

FRAMEWORK FOR TEACHING

DOMAIN 2: THE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

Teaching depends, fundamentally, on the quality of relationships among individuals. Teachers must manage relationships with students and must ensure that relationships among students are positive and supportive. Verbal and nonverbal behavior and patterns of interactions contribute to the overall tone of the class. In a respectful environment, all students feel valued and safe, encouraging them to take intellectual risks.

The elements of component 2a are:

- **Teacher interactions with students, including both words and actions**

A teacher's interactions with students set the tone for the classroom. Through their interactions, teachers convey that they care about their students.

- **Student interactions with other students, including both words and actions**

How students treat each other is as important as how teachers treat students—and arguably, for students, even more important. At its worst, poor treatment results in bullying, which can poison the environment of an entire school. At its best, positive interactions among students are mutually supportive and create an emotionally healthy school environment. It's the teacher's responsibility both to model and teach students how to engage in respectful interactions with one another.

Indicators include:

- Respectful talk and turn-taking
- Attention to students' background and lives outside of the classroom
- Teacher and student body language
- Physical proximity
- Warmth and caring
- Politeness and dignity
- Encouragement
- Active listening
- Fairness

Component 2a: Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

Level 4

Classroom interactions among the teacher and individual students are highly respectful, reflecting genuine warmth and caring and sensitivity to students as individuals. Students exhibit respect for the teacher and contribute to high levels of civility among all members of the class. The net result of interactions is that of connections with students as individuals.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about individual students' lives beyond school.
- When necessary, students correct one another in their conduct toward classmates.
- The teacher's response to a student's incorrect response respects the student's dignity.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Teacher inquires about a student's soccer game last weekend.*
- *Students say "Shhh" to classmates while the teacher or another student is speaking.*
- *Students clap enthusiastically for one another's presentations for a job well done.*
- *The teacher says, "That's an interesting idea, Student J, but you're forgetting..."*
- *And others...*

Level 3

Teacher-student interactions are friendly and demonstrate general caring and respect. Such interactions are appropriate to the ages of the students. Students exhibit respect for the teacher. Interactions among students are generally polite and respectful. The teacher responds successfully to disrespectful behavior among students. The net result of the interactions is polite and respectful, but business-like.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Talk between the teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful.
- The teacher makes general connections with individual students.
- Students exhibit respect for the teacher.
- The teacher responds to disrespectful behavior among students.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher greets students by name as they enter the class or during the lesson.*
- *The teacher gets on the same level with students, such as kneeling beside a student working at a desk.*
- *Students attend fully to what the teacher is saying.*
- *Students wait for classmates to finish speaking before beginning to talk.*
- *Students applaud politely following a classmate's presentation to the class.*
- *Students help each other and accept help from each other.*
- *The teacher and students use courtesies such as please/thank you, excuse me.*
- *The teacher says, "Don't talk that way to your classmates," and the insults stop.*
- *And others...*

Level 2

Patterns of classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are generally appropriate but may reflect occasional inconsistencies, favoritism, and disregard for students' ages, cultures, and developmental levels. Students rarely demonstrate disrespect for one another. The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior, with uneven results. The net result of the interactions is neutral: conveying neither warmth nor conflict.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The quality of interactions between the teacher and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect.
- The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students, with uneven results.
- The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that the efforts are not completely successful or are unusual.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students attend passively to the teacher, but tend to talk, pass notes, etc. when other students are talking.*
- *A few students do not engage with others in the classroom, even when put together in small groups.*
- *Students applaud halfheartedly following a classmate's presentation to the class.*
- *The teacher says, "Don't talk that way to your classmates," but student shrugs his/her shoulders.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

Patterns of classroom interactions, both between the teacher and students and among students, are mostly negative, inappropriate, or insensitive to students' ages, cultural backgrounds, and developmental levels. Interactions are characterized by sarcasm, put-downs, or conflict. The teacher does not deal with disrespectful behavior.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher uses disrespectful talk toward students.
- Student body language indicates feelings of hurt or insecurity.
- The teacher does not address disrespectful interactions among students.
- The teacher displays no familiarity with or caring about individual students' interests or personalities.
- Students use disrespectful talk toward one another with no response from the teacher.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *A student slumps in his/her chair following a comment by the teacher.*
- *Students roll their eyes at a classmate's idea; the teacher does not respond.*
- *Many students talk when the teacher and other students are talking; the teacher does not ask them to stop.*
- *The teacher does not call students by their names.*
- *Some students refuse to work with other students.*
- *And others...*

Component 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning

A “culture for learning” refers to the atmosphere in the classroom that reflects the importance of the work undertaken by both students and teacher. It describes the norms that govern interactions among individuals about the activities and assignments, the look of the classroom, and the general tone of the class. A classroom with a strong culture for learning is characterized by high cognitive energy, by a sense that what is happening there is important, and that it is essential to get it right. There are high expectations for all students, and the classroom is a place where the teacher and students value learning and hard work.

