in extra-grippy running sneakers, Under Armor leggings and an undershirt for warmth, running gloves (yes, this is a real thing), and a running hat. Me on the other hand, I was wearing tennis sneakers, heavy sweatpants, and a bulky sweatshirt. I had no hat or gloves.

While we both finished the race, I struggled much more than he did. I could barely breathe and at one point, I even started dry-heaving. All while he sang and laughed and cheered our fellow runners on. Yes, he's an experienced runner and I'm not, so that certainly gave him an advantage. But he also made accommodations - for the cold, for the freezing rain, for the slippery terrain - that I didn't.

Sometimes when we're in schools, teachers will tell us that they'd have a much stronger school culture if it wasn't for a handful (or more) of very disruptive students who are affecting the learning of everyone else in the building. This is, of course, a very real concern. Both that this is happening but maybe more importantly, that when we ask what accommodations teachers (and leaders) have made for these students, they're sometimes lacking (or even non-existent).

This teacher action exists for two reasons. The first is to support school leaders in providing coaching for teachers around supporting all students in their schools. The second is to hopefully blow up the idea that it's the students' fault when the adults haven't provided enough support for them. Yes, some students are very challenging to teach. I know this as a former special education teacher and the father of a child with Autism. But we need to make accommodations, both for the sake of those students who are struggling and for the sake of the other students in their classes. While this may mean more work on the front end, if done well, it'll save a lot of time in the way of parent phone calls and disciplinary hearings on the back end; and, ideally, it will lead to more students success and cause less teacher frustration and burnout.

What it looks like – the teacher is aware of the accommodations each student who requires them needs and throughout the day he makes intentional decisions to ensure these accommodations are being executed. This teacher would do things like having an easily distracted student sit up front so she can focus more easily on the board. He'd potentially give intermittent breaks to a student with self-control issues. He may redirect a student who has oppositional defiance privately vs. publicly as not to get into a conflict.

Note: accommodations referred to here are behavioral in nature. For differentiation around instruction, refer to S2.TA7.

Practice

1. The first practice involves looking through IEPs and/or 504 plans to ensure the teacher is aware of all the accommodations that are needed. Teachers should be asked to make a list of these on an easily accessible doc. Once the teacher is aware of these, the leader should model what it looks like to make these accommodations. Some of these will be made in advance, like changing a seating chart. But others, like checking in with a student who is emotionally disturbed, to ensure he's focused and feeling supported, will take explicit modeling with corresponding criteria. Because there are so many different behaviors and so many different ways to address them, we have not provided criteria here. However, using the IEPs and/or 504s and what the leaders and the teachers know about the students, they should develop a plan for in-the-moment student support. Leaders, make sure you're being explicit here. There's a huge difference between saying, "Check in on Jonathan" and "Every 10 minutes, you'll walk to Jonathan's desk, kneel down, and ask him if he needs anything. You'll then check on his work offering one piece of praise and one next step."
2. After the accommodations are created, simulate a real classroom and call out student names and the behaviors they're engaging in while the teacher circulates and provides those accommodations. One note here is that we usually coach leaders away from using real student names in practices around redirection as it could reinforce that teacher's belief that student X or Y is a "bad kid." This is different. We need to use the student names here as each of these students needs a tailored support. Just stay away from conversations, both on your end or the teacher's end, that paint the students in a negative light. If the teacher says, "Yeah, this won't ever work with him," you should address that right away with something like, "It's true that his behaviors can be challenging, but we haven't provided him with enough support so far. I'm requesting you give this a chance. For him, for the other students in the class, and for you."
3. Quiz the teacher on what accommodations each student needs.
4. If an IEP or 504 doesn't exist, co-design a support plan with the teacher. You don't need an IEP to tell you that a student can't sit still for five minutes. Name the behavior, determine what accommodation/s will address it, then create criteria for what it'll look like when done well. Then have the teacher do this, with your support, for another student. Then have the teacher do it on her own for any other students who need accommodations.



STRAND **2** CONTENT MASTERY

STUDENT OUTCOME GOAL :

STUDENTS MAKE SIGNIFICANT PROGRESS TOWARD MASTERING A RIGOROUS DAILY OBJECTIVE.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 1 - Lesson objective is the most important next step for students; and, all materials selected are purposeful, rigorous, and aligned to that objective.

Nickname – Next Step Objectives

Rationale – There are three types of people in the gym I go to. The first type are the folks who hop on the treadmill and jog leisurely for twenty minutes. Who then hop off and do some pushups and some bodyweight squats. Maybe they do a few curls as well. And then they leave. They're likely trying to maintain their physiques or health, but they're probably not getting better at anything. Or at least not significantly better because what they're doing is too easy for them. Then there are the folks upstairs who are lifting monster weight, screaming and groaning and testing the mettle of every vein in their necks and heads. I don't doubt that these people are building muscle, but I often wonder if they're doing more damage to themselves than they are good because what they're doing is too hard. The last group are the people sweating bullets in bootcamp classes, testing themselves by cranking out burpee after burpee and box jump after box jump. They're pushing themselves every time they're there. Their workouts aren't too easy and not so hard they could get injured.

Just like at the gym, my observations of classrooms usually reveal the following trends specific to instruction. Either students breeze through the day's lesson, mastering the content with ease and often working on (and sometimes completing) their homework in class. Leaving me with the question of why this lesson was chosen in the first place. Or, the students clearly don't understand what is happening and have no chance of mastering the content but the teacher plows forward anyway in order to "finish" the lesson. Sometimes the teacher models (S2.TA6) the daily skill. But often he doesn't. Sometimes all the materials are perfectly aligned to the objective, but often they're not (example – the lesson is about adding integers and the model only dealt with positive integers. But on the worksheet students are asked to add negative integers and they're not set up to do it). And in many cases, the teacher is simply teaching the "next lesson" of their scripted program and when asked, "Why this lesson today?" They readily admit that.

What I see far less often are rigorous, aligned lessons where the teacher knows exactly what all students know (S2.TA9) and they are using that data to responsively create (or modify if using scripted curriculum) lessons that are the most important next step for students.

What it looks like – Lessons are rigorous but manageable. Yes, they should be hard. But not hard in the way it would be hard for me to climb Mt Everest. It needs to be something that students can be taught to master in one period (or partially master). 3 or 4 part objectives are likely way too much for one class period. The lessons are informed by data and not a script so teachers are hyper-focused on what students need next. This might mean breaking from what the scripted program says they need. Or what the unit plan lays out. This is okay as long as it's intentionally done. It's not an out for instruction that's ineffective. All materials are aligned to the objective. And they all push student learning forward.

Practice

1. Co-plan writing objectives that meet the bar for rigor. Then plan each lesson component with the teacher. Do not plan entire lessons at once, but rather, plan multiple Direct Instruction portions to build their expertise there. Then plan multiple Guided Practice portions. And so on. Use student data to inform the creation of these objectives and the subsequent materials.
2. Ask the teacher to submit lesson plans that include data driven rationale for why each lesson was chosen. And get into the habit of asking teachers the following question: "Why this lesson today?"
3. With the teacher, review the different components and materials of a teacher's lesson for objective alignment (if there is a Do Now or opening activity, that can be ignored for the moment). If there are materials or content not aligned to the objective, model how to change one component so that it is aligned, and then have the teacher modify the rest. Repeat for subsequent lessons.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 2 - Lesson plan includes an accurate and appropriately rigorous lesson exemplar, steps for success, and criteria for evaluation as well as potential student misconceptions.

Nickname – Exemplar, Steps, and Criteria

Rationale – Whenever you have a goal, whether that is shedding some weight, making an addition to your home, or nailing an interview, you need to know what the end product looks like. If I go to get my hair cut and I don't tell my barber exactly what I want, if I don't have a vision for what my hair should look like afterward, I won't be able to explain to him what I want and I might (or might not) get a good haircut. But if I know I want my hair to look like Ryan Gosling's hair and I describe it exactly and maybe even show him a picture of Gosling's hair, we'll both know exactly what success looks like and we'll know, afterward, if we got there. That picture is the exemplar. The steps the barber needs to take to make my hair look like that are the steps for success. My hair looking like Ryan's afterward - the same shape, same length, same color, same part, etc. are the criteria for evaluation. The same rationale applies to the teacher and students. If a teacher doesn't know exactly what success is, if he doesn't have that exemplar, the steps, and the criteria, it'll be much harder to teach the children the new skill because he might not be able to describe exactly what they should be doing at every point. And if the teacher doesn't know these things, then he cannot provide the most precise feedback or evaluate the success of the students. By having an exemplar, steps, and criteria, the teacher knows what excellence is and how to get there. He can take partial student answers and push them towards that excellence.

But having an exemplar, steps, and criteria isn't enough. Teachers also need to know what issues may arise that will prevent the students from attaining excellence. Think about the television show *Property Brothers*. When Jonathan Scott makes his blueprint for reconstruction, he also considers what issues could interfere with the final product. Could there be mold in the bathroom? What about faulty electrical wiring? How about a leak in the roof? Just like Jonathan, the teacher needs to think about what things will prevent students from achieving excellence. These are misconceptions. Where might students run into "faulty wiring?" The teacher must plan for the misconceptions students may have so that when they arise, the teacher can identify and correct them. And knowing what misconceptions may arise is a direct result of knowing exactly what success looks like and how it should be achieved.

What it looks like – In lesson planning, the teacher designs and writes out an exemplar end product and backward maps from there to determine what steps he followed to get to the exemplar response. The teacher also thinks through her metacognitive processes to identify where a mistake or misconception might arise. These misconceptions are addressed prior to students engaging in independent practice. (note – during direct instruction, the teacher can show an exemplar to the students—but not, obviously, the final product exemplar as that will give away what the response is. But certainly, the teacher can create another exemplar or two and use those to model). Finally, the teacher lands on the criteria for evaluation. In other words, what will he look at to determine whether or not the students were successful?

Here's a sample exemplar: "Based on the text (using text evidence), I believe Jenna is unhappy (names a character trait). On page 31 (cites page), while crying, she says, "It wasn't supposed to be like this. It was supposed to be different (direct quote)." Here, she's referring to her relationship with her mom and how it's devolved to the point of them no longer speaking (makes an inference).

Misconception/s: Jenna is often sarcastic. On page 30 she says, "Wow, everything is just perfect." Some students may perceive this as her being happy and content and might think the quote on page 31 is inconsistent with this "happiness." Or they may not understand the quote on 31 at all.

The steps for success are using text evidence, names a character trait, cites page, etc. The criteria for evaluation might be 1) all steps followed correctly 2) minimum of three sentences 3) proper grammar and spelling.

Practice

1. Design an exemplar using one of the teacher's upcoming lessons. Review with her, pulling out the components. Ask the teacher to create one with you there. Identify the steps the teacher took to get to that exemplar. If you can't tell how the teacher got there, then the students probably can't either. Provide feedback and then ask the teacher to do another one (and even assign some for the teacher to do for homework).
2. Take three students examples of work and ask the teacher to identify how close the students were to meeting the exemplar. The teacher should be able to immediately identify how each student performed, and if they were short of expectations, where they were short. If a student met the exemplar, the teacher should be able to explain how as well. Use this feedback to inform the creation of more exemplars.
3. Choose a group of students who did not meet the exemplar set in a lesson. Model analyzing one student's work against the exemplar criteria, steps for success, and misconceptions. Have the teacher repeat this process for the other students, naming precisely why those students did not meet the bar. What were the common mistakes the students made? Why? By having a teacher go through the process of thinking about the misconceptions beforehand, she can begin to internalize the metacognitive processes the students will be going through on a daily basis. Use this feedback to inform the creation of more exemplars and misconceptions.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 3 - Lesson requires students to engage (notes, annotating, written responses, etc) consistently throughout.

Nickname – Engagement Opportunities

Rationale – Seeing a hockey game in person is an awesome experience. The puck is whipped from player to player, from one side of the ice to the other. In the blink of an eye, a puck saved at one end of the rink is shot up the other side of ice to a streaking player who scores. This happens in a matter of seconds. As soon as you look away, you’ve missed something. Live hockey requires an attendee’s total concentration and engagement. A classroom must operate like a live hockey game. Students must be required to engage at all times. But unlike a hockey game, that’s very exciting on its own, class sometimes feels the opposite of this. So students must be asked to engage so they don’t miss anything. Engagement means they are thinking, participating, and learning. Think of any ineffective class you had in high school or college. Chances are, the teacher or professor spoke ad nauseam and you just went along for the ride. Chances are, you didn’t learn much. In the classroom, students must be active and engaged because engagement is paramount to learning. This does not mean that every second of every class is high leverage or intense, but it does mean that for every teacher action, there is a requisite student action. To be clear, what I’m talking about in this strand is what I call, “Low-Level Engagement.” Annotating, tracking the speaker, snapping when they agree with a response, etc. We get into much deeper levels of engagement in Strand 3.

What it looks like – For every activity in class, the teacher must have a tangible task/expectation for all students. Asking students to “listen” as a classmate reads is much harder to observe, monitor, and provide feedback on than “annotate for one thing you find interesting.” If the teacher is lecturing, the students should be doing something as well (taking notes or responding to a thinking question). If the students are reading, they are annotating as well. If students are talking with their peer, they are writing down their peer’s response as well (note– talking to peers is Strand 3, but they should still have a tangible task when they are). For every action in class, there is requisite student action. This ties very clearly to S1.T7 TTMS Directions. “While I am reading out loud, highlight diction that demonstrates_____.”

Practice

1. Review a lesson with a teacher. For every teacher action ask or action, “What are the students doing here?” If nothing exists, or if it’s not easily observable, co–design the engagement opportunity with her. Then ask her to do the same for another lesson or two and provide feedback.
2. Record a portion of class and watch the video together. Note where student engagement drops and compare with the teacher. Have the teacher make suggestions for different ways she could have included more engagement opportunities. Apply these takeaways to an upcoming lesson.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 4 - Teacher states daily objective/learning outcome to students, what they will accomplish by the end of the lesson, and how/why they're both meaningful.