The elements of component 2b are:

- **Importance of the content and of learning**

In a classroom with a strong culture for learning, teachers convey the essential importance of what the students are learning.

- **Expectations for learning and achievement**

In classrooms with robust cultures for learning, all students receive the message that while the work is challenging, they are capable of achieving it if they are prepared to work hard.

- **Student pride in work**

When students are convinced of their capabilities, they are willing to devote energy to the task at hand, and they take pride in their accomplishments. They may undertake revisions on their own, or show a visitor a recent paper or project they have produced.

Indicators include:

- Belief in the value of the work
- Expectations are high and supported through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors
- Quality is expected and recognized
- Effort and persistence are expected and recognized
- Confidence in ability is evidenced by the teacher’s and students’ language and behaviors
- Expectation for all students to participate

Component 2b: Establishing a Culture for Learning

Level 4

The classroom culture is a cognitively vibrant place, characterized by a shared belief in the importance of learning. The teacher conveys high expectations for learning by all students and insists on hard work; students assume responsibility for high quality by initiating improvements, making revisions, adding detail, and/or helping peers.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- The teacher communicates a genuine passion for the subject.
- Students indicate that they are not satisfied unless they have complete understanding.
- Student questions and comments indicate a desire to understand the content rather than, for example, simply learning a procedure for getting the correct answer.
- Students recognize the efforts of their classmates.
- Students take initiative in improving the quality of their work.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher says, "It's really fun to find the patterns for factoring polynomials."*
- *A student asks a classmate to explain a concept or procedure since he didn't quite follow the teacher's explanation.*
- *Students question one another on answers.*
- *A student asks the teacher whether she can redo a piece of work since she now sees how it could be strengthened.*
- *Students work even when the teacher isn't working with them or directing their efforts.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

The classroom culture is a cognitively busy place where learning is valued by all, with high expectations for learning the norm for most students. The teacher conveys that with hard work students can be successful; students understand their role as learners and consistently expend effort to learn. Classroom interactions support learning and hard work.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher communicates the importance of learning and that with hard work all students can be successful in it.
- The teacher demonstrates a high regard for student abilities.
- The teacher expects student effort and recognizes it.
- Students put forth good effort to complete work of high quality.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher says, "This is important; you'll need to speak grammatical English when you apply for a job."*
- *The teacher says, "This idea is really important! It's central to our understanding of history."*
- *The teacher says, "Let's work on this together. It's hard, but you all will be able to do it well."*
- *The teacher hands a paper back to a student, saying, "I know you can do a better job on this." The student accepts it without complaint.*
- *Students get to work when an assignment is given or after entering the room.*
- *And others...*

Level 2

The classroom culture is characterized by little commitment to learning by the teacher or students. The teacher appears to be only “going through the motions,” and students indicate that they are interested in completion of a task rather than quality. The teacher conveys that student success is the result of natural ability rather than hard work; high expectations for learning are reserved for those students thought to have a natural aptitude for the subject.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher’s energy for the work is neutral, indicating neither a high level of commitment nor “blowing it off.”
- The teacher conveys high expectations for only some students.
- Students comply with the teacher’s expectations for learning, but don’t indicate commitment or their own initiative for the work.
- Many students indicate that they are looking for an easy path to completing the work.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher says, “Let’s get through this.”*
- *The teacher says, “I think most of you will be able to do this.”*
- *Students consult with one another to determine how to fill in a worksheet, without challenging classmates’ thinking.*
- *The teacher does not encourage students who are struggling.*
- *Some students get to work after an assignment is given or after entering the room.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

The classroom culture is characterized by a lack of teacher or student commitment to learning and/or little or no investment of student energy in the task at hand. Hard work is not expected or valued. Medium to low expectations for student achievement are the norm, with high expectations for learning reserved for only one or two students.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher conveys that the reasons for the work are external.
- The teacher conveys to at least some students that the work is too challenging for them.
- The teacher trivializes the learning goals and assignments.
- Students exhibit little or no pride in their work.
- Class time is devoted more to socializing than to learning.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher tells students that they’re doing a lesson because it’s on the test, in the book, or is district-directed.*
- *The teacher says to a student, “Why don’t you try this easier problem?”*
- *Students turn in sloppy or incomplete work.*
- *Students don’t engage in work, and the teacher ignores it.*
- *Students have not completed their homework, and the teacher does not respond.*
- *Almost all of the activities are busy work.*
- *And others...*

Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures

A smoothly functioning classroom is a prerequisite to good instruction and high levels of student engagement. Teachers who demonstrate strengths in this component establish and monitor routines and procedures for the smooth operation of the classroom and the efficient use of time. Hallmarks of a well-managed classroom are that students work productively in instructional groups even when not under the direct supervision of the teacher, non-instructional tasks are completed efficiently, and management of transitions between activities and of materials and supplies is skillfully done in order to maintain momentum and maximize instructional time. The establishment of efficient routines, and teaching students to employ them, may be inferred from the sense that the class “runs itself.” At the highest level of performance, the students themselves contribute to the use of these routines.

The elements of component 2c are:

- **Management of instructional groups**

Much work in classrooms occurs in small groups; small-group work enables students to work with their classmates, to discuss possible approaches to a problem, and to benefit from one another’s thinking. But students cannot be expected to automatically know how to work productively in small groups. These skills, like others, must be taught, and in a well-run classroom students are able to work independently in groups, with little supervision from the teacher.

Note: Grouping of students is also an element for **3c: Engaging Students in Learning**. In that component, however, the focus is on use of student groups to maximize student engagement in learning. In other words, 3c deals with the nature of what students are doing in the small group; this component centers on the procedures students have been taught for working productively independent of direct teacher supervision..

- **Management of transitions**

Many lessons engage students in different types of activities—large group, small group, independent work—and in a well-run classroom transitions between these different activities and grouping patterns proceed easily and smoothly. Little time is lost as students move from one activity to another; they know the drill and execute it seamlessly.

- **Management of materials and supplies**

A clear indication of a teacher’s skill lies in the procedures for the distribution and collection of materials; experienced teachers have all necessary materials at hand and have taught students to implement the routines with a minimum of disruption to the flow of instruction.

- **Performance of non-instructional duties**

Accomplished teachers are masters of multitasking; they take attendance, for example, while students are beginning a task that has been written on the board. Furthermore, where appropriate, students themselves contribute to the design and execution of routines for other non-instructional matters, such as the lunch count or the return of permission slips for a class trip. Overall, little instructional time is lost in such activities.

Indicators include:

- Smooth functioning of all routines
- Little or no loss of instructional time
- Students playing an important role in carrying out the routines
- Students know what to do, where to move

Component 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures

Level 4

Instructional time is maximized due to efficient classroom routines and procedures. Students contribute to the management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or the handling of materials and supplies. Routines are well understood and may be initiated by students.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- Students take the initiative with their classmates to ensure that their time is used productively.
- Students themselves ensure that transitions and other routines are accomplished smoothly.
- Students take initiative in distributing and collecting materials efficiently.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students redirect classmates in small groups not working directly with the teacher to be more efficient in their work.*
- *A student reminds classmates of the roles that they are to play within the group.*
- *A student redirects a classmate to the table she should be at following a transition.*
- *Students propose an improved attention signal.*
- *Students independently check themselves into class on the attendance board.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

There is little loss of instructional time due to effective classroom routines and procedures. The teacher's management of instructional groups and/or the handling of materials and supplies is consistently successful. With minimal guidance and prompting, students follow established classroom routines.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The students are productively engaged during small-group work.
- Transitions between large- and small-group activities are smooth.
- Routines for distribution and collection of materials and supplies work efficiently.
- Classroom routines function smoothly.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students get started on an activity while the teacher takes attendance.*
- *Students move directly between large- and small-group activities.*
- *The teacher has an established timing device, such as counting down, to signal students to return to their desks.*
- *The teacher has an established attention signal, such as raising a hand or dimming the lights.*
- *One member of each small group collects materials for the table.*
- *There is an established color-coded system indicating where materials should be stored.*
- *In small-group work, students have established roles; they listen to one another, summarize different views, etc.*
- *Clean-up at the end of a lesson is fast and efficient.*
- *And others...*

**Level
2**

Some instructional time is lost due to only partially effective classroom routines and procedures. The teacher's management of instructional groups, transitions, and/or the handling of materials and supplies is inconsistent, leading to some disruption of learning. With regular guidance and prompting, students follow established routines.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Procedures for transitions and for distribution/ collection of materials seem to have been established, but their operation is rough.
- Small groups are only partially engaged while not working directly with the teacher.
- Classroom routines function unevenly.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Some students not working with the teacher are off task.*
- *Transition between large and small group activities requires five minutes, but it is accomplished.*
- *Students ask what they are to do when materials are being distributed or collected.*
- *Students ask some clarifying questions about procedures.*
- *Taking attendance is not fully routinized; students are idle while the teacher fills out the attendance form.*
- *And others...*