Nickname – Objective Importance

Rationale – If I asked you to go for a run, you'd inevitably ask me one question in response: how far are we going? I know this because I ask this question at trainings around the country and this is how people respond. If I asked you to play a game of one-on-one basketball, you'd ask, "What are we playing to?" And if I said, "11," I'd bet that as we got closer to that number, the intensity would ratchet up. Just like if our run was 8 miles, we'd push ourselves at mile 7, even if we were both exhausted. Without those goals, without that end point to strive for, we'd just be jogging or shooting around. The goal is what turns the scrimmage into a game. It's what makes it matter more. Students need to know the objective in every lesson, how it connects to what they've been learning, why they are doing it, and how they are going to accomplish it. This deeper connection to what's happening in the lesson will allow the teacher to push students further as well as motivate students to push themselves as they know exactly what they're striving toward. And while you know that we'd go for a run because it's good for our health, explaining to students why today's lesson matters is a great way to get them to see the value in it. Note – a really big trend I see in classrooms around the country are lessons that start with almost no explanation of what's about to happen. Intros that sound like, "Okay, open to page 39 and let's get started." And when I ask those students what they're working on or why it matters or what they'll have done by the end, they rarely know. S2.TA4 is a pretty easy way to get kids really connected to why they should be wholly focused on this lesson and everything included therein.

What it looks like – At the beginning of the lesson, before direct instruction, the teacher states what students will do in that class period. She will explain, in student friendly terms, what the objective is, how it relates to the unit of study/why it matters, and how the students will accomplish it: "Today we are going to explore the themes of love and revenge in Romeo & Juliet and analyze how Shakespeare used literary devices to emphasize each. Before you leave today, you'll choose one literary device he used and be able to explain exactly how it contributed to the themes of love and revenge. And the reason why this is important is because writing is more than simply putting words on a page. Great writers write intentionally. Every word is chosen precisely and every device they use, whether it's repetition or imagery, are all designed to make us, as readers, feel a certain way. If we can analyze what they're doing and why, we'll likely get greater joy from our reading. Also, we'll be able to infuse some of that into our own work."

Practice

1. With the teacher, model then practice scripting out objective importance. Have the teacher do this multiple times, providing feedback throughout. This is particularly effective with teachers who use scripted programs with predetermined objectives. It'll be very helpful to get them connected to why today's lesson matters beyond just that it came next in the progression. The teacher can then add a visual cue/reminder in their slide deck so that she mentions it at the appropriate part in the lesson.
2. Ask your teacher to complete a task (it could be really trivial, unrelated to teaching) without giving them any instruction on how, why, or what to do. Observe their reaction and see if they ask you any questions. Then explain the connection between what you just did and standing in front of a class without explaining what's happening and why. Then ask them to revise any upcoming lessons to include the necessary components.
3. Share some direct quotes from students regarding a previous lesson and compare it to the teacher's own words. Model how the teacher could revise how she explains the objective to students, and then have the teacher practice with upcoming lessons.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 5 - A lesson hook (anecdote, student prediction, connection to previous learning, etc) is used to engage students.

Nickname – Lesson Hook

Rationale – About once an hour, I get some kind of update on my phone, whether it's from Facebook, the news, or Twitter. Not to mention emails and text messages. Every time my phone vibrates or pings, it's another call for attention. The most recent one I received was regarding a friend's birthday. I immediately got on my phone and texted him. In that instance, I was hooked into taking immediate action. This is the life of students in the technological age we live in, where attention spans are shorter than they have ever been before. Students will be pulled in countless directions, from social media to home life issues to what's going on after school. Teachers are competing with all of this. In order to keep students' attention, teachers must devise a hook: something that will make the lesson interesting and relatable and allow students access very early on. The hook can be combined with the piece of why this matters from S2.TA4. Or it can be something totally different.

What it looks like – Hooks should occur at the beginning of a lesson. In the first five minutes after the Do Now or Intro Exercise. The teacher should give students a question to ponder, a scenario which piques the interest, relayed in a way that the students can connect to it. This time should be served with a lot of student voice—students should be writing, talking to each other, responding to questions, raising their hands because they can't wait to share their opinions. The teacher here is a facilitator of student engagement. Think about what makes the content interesting, and connect it to students' lives.

I saw a great example of this in a Government class where the day's lesson was about choosing a side in an argument. The teacher began with a story about his youth and connected it to a candy bar his dad always ate and about his dad's rationale for always eating that candy bar. As you can imagine, students (they were 8th graders) were excited to share about their own favorite candy bars, which the teacher had them do next. They were asked to come up with as many reasons as possible why their candy bar was the best. Then a few shared out and the students were asked to either stay with their candy bar or switch to the other person's (only if the argument to do so was strong enough). After a few minutes of the candy bar share, students were thrilled to dive into the lesson and excited about choosing sides in an argument.

Practice

1. Model this for your teacher in isolation by showing how a normal lesson usually starts and then have them compare that to a lesson that begins with a hook. Provide some examples of hooks (questions, activities, stories, hypotheticals, real-life examples, etc.) The teacher should then practice on multiple lessons by designing a hook that will resonate with students. The more relatable for kids, the better. I just recently saw a literature class in which they were discussing significant moments begin with the teacher showing a clip of Steph Curry hitting a game winning shot and the teacher explaining that the shot was the most significant moment of the game. As you can imagine, students were hooked.
2. In lesson plans, add a column for lesson hooks so the teachers are in the habit of creating hooks and receiving feedback on hooks.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 6 - Direct instruction succinctly and efficiently models the precise steps and cognitive process students are expected to take to master content.

Nickname – Create a Model

Rationale – I remember when I first learned how to swim. The instructor showed us how to doggy paddle and then put us in the water and asked us to stay up for at least sixty seconds. What the instructor didn't do was show us how to doggy paddle and then have us swim freestyle across the length of the pool. If he had, I probably would've drowned. And if I didn't drown, I certainly wouldn't have trusted that swim instructor again. If teachers don't explain and model succinctly and efficiently the precise steps needed to master the objective for the day, it sets the students up for failure. If students find themselves in this situation too frequently, it can cause them to mentally checkout. Whatever the end assessment is, the steps in direct instruction should be perfectly aligned to that end goal.

What it looks like – Think about cooking dinner. If you ask me to cook chicken cordon bleu but all I know how to cook is roasted chicken, then the end product will not be chicken cordon bleu. Direct instruction is the recipe...the step-by-step process the students need to master in order to produce chicken cordon bleu. Ask your teacher to produce an exemplar (S2.TA2) and then list out the steps/she took to get there. Those steps should be explicit and clear in direct instruction. Students should see not just the steps but hear, from the teacher, the thinking that's involved as well.

Practice

1. Script out your own exemplar and direct instruction. Model for the teacher in isolation. Ask them to follow your steps. Have them reflect on the experience and then have them do it themselves multiple times.
2. Follow your teacher's direct instruction model exactly. Compare your end product with the teacher's exemplar. If they match up, then the steps in direct instruction are aligned to the final product. If your end product doesn't match the exemplar, identify the area(s) where you fell short. There could be two issues here. One: the exemplar is not at all aligned to the steps. Two: the steps are missing something to produce the exemplar. Identify which of these options your teacher falls under. If it is the former, have the teacher modify the exemplar to be more aligned to the steps (see S2.TA2). If it is the latter, identify the missing pieces of direct instruction and ask your teacher to modify them. Then ask the teacher to repeat with multiple lessons. This can also be done with student work.
3. Record DI and ask the teacher to reflect on places where the model is clear and places where it isn't. Ask the teacher to revise the lesson to make it clearer. Do this with multiple lessons.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 7 - Teacher differentiates content, materials, presentation to meet the needs of all learners.