**Level
1**

Much instructional time is lost due to inefficient classroom routines and procedures. There is little or no evidence of the teacher managing instructional groups, transitions, and/or the handling of materials and supplies effectively. There is little evidence that students know or follow established routines.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Students not working with the teacher are not productively engaged or are disruptive to the class.
- There are no established procedures for distributing and collecting materials.
- Procedures for other activities are confused or chaotic.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *When moving into small groups, students ask questions as to where they are supposed to go, whether they should take their chairs, etc.*
- *There are long lines for materials and supplies, or distributing supplies is time-consuming.*
- *Students bump into one another while lining up or sharpening pencils.*
- *Roll-taking consumes a lot of time at the beginning of the lesson and students are not working on anything else in the meantime.*
- *And others...*

Component 2d: Managing Student Behavior

In order for students to be able to engage deeply with content, the classroom environment must be orderly; the atmosphere must feel business-like and productive, without being authoritarian. In a productive classroom, standards of conduct are clear to students; they know what they are permitted to do, and what they can expect of their classmates. Even when their behavior is being corrected, students feel respected; their dignity is not undermined. Skilled teachers regard positive student behavior not as an end in itself, but as a prerequisite to high levels of engagement in content.

The elements of component 2d are:

- **Expectations**

It is clear, either from what the teacher says or by inference from student actions, that expectations for student conduct have been established and that they are being implemented.

- **Monitoring of student behavior**

Experienced teachers seem to have eyes in the backs of their heads; they are attuned to what's happening in the classroom and can move subtly to help students, when necessary, re-engage with the content being addressed in the lesson. At a high level, such monitoring is preventive and subtle, which may make it challenging to observe.

- **Response to student misbehavior**

Even experienced teachers find that their students occasionally violate one or another of the agreed-upon standards of conduct; how the teacher responds to such infractions is an important mark of the teacher's skill and provides students with an indication of how seriously the teacher takes the behavior standards. Accomplished teachers try to understand why students are conducting themselves in such a manner (are they unsure of the content? are they trying to impress their friends?) and respond in a way that respects the dignity of the student. The best responses are those that address misbehavior early in an episode, although this is not always possible.

Indicators include:

- Clear standards of conduct, possibly posted, and possibly referred to during a lesson
- Absence of acrimony between teacher and students concerning behavior
- Teacher awareness of student conduct
- Preventive action when needed by the teacher
- Fairness
- Absence of misbehavior

Component 2d: Managing Student Behavior

Level 4

Student behavior is entirely appropriate. Students take an active role in monitoring their own behavior and that of other students against standards of conduct. The teacher's monitoring of student behavior is subtle and preventive. The teacher's response to student misbehavior is sensitive to individual student needs and respects student dignity.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- Student behavior is entirely appropriate; there is no evidence of student misbehavior.
- The teacher monitors student behavior without speaking, just moving about the classroom.
- Students respectfully intervene with classmates as appropriate to ensure compliance with standards of conduct.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *A student suggests a revision to one of the classroom rules.*
- *The teacher notices that some students are talking among themselves and, without a word, moves nearer to them; the talking stops.*
- *The teacher asks to speak to a student privately about misbehavior.*
- *A student reminds his classmates of the class rule about chewing gum.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

Student behavior is generally appropriate. The teacher monitors student behavior against established standards of conduct. The teacher's response to student misbehavior is consistent, appropriate and respectful to students, and effective.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Standards of conduct have been established.
- Student behavior is generally appropriate.
- The teacher frequently monitors student behavior.
- The teacher's response to student misbehavior is effective.
- The teacher acknowledges good behavior.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Upon a nonverbal signal from the teacher, students correct their behavior.*
- *The teacher moves to every section of the classroom, keeping a close eye on student behavior.*
- *The teacher gives a student a hard look, and the student stops talking to her neighbor.*
- *And others...*

**Level
2**

Standards of conduct appear to have been established, but their implementation is inconsistent. The teacher tries, with uneven results, to monitor student behavior and respond to student misbehavior. There is inconsistent implementation of the standards of conduct.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher attempts to maintain order in the classroom but with uneven success; standards of conduct, if they exist, are not evident.
- The teacher attempts to keep track of student behavior, but with no apparent system.
- The teacher’s response to student misbehavior is inconsistent: sometimes very harsh, other times lenient.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Classroom rules are posted, but neither teacher nor students refer to them.*
- *The teacher repeatedly asks students to take their seats; some ignore him or her.*
- *To one student: “Where’s your late pass? Go to the office.” To another: “You don’t have a late pass? Come in and take your seat; you’ve missed enough already.”*
- *And others...*