Nickname – Differentiate Content

Rationale – Everyone learns just a little bit differently from the next individual. Because different people learn differently, teachers must differentiate instruction. Some students might need small group instruction. Others might produce a different final project to demonstrate understanding. This does not mean that teachers should lower the bar. We never lower the bar. What it does mean is that one size does not fit all. By differentiating instruction, teachers are working their hardest to make their classroom as inclusive as possible.

What it looks like – Differentiation can happen in 4 ways. One is the content—students will be at different areas of content knowledge on a given day, so the information/lesson may differ. Two is input—how the teacher delivers the lesson to the students. Think of having videos, guided notes, vs reading a text. Three is output—how will students demonstrate mastery of the material? This could be in a written paper, speaking through their understanding, drawing something, etc. Four is environment—some students need small group, others need individualized attention, some work best with a partner. The key here is to understand where each student is and meet them there. The bar never changes. How the students reach the bar does.

Practice

1. Come prepared with a model of how to differentiate one of the teacher's lessons for students who are on grade level, below grade level, and above grade level on that particular content. Ensure your model targets different modes of learning, both in terms of input and output (for example, a PowerPoint supplemented with guided notes, a graphic organizer, a video, and a reading assignment). Next, have the teacher create her own differentiated content. While this can be done generally at first, you should eventually move toward tailoring lesson design for particular students. You can go back to the modifications you made for S1.TA13 to inform this part of the practice. Just ensure the conversations here are around what the students can do and about how this will support that vs. conversations that are grounded in frustration about this extra work for what may be just a handful of kids.

Note - It's likely not feasible for a teacher to create three or four different approaches for every lesson she teaches. And she shouldn't. The practice here is about getting the teacher to think generally about this and then honing in on a more specific approach. Once student accommodations are determined and through the strategic collection of data (S2.TA9), teachers can create alternative approaches for the handful of students who need them.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 8 - An appropriate amount of time is allocated for each lesson portion to ensure students have enough reps, both guided and independently, to master the content.

Nickname – Time to Practice

Rationale – When my friend was growing up, he took piano lessons. He’s not, by his own admission, a naturally good musician; but, over time, he became a good pianist. When I asked him what was the thing or things that most contributed to him becoming a good player, he shared, “The amount of time I got to practice in front of the piano instructor. She would show me a new scale or chord progression or entire song and then would give me time to practice in front of her. Getting feedback in the moment from her was incredibly valuable, and it allowed me to practice independently at home.”

In the classroom, it is just as important to give students ample time to practice, both guided and independently. What I often see is teachers spending so much time in direct instruction that the lesson runs long and students are deprived of practice time in front of the teacher. When this happens, students do not know in the moment if they are mastering the material or making mistakes. If content mastery gets pushed to homework (which it often does), students might not get any feedback on their work and progress. Not only is this bad for student knowledge and mastery, it’s bad for the teacher because there isn’t the data available right away to inform the next lesson. If students are practicing the wrong way, they’re reinforcing the wrong thing. If they’re not practicing at all, they can’t possibly get better. In order for lesson content to truly stick, the teacher needs to allocate enough time in each lesson for the students to practice.

What it looks like – After the hook and direct instruction, students get multiple reps at an aligned guided practice and then they get at least one rep at independent practice. During guided practice, the teacher should be circulating amongst students to identify trends—where are the students succeeding and where are they struggling—so that these trends can be addressed prior to independent practice (think of misconceptions addressed in S2.TA2 and S2.TA9 coming next). Independent practice should comprise the majority of practice time.

Practice

1. Have the teacher practice delivering their lesson. Time each piece, giving feedback on where they can cut certain things or deliver some content in a more succinct way. Once you get the initial times for each lesson component, set time limits for each part in order to ensure they leave time for practice. Have them include these time stamps on lesson plans; and, when you’re in their class, make sure to time each piece live and give feedback if they’re falling behind.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 9 - Teacher frequently and strategically checks for understanding and that data is used to make appropriate adjustments to instruction.

Nickname – CFU and Adjusting Instruction

Rationale – In my early years as a teacher, I'd teach vocabulary and, my first assumption was, "I taught it. They learned it." Eventually I gave a test. Much to my surprise, students didn't do nearly as well as I thought they would. The reason for this is simple—I didn't frequently and strategically check for understanding of the terms. When kids were supposed to participate around vocab, I called on students who had their hands raised. When I collected student work, I didn't thoroughly go through enough student responses to get the entire range of student understanding of the terms. What that meant was that I didn't have a good idea of where my students stood going into the test.

Regardless of the lesson, it is incumbent upon the teacher to know what the students understand, and maybe more importantly, what they don't. Once the teacher knows that, she can modify the lesson appropriately. Maybe it needs to be taught again tomorrow in a new way. Or maybe the teacher can increase the difficulty or move faster because students already get it. This is the heart of teaching. And it's very different from simply teaching the content once, in one way, and assuming it's been learned.

What it looks like – Checking for understanding needs to happen multiple times within each lesson and in a variety of ways. Think of a coach teaching someone to shoot a basketball. After teaching the skill, a player shoots 10 times, and she misses all 10 shots. The obvious result is no basket—the student hasn't learned how to shoot a basketball. So shooting needs to be retaught. The flaw in this approach is that the end result is informing what comes next. But there are multiple facets to shooting a basketball. There is the position of the feet, of the body over the feet, of the shooting elbow, of the guiding hand, etc. Checking for understanding needs to address each component of the lesson, and it needs to happen multiple times. Why the student missed could be from poor foot position or bad posture. Maybe one player has bad guiding hand placement but the others keep the ball too low. Only by checking for understanding frequently and with students of varying skill levels can a teacher properly gauge the knowledge of all her students. The teacher should use a variety of techniques including circulating, questioning, and sampling the work of students at multiple different skill levels to make in the moment adjustments, including speeding up, to meet the needs of the students.

Practice

1. Review a lesson plan with a teacher and ask the teacher to identify what students should know, be able to explain, etc. at different parts of the lesson (possibly after Direct Instruction, during Guided Practice, and after Independent Practice). Provide an example of a question and aligned task that requires students to show their understanding during one part of the lesson (quick write, think-pair-share, white-boards, etc.), then have the teacher practice with subsequent lesson components, designing both the question and how students will demonstrate their understanding. Have your teacher script these checks for understanding in their lesson plans.
2. Review an upcoming lesson and compare it with a class roster/seating chart. Identify a sample set of students (5-10) with a variety of skills for this particular lesson (think below grade level, at grade level, above grade level). Support the teacher in planning how she will check for understanding with this subset of students. The teacher should plan the questions she will ask and how she will collect the data from this sample set of students. Repeat for more lessons as warranted.
3. Provide some fake data points based on checks for understanding. Identify with the teacher how she would adjust instruction based on these data points. If you have actual student work from a previous lesson, use this to identify how instruction could have been adjusted based on that work.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 10 - Lesson objective is clearly displayed and visible to all students throughout the lesson. Teacher makes multiple mentions of that objective throughout the lesson and updates students as to their progress toward it.