**Level
1**

There appear to be no established standards of conduct and little or no teacher monitoring of student behavior. Students challenge the standards of conduct. Response to student misbehavior is repressive, or disrespectful of student dignity.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The classroom environment is chaotic, with no apparent standards of conduct.
- The teacher does not monitor student behavior.
- Some students violate classroom rules, without apparent teacher awareness.
- When the teacher notices student misbehavior, She/he appears helpless to do anything about it.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students are talking among themselves, with no attempt by the teacher to silence them.*
- *An object flies through the air without the teacher appearing to notice.*
- *Students are running around the room, resulting in chaos.*
- *Students are using their phones and other electronics; the teacher doesn’t do anything.*
- *And others...*

DOMAIN 3: INSTRUCTION

Component 3a: Communicating with Students

Teachers communicate with students for several independent, but related, purposes. First, they convey that teaching and learning are purposeful activities; they make that purpose clear to students. They also provide clear directions for classroom activities, so students know what it is that they are to do. When teachers present concepts and information, those presentations are made with accuracy, clarity, and imagination; where appropriate to the lesson, skilled teachers embellish their explanations with analogies or metaphors, linking them to student interests and prior knowledge. The teacher's use of language is vivid, rich, and error free, affording the opportunity for students to hear language well used and to extend their own vocabularies. The teacher presents complex concepts in ways that provide scaffolding and access to students.

The elements of component 3a are:

- **Expectations for learning**

Classrooms are business-like places, with important work taking place. This is not to suggest that they are somber; indeed, they may be joyful, but still business-like. The goals for learning are communicated clearly to students. Even if these goals are not conveyed at the outset of a lesson (for example, during an inquiry lesson in science), by the end of the lesson students are clear about what they have been learning..

- **Directions and procedures**

Students must be clear about what they are expected to do during a lesson, particularly if they are working independently or with classmates without direct teacher supervision. Directions and procedures for the lesson activities may be provided orally, in writing, or some combination of the two. Some teachers use a board or projection device to good effect; students can refer to it without requiring the teacher's attention.

- **Explanations of content**

Skilled teachers, when explaining concepts to students, use vivid language and imaginative analogies and metaphors, connecting explanations to student interests and lives beyond school. The explanations are clear, with appropriate scaffolding, and, where appropriate, anticipate possible student misconceptions.

- **Use of oral and written language**

For many students, their teachers' use of language represents their best model of both accurate syntax and a rich vocabulary; these models enable students to emulate such language, making their own more precise and expressive.

Indicators include:

- Clarity of lesson purpose
- Absence of content errors and clear explanations of concepts
- Clear directions and procedures
- Correct and imaginative use of language

Component 3a: Communicating with Students

Level 4

The teacher links the instructional purpose of the lesson to student interests; the directions and procedures are clear and anticipate possible student misunderstanding. The teacher's explanation of content is thorough and clear, developing conceptual understanding through artful scaffolding and connecting with student interests. Students contribute to extending the content and explaining concepts to their classmates. The teacher's spoken and written language is expressive, and the teacher finds opportunities to extend students' vocabularies.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- The teacher points out possible areas for misunderstanding.
- The teacher explains content clearly, using metaphors and analogies to bring content to life.
- All students seem to understand the presentation.
- The teacher invites students to explain the content to the class or to a small group of classmates.
- The teacher uses rich language and offers brief vocabulary lessons where appropriate.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher says, "Here's a spot where some students have difficulty; be sure to read it carefully."*
- *The teacher asks a student to explain the task to other students.*
- *When needed, a student offers clarification about the learning task to classmates.*
- *The teacher explains passive solar energy by inviting students to think about the temperature in a closed car on a cold but sunny day, or by the temperature of water in a hose that has been sitting in the sun.*
- *The teacher asks, "Who would like to explain this idea to us?"*
- *The teacher pauses during an explanation of the civil rights movement to remind students that the prefix in- as in inequality means "not," and the prefix un- also means the same thing.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

The instructional purpose of the lesson is clearly communicated to students, including where it is situated within broader learning; directions and procedures are explained clearly. The teacher's explanation of content is well scaffolded, clear, and accurate and connects with student knowledge and experience. During the explanation of content, the teacher invites student intellectual engagement. The teacher's spoken and written language is clear and correct. Vocabulary is appropriate to students' ages and interests.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students are learning.
- If appropriate, the teacher models the process to be followed in the task.
- Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do.
- The teacher makes no content errors.
- The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.
- Vocabulary and usage are correct and completely suited to the lesson.
- Vocabulary is appropriate to students' ages and levels of development.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *"By the end of today's lesson, you're all going to be able to factor different types of polynomials."*
- *During a presentation of content, the teacher asks students, "Can anyone think of an example of that?"*
- *The teacher uses a board or projection device so students can refer to it without requiring the teacher's attention.*
- *And others...*

Level 2

The teacher's attempt to explain the instructional purpose has only limited success, and/or directions and procedures must be clarified after initial student confusion. The teacher's explanation of the content may contain minor errors; some portions are clear while other portions are difficult to follow. The teacher's explanation consists of a monologue, with no invitation to the students for intellectual engagement. The teacher's spoken language is correct; however, vocabulary is limited or not fully appropriate to students' ages or backgrounds.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher refers in passing to what the students will be learning, or it is written on the board with no elaboration or explanation.
- The teacher must clarify the learning task so students can complete it.
- The teacher makes no serious content errors but may make a minor error.
- The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue or is purely procedural with minimal participation by students.
- Vocabulary and usage are correct but unimaginative.
- Vocabulary is too advanced or juvenile for the students.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher mispronounces the word phonemes.*
- *The teacher says, "And oh, by the way, today we're going to factor polynomials."*
- *A student asks, "What are we supposed to be doing?" and the teacher clarifies the task.*
- *Students ask, "What do I write here?" in order to complete a task.*
- *The teacher says, "Watch me while I show you how to solve the equation" with students asked only to listen.*
- *A number of students do not seem to be following the explanation.*
- *Students are inattentive during the teacher's explanation of content.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

The instructional purpose of the lesson is unclear to students and the directions and procedures are confusing. The teacher's explanation of the content contains major errors. The teacher's spoken or written language contains errors of grammar or syntax. Vocabulary is inappropriate, vague, or used incorrectly, leaving students confused.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to the students what they will be learning.
- Students indicate through their questions that they are confused about the learning task.
- The teacher makes a serious content error that will affect student understanding of the lesson.
- Students indicate through body language or questions that they don't understand the content being presented.
- The teacher's communications include errors of vocabulary or usage.
- Vocabulary is inappropriate to the age or culture of the students.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *A student asks, "What are we supposed to be doing?" but the teacher ignores the question.*
- *The teacher states that to add fractions, the fractions must have the same numerator.*
- *Students have a quizzical look on their faces; some may withdraw from the lesson.*
- *Students become disruptive, or talk among themselves in an effort to follow the lesson.*
- *The teacher uses technical terms without explaining their meanings.*
- *The teacher uses the word ain't.*
- *Most students ask what they are to do or look around for clues from others.*
- *And others...*

Component 3b: Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques

Questioning and discussion are the only instructional strategies specifically referred to in the Framework for Teaching; this reflects their central importance to teachers' practice. In the framework, questioning and discussion are used as techniques to deepen student understanding, rather than serving merely as recitation or a verbal "quiz." Good teachers use divergent as well as convergent questions, framed in such a way that they invite students to formulate hypotheses, make connections, or challenge previously held views. Students' responses to questions are valued; effective teachers are especially adept at responding to and building on student responses and making use of their ideas. High-quality questions encourage students to make connections among concepts or events previously believed to be unrelated and arrive at new understandings of complex material. Effective teachers also pose questions to which they do not know the answers. Asking questions, even when the question has a limited number of correct responses, is likely to promote student thinking. Effective questioning and discussion techniques lead to animated class discussions that engage all students in considering important issues and in using their own language to deepen and extend their understanding. Discussions may be based around questions formulated by the students themselves.

Not all questions must be at a high cognitive level in order for a teacher's performance to be rated at a high level, however; when exploring a topic, a teacher might begin with a series of questions of low cognitive challenge to provide a review or to ensure that everyone in the class is on board. Furthermore, if questions are at a high level, but only a few students participate in the discussion, the teacher's performance on the component cannot be judged to be at a high level. In lessons involving small-group work, the quality of the students' questions and discussion in their small groups may be considered as part of this component.

In order for students to formulate high-level questions, they must have learned how to do so. Therefore, high-level questions from students, either in the full class, or in small group discussions, provide evidence that these skills have been taught.

The elements of component 3b are:

- **Quality of questions/prompts**

Questions of high quality cause students to think and reflect, to deepen their understanding, and to test their ideas against those of their classmates. When teachers ask questions of high quality, they ask only a few of them, and they provide students with sufficient time to think about their responses, to reflect on the comments of their classmates, and to deepen their understanding. Occasionally, for the purposes of review, teachers ask students a series of (usually low-level) questions in a type of verbal review. This may be helpful for the purpose of establishing the facts of an historical event, for example, but they should not be confused with the use of questioning to deepen student understanding.