Nickname – Objective Progress

Rationale – You’ve been in long car rides before. Undoubtedly, someone (maybe you), asked, “Are we there yet?” Why? Because we want to know. Humans are naturally inquisitive. Students are just like the passengers in the car. They want to know how they’re doing— it validates all the effort they are putting into their work. If in the course of a lesson, the teacher fails to project the objective, mention it, and student progress toward it, then the students might very well walk out of the lesson not knowing if they mastered the content or not. If students can’t explain what they know, or don’t know for that matter, then we haven’t done our jobs as teachers.

What it looks like – Go back to the basketball shooting scenario (S2.TA9). The goal should be visible and at different parts of the instruction, the coach should mention the goal—develop proper shooting form in order to put the ball in the basket. The coach checks for understanding at different points of the lesson and then verbalizes the students’ progress toward the goal. For instance, at one point, the teacher mentions footwork, and that 15 of 20 students have their feet set properly. At another juncture, the coach states that 12 of 20 students have their guiding hand in the correct position. However, it cannot stop there. The coach must tell the individual students how they are doing as well. If all the coach says is that 12 students have correct hand placement, how do I know for sure that I am one of the 12? I don’t, unless the coach tells me directly. In the classroom it could sound like, “20 of 24 of us have at least one piece of evidence to back up our assertions. 10 of 24 have at least two. I’m going to check in with students who are looking for that first piece of evidence now.” When done well, the class and each student knows exactly where they stand at every point and what their next steps are.

Practice

1. Support the teacher in scripting out the objective in student-friendly language. Ask the teacher to include the “objective check” slides in her PowerPoint or in different places on the worksheet. Give real time feedback to ensure she’s relaying their progress at those strategic points in the lesson.
2. Develop a common, highly visible place/s for the objective to always be displayed: every PPT slide, all worksheets, the board, etc.
3. Replicate the classroom by putting a sticky note at each student’s desk. The sticky should be marked with a clear, easy to interpret system for identifying student progress (i.e. 1 = not mastered, 2 = close to mastery, 3 = mastered). Using the checks for understanding questions planned in S2.TA9, have the teacher circulate, collect data, and then state aloud the students’ progress towards mastering the objective.

STRAND 2

Teacher Action 11 - Student learning and progress toward the objective are assessed (exit ticket, independent practice, questioning, whiteboards, student self-assessment, etc.) at the end of the lesson and assessment data is used to tell students overall class progress toward the objective.

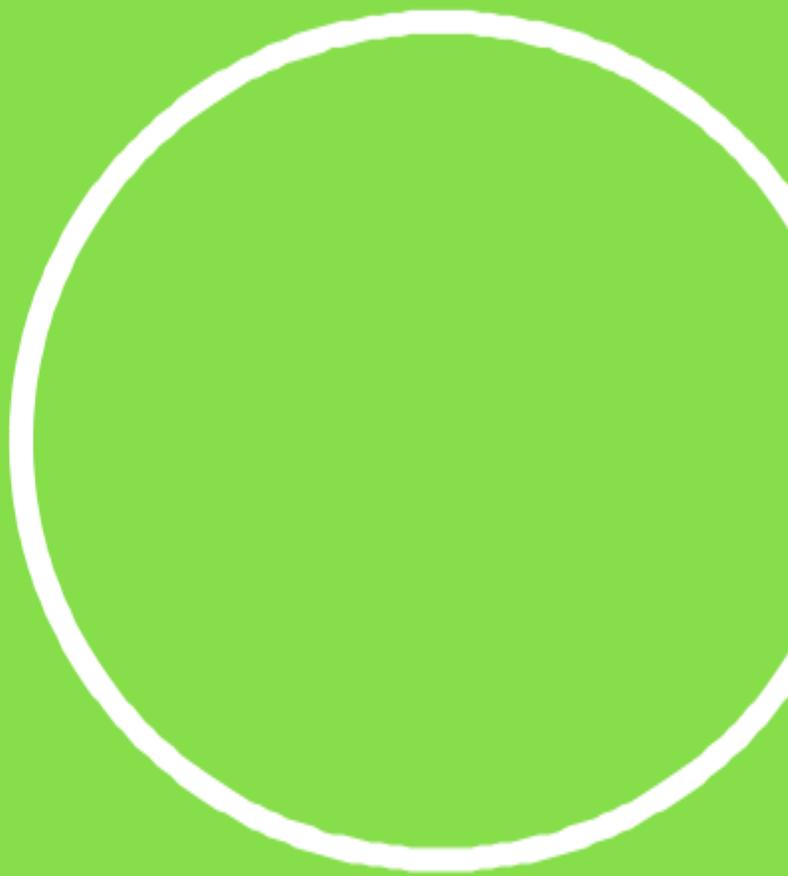
Nickname – Final Objective Data

Rationale – I have a vivid memory of trigonometry with Mr. K. I worked hard in class, did my homework, but I didn't ask too many questions. When the first test came, I completely bombed it. I went into the test expecting to succeed, and instead failed miserably. Why? Because I didn't know what I understood or didn't. Prior to the test, I'm not sure if Mr. K could have told me either. This pattern played out for the rest of the year—me working really hard and thinking I understood, only for the test to come and prove me wrong. My friend Tim was the same, and I believe we both ended up with Cs in Mr. K's math class. What's the point? Because I never knew if I had completely understood the content, I didn't get the help I needed. If Mr. K would have told me what I was doing wrong, perhaps I would've made a change or sought extra help. Teachers don't want their kids to feel like me in Mr. K's math class: they want their kids to be able to explain if they mastered the content and how. They also want them to be able to name why they weren't successful when they miss the mark. When teachers collect data at the end of each lesson, assess how the students did, and inform them of their progress, they help create intrinsically motivated students who are invested in doing well.

What it looks like – At the end of each lesson, student progress toward the goal is collected via an exit ticket, independent practice, whole group questioning, etc. This data is then shared with the class in that moment. When I first started teaching, I had a habit of collecting exit tickets and then not grading them for days. That was a waste of both my students' and my time, because by the time I actually looked at their exit tickets, we had moved on to something else. The teacher stands in front of the class and shares overall class progress in the form of a percentage or fraction. "27 out of 29 of us totally got steps 1 and 2. However, less than half of us got step 3. We're going to pick up on that tomorrow..." Students can also self-assess and report this data out as well. While this is admittedly less accurate than the teacher collecting this data, if steps and criteria are crystal clear, students can use a teacher created rubric to determine how they did in the lesson with relative accuracy.

Practice

1. Review an upcoming lesson and support the teacher in designing the exit ticket or independent practice questions/task that will inform objective mastery. Design multiple fake data points and have the teacher practice quickly determining student success and then relaying that to the class (the room should be empty).
2. Have the teacher insert a How'd We Do? slide into every PowerPoint.
3. Review a class set of student work with the teacher. Have her assess objective mastery and then practice stating overall class progress aloud.
4. If the teacher is collecting work that has multiple data points (i.e. a worksheet with many questions, paragraphs), support the teacher in identifying the most important question, element of written work, etc., so that content mastery can be assessed efficiently. Repeat with upcoming lessons.



STRAND 3 RIGOR

STUDENT OUTCOME GOAL :

STUDENTS DEEPLY ENGAGE WITH CONTENT AND PARTICIPATE IN ACADEMIC DISCUSSIONS CONSISTENTLY THROUGHOUT THE LESSON.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 1 - Teacher scripts out multiple higher-order questions and engagement opportunities in lesson plans. These include opportunities for students to respond to each other.

Nickname – Script it!