- **Discussion techniques**

Some teachers report that "we discussed x" when what they mean is "I said x." That is, some teachers confuse discussion with explanation of content; as important as explanation is, it's not discussion. Rather, in a true discussion, a teacher poses a question and invites all students' views to be heard, and also enables students to engage in discussion directly with one another, not always mediated by the teacher.

- **Student participation**

In some classes a few students tend to dominate the discussion; other students, recognizing this pattern, hold back their contributions. Experienced teachers use a range of techniques to ensure that all students contribute to the discussion, and enlist the assistance of students to ensure this outcome.

Indicators include:

- Questions of high cognitive challenge, formulated by both students and teacher
- Questions with multiple correct answers, or multiple approaches even when there is a single correct response
- Effective use of student responses and ideas
- Discussion in which the teacher steps out of the central, mediating role
- High levels of student participation in discussion

Component 3b: Using Questioning/Prompts and Discussion Techniques

Level 4

The teacher uses a variety or series of questions or prompts to challenge students cognitively, advance high-level thinking and discourse, and promote meta-cognition. Students formulate many questions, initiate topics and make unsolicited contributions. Students themselves ensure that all voices are heard in the discussion.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- Students initiate higher-order questions.
- Students extend the discussion, enriching it.
- Students invite comments from their classmates during a discussion.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- A student asks, "How many ways are there to get this answer?"
- A student says to a classmate, "I don't think I agree with you on this, because..."
- A student asks other students, "Does anyone have another idea as to how we might figure this out?"
- A student asks, "What if...?"
- And others...

Level 3

While the teacher may use some low-level questions, he or she poses questions to students designed to promote student thinking and understanding. The teacher creates a genuine discussion among students, providing adequate time for students to respond and stepping aside when appropriate. The teacher successfully engages most students in the discussion, employing a range of strategies to ensure that most students are heard.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher uses open-ended questions, inviting students to think and/or offer multiple possible answers.
- The teacher makes effective use of wait time.
- The teacher builds on and uses student responses to questions effectively.
- Discussions enable students to talk to one another, without ongoing mediation by the teacher.
- The teacher calls on most students, even those who don't initially volunteer.
- Many students actively engage in the discussion.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- The teacher asks, "What might have happened if the colonists had not prevailed in the American war for independence?"
- The teacher uses the plural form in asking questions, such as "What are some things you think might contribute to...?"
- The teacher asks, "Student M, can you comment on Student T's idea?" and Student M responds directly to Student T.
- The teacher asks a question and asks every student to write a brief response and share it with a partner; the teacher then invites a few students to offer their ideas to the entire class.
- And others...

Level 2

The teacher's questions lead students along a single path of inquiry, with answers seemingly determined in advance. Or, the teacher attempts to frame some questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding, but only a few students are involved. The teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion and to encourage them to respond to one another, with uneven results.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher frames some questions designed to promote student thinking, but only a few students are involved.
- The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students respond.
- The teacher calls on many students, but only a small number actually participate in the discussion...

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Many questions are of the "recitation" type, such as "How many members of the House of Representatives are there?"*
- *In a lesson on plot structure in a Dickens novel, the teacher asks: "Where was Shakespeare born?"*
- *The teacher asks, "Who has an idea about this?" but the same three students offer comments.*
- *The teacher asks, "Student M, can you comment on Student T's idea?" but Student M does not respond, or makes a comment directly to the teacher.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

The teacher's questions are of low cognitive challenge, with single correct responses, and asked in rapid succession. Interaction between teacher and students is predominantly recitation style, with the teacher mediating all questions and answers. A few students dominate the discussion.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Questions are rapid-fire and convergent, with single correct answers.
- Questions do not invite student thinking.
- All discussion is between teacher and students; students are not invited to speak directly to one another.
- A few students dominate the discussion.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *All questions are of the "recitation" type, such as "What is 3 x 4?"*
- *The teacher asks a question for which the answer is on the board; students respond by reading it.*
- *The teacher only calls on students who have their hands up.*
- *And others...*

Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning

Student engagement in learning is the centerpiece of the framework for teaching; all other components contribute to it. When students are engaged in learning, they are not merely “busy,” nor are they only “on task.” Rather, they are intellectually active in learning important and challenging content. The critical distinction between a classroom in which students are compliant and busy, and one in which they are engaged, is that in the latter students are developing their understanding through what they do. That is, they are engaged in discussion, debate, answering “what if?” questions, discovering patterns, and the like. They may be selecting their work from a range of (teacher arranged) choices, and making important contributions to the intellectual life of the class. Such activities don’t typically consume an entire lesson, but they are essential components of engagement.