Rationale – When you interview for a job, there are a standard set of questions that you have to answer. You know them. You’ve answered them. Where interviews vary is once you get past those initial questions. Depending on the job, the employer, or the hiring manager, you’re going to get asked more complex questions related to your duties, your communication skills, and your ability to think on your feet. Your answers to these questions are what will get you hired (or not). These questions are scripted. Hiring managers know what questions they are going to ask as long as the candidate answers the first set of questions appropriately. In your classroom, after you’ve mastered the design and presentation of your content, it is your job to plan multiple opportunities for students to respond to these higher-order questions. Higher-order questions go beyond simple recall and require students to use what they know to make inferences or assertions about content. These questions must be scripted and teachers should know when they are going to ask them. These questions should push students’ thinking beyond the baseline. By scripting higher-order questions and facilitating student responses to each other, you put the cognitive load on students. When students carry the cognitive load, they will be more engaged because their brains are doing more work.

What it looks like – At multiple points in the lesson, the teacher has predetermined questions scripted. For example, the students just read an excerpt from a book and the teacher has scripted out, “Make a prediction. Based on the character’s behavior here, do you believe he’ll be successful in his quest? Please defend your response.” Or, “Looking at the way we solved that problem, please jot down another way it can be solved that would lead to the same result.” It’s important that the questions are written in a way that allows for all students to engage. While this teacher action is specific to the design of these questions and not the asking of them, questions that read like, “Who can tell me what you believe our objective is based on a review of my exemplar?” will elicit one student response (or a handful) vs. what you want here: every student engaging.

Practice

1. Co-plan with the teacher and script out questions that require all students to engage. Ensure these questions go beyond recall.
2. Have your teacher script out higher-order questions and email them to you for all upcoming lessons. Provide feedback.
3. Present the teacher with a list of questions she asked in a previous lesson and your analysis for which met the bar for higher-order questions and which did not. Model how a question could be modified from recall/calculation to higher-order. Have the teacher revise the non-higher-order questions to be higher-order, where appropriate.
4. Co-design a set of go-to questions that the teacher can ask all students in response to the answer of one student. Example: “Everyone write down whether or not you agree with James’ assertion and why or why not. James, take this opportunity to add an additional piece of evidence to your assertion.”

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 2 - Teacher plans for students to have at least 50% of class to work independently/with partners/in groups.

Nickname – Plan for Engagement

Rationale – When we were pregnant with our first child, we took an 8 week birthing class. My wife and I expected a hands-on, crash-course in all things pregnancy and baby. What we got instead was a dry, boring class without any interaction, any engagement, and no work we had to do other than listen to the instructor read from a book and talk about her experiences. This is the opposite of how a classroom should operate. In this strand, teachers are not lecturers. They're facilitators of student learning. Once the teacher presents the content in an effective and efficient way, she steps back and lets the students carry the cognitive load. Predictions about the objective can be made and students can run lead on determining what steps they'll need to take to be successful based on projected exemplar responses (teachers do ultimately need to share the correct steps with students).

What it looks like – The start of class (hook) through direct instruction should take no more than half the class. Even during the hook and direct instruction, the teacher should plan for students to be carrying the cognitive load. Guided notes should be mostly avoided at this stage in Strand 3 as students should be taking notes on loose-leaf or in notebooks. After the hook and direct instruction are complete, the teacher should plan for students to be working for most of the remainder of class. This can start with groups, then part-ners, then independently. During this time, many of the higher-order questions are asked and students are responding to each other.

Practice

1. Co-plan lessons that are instructionally dense but that don't rely on the teacher doing too much of the heavy lifting. In this TA, less is more. Make a PowerPoint slide limit/notes limit and make sure the teacher stays within that. Throughout the PPT or lesson plan, the questions and student activities should dominate. Ask the teacher to plan this way going forward and submit to you when complete.
2. Model analyzing the time that one component of a lesson will take, including the time students spend working, and how this could be adjusted up or down. Then have the teacher repeat this process, timing each component throughout the lesson and add it up. If it is less than 50% of the lesson, review the other lesson components and identify areas which can be cut or made more succinct/efficient.
3. Have the teacher put time stamps in their lesson plans denoting student work time and submit them to you when complete.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 3 - After each high order question asked, teacher will require all students to, either individually or with partners, generate a response (Everybody Writes, Turn and Talk, White Boards, etc).

Nickname – All Students Every Time

Rationale – There is a specific dynamic that exists within every group, whether it's a group of friends going out to eat or a group of students in a classroom. You probably have a friend who always speaks what's on his or her mind. Who's always Mr. or Mrs. Personality. You probably have another friend who doesn't say much of anything unless he or she is asked a question. Growing up, that person who didn't talk much unless he was asked a question, was me. In fact, I only participated in school when I was asked a question. As a result, I probably didn't learn as much as I could because I sat back and let other people do the talking, writing, and ultimately, thinking. I was disengaged and even disliked school. There will be students like me in every class, and it's our job to ensure they do not become passengers in their own education. Conversely, there are also students who may be passionate about a certain subject or school altogether. Teachers should leverage that passion by challenging them consistently. We need to engage all students to keep them invested, learning, and so we know what everyone is thinking.

What it looks like – Throughout class, the teacher is asking those higher-order questions and for each, requiring all students to produce something. So not, "Who thinks they know how to solve this problem?" but rather, "Take 1 minute to try to solve this problem in your notebooks." Or, "With your neighbor, come up with an argument either for or against the use of solar power." For each question, all students are required to generate a response.

Practice

1. Using the teacher's scripted higher-order questions (S3.TA1), model how one question could be turned into a whole group task. Have the teacher practice with other higher-order questions.
2. Co-plan engagement opportunities across multiple lessons to get the teacher into the habit of embedding all-group tasks throughout.
3. Design question stems ("Let's get everyone to generate a response to..." "When I say go, let's all turn to our neighbors and discuss...") and practice in an empty room by naming tasks and having the teacher turn each one, on the spot, into an all group task.
4. Co-design turn and talk and group roles to ensure that when students engage with each other, everyone is accountable for something. A teacher asking students to "Turn to your neighbor and share your response" is much different than, "Everyone turn to a neighbor and share your response. Neighbors, it's your responsibility to ask one question and share either something about their response you agree or disagree with. Be prepared to share your neighbor's responses, the question you asked, and what you agree or disagree with."

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 4 - After giving sufficient time to process, write, talk to partners, etc. teacher will cold call after 100% of higher-order questions.

Nickname – Cold Call

Rationale – Even if every student in your classroom is generating a response to your question, it does not mean all student voices are heard. And while a teacher might do a great job of getting kids engaged and responding to higher-order questions, to ensure they're fully engaged and participating, they need to know that being called on is an option. For teachers, it can be easy to call on students who have their hands raised—these students often are more confident, and their confidence likely comes from knowing the answers. For teachers, calling on students who frequently know the answer is validating (“I taught the content. They get it”), however, that obscures the complete view of learning in the classroom. By constantly cold-calling on higher-order questions, the teacher lets all students know that they're accountable for doing the work. This means that students feel compelled to answer every question, and as such, they engage deeply with the content and are always ready to respond.

What it looks like – Cold-calling means that students do not raise their hands to answer questions. After the teacher asks a higher-order question, she informs the students that she will be cold calling on someone after the students have been given sufficient time to generate a response. This lets the students know that they have to be prepared with an answer. The teacher calls on one student (and asks the others to track the speaker S2.TA3) and that student shares what they wrote. The teacher then calls on another student or two and either asks them to share what they wrote or asks them to respond to the speaker before them.

Practice

1. The first step for cold-calling is setting up the system that the teacher will use to do it. To ensure it becomes habit, you can have the teacher put students' names in a hat or ask one student to write all the students' names on popsicle sticks and then model pulling names from the hat (or sticks from an empty coffee can). Have the teacher practice and give feedback to her. To be clear, the teacher doesn't need a system for this if she can simply remember to call on as many students as possible. However, if she reports this will be a challenge or you believe it will be a challenge, popsicle sticks, names in a hat, or an attendance list with check marks next to the names of students who've shared work great.
2. Script out the exact language she'll use and practice it. As cold-call might be new for the students as well, the teacher should name that it's about to happen. This will minimize call outs and/or students waving raised hands at the teacher. “I'm going to cold-call after this one. So please, no volunteers.” Then wait, scan, and call on a student.
3. The coach should also model what will happen if a student doesn't have a response or refuses to respond at all. The teacher needs to keep the student on the hook but must also protect the relationship. You can model saying, “We'd love to hear what you think,” or “It's okay to be wrong. What matters most in here is our effort.” Also, model having students dive back into the question so the teacher can have an opportunity to speak to the student individually. “Ladies and gentleman, please share your responses with your neighbors as James takes a few more seconds to think this through.” Then, you can model checking in with James. “Is everything okay? I'd love for us to all be able to learn from you. Can I come back to you after this turn and talk?”

Note - Cold-call is not a punishment and should never be framed as such. Cold-calling to “catch” students who weren't paying attention or in response to a lack of raised hands or a perceived lack of interest in certain content will only damage relationships and hinder the teacher's ability to use this tool for good going forward. If students aren't paying attention, coach the teacher to get their attention. If students are disinvested, coach the teacher to create better lesson hooks or clearer models or more interesting questions. Just make sure that when students are cold-called on, it's to further their engagement.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 5 - Turn and talks, partner work, and group work are intentionally designed. Roles and outputs are clearly defined beforehand, and all activities are intended to engage all students equally.

Nickname - Partner Work

Rationale - In high school and college, I hated working in groups. Without fail, I'd be partnered with a person or two who didn't carry their weight, who tagged along for the ride (I was definitely guilty of this at times as well). Sometimes this would play out fine, other times, we'd stand in front of the room to present to the class and some parts of the presentation would look paltry and disconnected compared to others, or sections of our paper would vary vastly in quality. Then, we'd all get the same grade. Nothing created more resentment. I'm sure you've had a similar experience. While not all partner/group work in school is a project, we do want to build teamwork, communication, and responsibility within our students. That means that it is not enough for a teacher to just say, "Work in groups to solve this problem," for that ensures that one or two people will likely do the bulk of the work, or the roles will be so ill-defined that the work won't get done efficiently or well. By explicitly stating precisely what partner/group work looks like and what each person is responsible for, the teacher can avoid many of the issues that plague partner work.

What It Looks Like - Every time the teacher has students interact with each other, the teacher has thought through each component of that interaction, explained it to students, and modeled it as necessary. Who talks? For how long? What precisely do they talk about? What does the other student do while their partner is talking? In group work, what is each student responsible for? How does each student contribute equally and equitably to the end product? How will the teacher know? The teacher should be able to walk amongst the students and see/hear engagement from everyone, and that only happens when all students know exactly what to do, how to do it, and what they are responsible for.

Practice

1. Share with the teacher how a previous group/pair activity functioned. Who said/did what? How was the work distributed amongst students? Model how that activity could be changed to give all students voice, responsibility, and equitability.
2. Look at an upcoming lesson where partner work is planned. Support the teacher as they define the roles and responsibilities each student has in this partner work. Model the language the teacher should use as they introduce it to students (similar to S1.TA4). Have the teacher practice saying this aloud. Then have the teacher repeat this process for their own group work. You can even have the teacher put the roles and responsibilities in her slides or on a handout, depending on the complexity of the interaction.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 6 - Teacher will neither confirm or deny, through speech or body language, whether a response is correct. Rather, the teacher will thank the student for participating and call on other students to respond to the speaker after all HOQs.

Nickname – Poker Face!

Rationale – I used to play a game with my oldest son right before I kissed him goodnight. He was three at the time, and I'd ask him, "Max, do you think I love you as big as an ant or as big as an elephant?" It was fun for me to watch him think about which one of the things I named is bigger and to hear his little three-year-old voice excitedly say, "An elephant!" After he'd share his response, I'd always say the same thing. "That's right!" Then he'd ask me a similar question (note– he didn't think anything was bigger than a crocodile so if that was one of his choices, I knew to pick that) and if I guessed correctly, he'd say, "That's right!" The truth is, as much as my wife and I were/are working to instill in all three of our kids that there's nothing that's more important than practice and trying hard and not giving up, I still default to the binary, "Right or wrong" at times.

For a teacher, it feels good when a student provides a "correct" answer. Or, the answer that the teacher was "looking for." But a classroom, unlike a one-on-one interaction with a 3-year-old, is the perfect place to avoid immediately affirming answers. If the teacher signals (either by speech, body language, or facial expression) that the answer given is correct, the other students might mentally check out. And within that, a student who has a really unique perspective to share, might not do so because she feels like her answer isn't what the teacher wanted. By nodding or saying, "Yep. Yep" or smiling or doing any number of things that can message approval, the teacher is messaging to other students that it is okay to stop thinking.

What it looks like – Once a teacher has asked a higher-order question, the teacher puts on their best poker face. Regardless of the student response, the teacher will thank the student for sharing and then call on another student to respond (this should be cold-call) either with their own answer or a response to the first student. Through the process, the teacher can ask all students to reflect on a particular response: "Everyone, please jot down whether or not you agree with Anna's statement. And be prepared to share out." The teacher should share the "right" answer (if there is one) at the end of this exercise. Especially if the class decides on a decidedly incorrect response through some misconception. In this case, the teacher needs to stop the lesson, address the misconception, and perhaps re-teach the content.

Practice

1. One reason professional poker players are so good is because they do not reveal anything through their facial expressions. They know, and can control, their face, their breathing, their hands, and their body language. This is easier said than done. Practice with your teacher by videotaping their responses to the correct answers you give them. Review the video back with the teacher so they can see their face and body and how they respond.
2. Record a portion of class that has the teacher asking higher-order questions. As students give correct or incorrect answers, provide an example analysis of how the teacher's facial expressions, body language, or speech signaled to other students the quality of the response. Have the teacher perform the same type of analysis for other parts of the lesson. Review an upcoming lesson's higher-order questions and practice giving correct or incorrect responses. Monitor and provide feedback on the teacher's poker face.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 7 - Teacher projects/shares student work and has students analyze to either further their understanding or to address misconceptions.

Nickname – Project It!

Rationale – Think about a chef creating a new dish. He spends hours in the kitchen, fiddling with the right mixture of ingredients, seasoning, cooking time, temperature, etc. The dish is then added to the menu, possibly as a special or for a trial run so that the chef can get feedback. Do the customers like it? Are they ordering it or passing on it for something else? Depending on how the dish performs, it is added to the menu, modified, or removed. Students are the chefs of their own learning. It is not enough for them to work in isolation, they need to get feedback from and analyze other students' work in order to get the most out of the lesson. And while most people like to be recognized for their accomplishments, when people make mistakes, avoiding recognition is usually the modus operandi. This is why sharing student work on a doc cam or projector can be stressful for everyone. However, projecting student work should not be about stress. It should be about creating leaders in the classroom by getting them excited about what they're doing academically. Every time you put someone's work on display, you build confidence, student voice, and a culture of respect. The purpose of projecting student work is to share what some students are doing so they can all learn from each other and build confidence in each other. At the same time, it prepares students to take risks by forcing them to put their work and voice on display.

What it looks like – The teacher announces at the beginning of practice that student work will be collected and displayed. This should be a routine—after students have been working, they can expect that their work will get used at some point during the lesson. Projecting work should always be framed as a tool to improve—it should highlight a common misconception the teacher noticed in student work or it should drive a deeper understanding of the content. When the teacher is collecting data while circulating, he notes work that demonstrates a misconception he's planned for versus particularly outstanding work. There are a few ways he can choose to project. Choose the misconception or the outstanding work and let the students analyze. "Take a look at Matt's piece here. Jot down one glow about it and one grow that could improve it." Or two examples can be projected as a side-by-side comparison. When presenting these examples for the class, the questions the teacher asks should be less about which one is "right" and more the higher-order variety about process and areas of success and improvement for both. Also, the teacher should not tip his hand.

Practice

1. Review student work with the teacher. Practice scripting out questions that can be asked of students that require all students to engage (the opportunity to display this work will likely have passed. But this is about building the habit).
2. The students should be carrying the majority of the cognitive load in Strand 3, which means, even when providing feedback whole class, the students should be doing a lot of the analysis. Video tape the teacher projecting student work and the analysis that follows. Note the difference in teacher talk vs. student talk (you might use a timer to quantify the disparity between the two). Does the teacher build on student responses or do students expand on what their peers said? What kinds of questions are asked? Are students being held accountable for each question? Give feedback initially and have the teacher take over by providing feedback for himself.
3. Review an upcoming lesson and identify areas where student work could be displayed and analyzed, including the questions that could be asked. Have the teacher repeat for other lessons and plan for this in their lesson plans. Have the teacher submit to you for feedback.

STRAND 3

Teacher Action 8 - Teacher models academic language for students and holds students accountable for using academic language in both verbal interactions and written work.

Nickname – Complete, Academic Responses

Rationale – Have you ever played a sport for an organized team? How about attended a business meeting? Or worked in a restaurant? In each of these cases, people wear a uniform appropriate for the situation. When you put on your jersey, you feel like an athlete. Even if you aren't very good. When you attend the business meeting in a suit, you feel like a professional. Even if you're the low man or woman on the totem pole. Walk into any chain store and you will see all employees, from the cashier to the manager, in a uniform. This uniform is the signal that the people here are present to do their jobs in a professional manner. There is something about that uniformity that screams professionalism. Being professional in the classroom means, in part, students using complete, academic responses for both verbal interactions and written work. When students present their work this way, it helps build their confidence and sends a message to them and to the world that they are serious and professional about the work they're doing. This is the essence of walking the walk and talking the talk.

What it looks like – Every student response should be in a complete sentence that fully answers the question. So not, "Because of Shakespeare's word choice," but rather, "I know the tone of this scene is humorous because of Shakespeare's word choice. For example, on line 12_____." Not, "7," but, "4 plus 3 equals 7." This is in response to both teacher questions/assertions and student questions/assertions. In addition, in all written work, students use academic language as well. The teacher should model what this sounds like early on and have reminders, both verbal and written, around the room. "Let's begin the share outs. Just a reminder to make sure you're using academic language" and "Please begin your analysis of the text. Make sure you're using academic language in your responses."

Note – There is a reason that this TA comes at the very end of Strand 3. At this point, we're dealing with a highly skilled teacher and a really well-functioning classroom. Students in this class should be ready to take this next step. There's a school of thought out there that states that as students are just becoming familiar with content, they shouldn't be pressured to speak in a certain way (example – teacher corrects a student's subject/verb agreement as he's answering a question about velocity) as it can interfere with learning. I actually participated in an exercise where myself and a few colleagues were asked to solve some math problems, but as we were sharing our findings, we had to add a "z" sound after every syllable. "I (z) be (z) lieve (z) that (z) the (z) an (z) swer (z) is (z)..." The exercise was meant to illustrate how difficult it can be to be thinking about content and thinking about speaking in a certain way at the same time. I subscribe to this theory and I believe we should help get students comfortable with content and bought into our classrooms before correcting slang or grammar. Which is why this TA arrives so late in our progression.

Practice

1. Make academic sentence starter posters with the teacher and hang them throughout the room. Sit in a variety of student seats and note how easily you can see/access these sentence starters and give feedback to the teacher.
2. Practice how the teacher will model using the sentence starters. Observe as she rolls it out to students. Provide whisper feedback.
3. Review student work that doesn't meet the bar for academic language. Model how you could provide feedback in the moment to hold students accountable. Have the teacher practice with other examples of student work.

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2021-2022 K-12

STRAND 1 CLASSROOM CULTURE

STRAND 2 CONTENT MASTERY

STRAND 3 RIGOR

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STRAND 1 CLASSROOM CULTURE

STUDENT OUTCOME GOAL :
STUDENTS ARE ON TASK THROUGHOUT THE LESSON.

FOUNDATIONAL TEACHER ACTIONS

1. Classroom is neat, clean, and organized. Classroom layout (desks, whiteboard, projector, etc.) is most conducive to student learning. Teacher and student materials are prepared in advance (handouts, guided notes, PPTs, etc.) and all lesson components are logical and accessible for students.
2. Classroom norms and academic expectations/teacher charts are posted and visible to all students.
3. Student work is displayed. It is recent and includes detailed feedback that celebrates students' effort, improvement, and success.
4. Teacher has created, modeled, and habituated expectations for all class routines (classroom entry, homework submission, share outs, partner work, etc.).
5. A signal (hand raised, countdown, claps, etc.) is used to achieve and maintain One Voice when appropriate.
6. Directions are delivered from the front of the room and/or with the attention of the overwhelming majority of students.
7. Major directions include information on time, task, materials, and sound.
8. Teacher scans the room after every direction to determine whether or not behavioral expectations are being met.
9. Teacher immediately and genuinely praises students meeting expectations after every direction given.
10. Appropriate redirection is used and logical consequences are issued for misbehavior.
11. Teacher is warm and positive while also being direct in presence and tone. Teacher uses the formal register most often.
12. Teacher uses growth mindset language to both celebrate individual and class achievements and to motivate students after individual and class misses.
13. Teachers are knowledgeable of student EPs, 504s, and/or behavioral support plans, and they make the appropriate accommodations for students based on them.

RUBRIC FOR EVALUATION

% of Students Meeting the Outcome

STRAND 1	STRAND 1	STRAND 1	STRAND 1
0%-64%	65%-84%	85%-94%	95%-100%
WEAK/NOVICE	DEVELOPING	PROFICIENT	ADVANCED

Teacher must rate proficient or higher over multiple observations to move on to Strand 2

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