A lesson in which students are engaged usually has a discernible structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end, with scaffolding provided by the teacher or by the activities themselves. Student tasks are organized to provide cognitive challenge, and students are encouraged to reflect on what they have done and what they have learned. That is, there is closure to the lesson, in which students derive important learning from their own actions. A critical question for an observer in determining the degree of student engagement is “What are the students being asked to do?” If the answer to that question is filling in blanks on a worksheet, or performing a rote procedure, they are unlikely to be cognitively engaged.

In observing a lesson, it is essential not only to watch the teacher, but also to pay close attention to the students and what they are doing. The best evidence for student engagement is what students are saying and doing as a consequence of what the teacher does, has done, or has planned.

The elements of component 3c are:

- **Activities and assignments**

The activities and assignments are the centerpiece of student engagement, since they determine what it is that students are asked to do. Activities and assignments that promote learning are those that require student thinking, that emphasize depth over breadth, and that may allow students to exercise some choice.

- **Grouping of students**

How students are grouped for instruction is one of the many decisions teachers make every day. There are many options; students of similar background and skill may be clustered together, or the more advanced students may be spread around into the different groups. Alternatively, a teacher might permit students to select their own groups, or they could be formed randomly. Whatever the arrangement, skilled teachers decide it purposefully.

Note: *Grouping of students is also an element for 2c: Managing Classroom Procedures. In that component, however, the focus is on the procedures students have been taught for working independently of teacher supervision; this component, on the other hand, centers on the use of student groups to maximize student engagement in learning.*

- **Instructional materials and resources**

The instructional materials a teacher selects to use in the classroom can have an enormous impact on student experience. While some teachers are obliged to use a school or district’s officially sanctioned materials, many teachers use these selectively or supplement them with others of their choosing that are better suited to engaging students in deep learning, for example, the use of primary source materials in social studies.

- **Structure and pacing**

Neither adults nor students like to be either bored or rushed in completing a task. Keeping things moving, within a well-defined structure, is one of the marks of an experienced teacher. And since much of student learning results from their reflection on what they have done, a well-designed lesson includes time for reflection and closure.

Indicators include:

- Activities aligned with the goals of the lesson
- Student enthusiasm, interest, thinking, problem-solving, etc.
- Learning tasks that require high-level student thinking and are aligned with lesson objectives
- Students highly motivated to work on all tasks and are persistent even when the tasks are challenging
- Students actively “working,” rather than watching while their teacher “works”
- Suitable pacing of the lesson: neither dragging nor rushed, with time for closure and student reflection

Component 3c: Engaging Students in Learning

Level 4

Virtually all students are intellectually engaged in challenging content, through well-designed learning tasks and suitable scaffolding by the teacher. Learning tasks and activities are fully aligned with the instructional outcomes. In addition, there is evidence of some student initiation of inquiry and student contributions to the exploration of important content. The lesson has a clearly defined structure, and the pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed to intellectually engage with and reflect upon their learning, and to consolidate their understanding. Students may have some choice in how they complete tasks and may serve as resources for one another.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- Virtually all students are highly engaged in the lesson.
- Students take initiative to modify a learning task to make it more meaningful or relevant to their needs.
- Students suggest modifications to the grouping patterns used.
- Students have extensive choice in how they complete tasks.
- Students suggest modifications or additions to the materials being used.
- Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students are asked to write an essay “in the style of Hemingway.”*
- *A student asks whether they might remain in their small groups to complete another section of the activity, rather than work independently.*
- *Students identify or create their own learning materials.*
- *Students summarize their learning from the lesson.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

The learning tasks and activities are aligned with the instructional outcomes and are designed to challenge student thinking, resulting in active intellectual engagement by most students with important and challenging content, and with teacher scaffolding to support that engagement. The lesson has a clearly defined structure and the pacing of the lesson is appropriate, providing most students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Most students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.
- Learning tasks have multiple correct responses or approaches and/or demand higher-order thinking.
- Students have some choice in how they complete learning tasks.
- There is a mix of different types of groupings, suitable to the lesson objectives.
- Materials and resources support the learning goals and require intellectual engagement, as appropriate.
- The pacing of the lesson provides students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Students are asked to formulate a hypothesis about what might happen if the American voting system allowed for the direct election of presidents.*
- *Students are given a task to do independently, then to discuss with a table group, followed by a report-out from each table.*
- *There is a clear beginning, middle, and end to the lesson.*
- *The lesson is neither rushed nor does it drag.*
- *Five students (out of 27) are playing video games, texting, etc.*
- *And others...*

Level 2

The learning tasks and activities are partially aligned with the instructional outcomes but require only minimal thinking by students, allowing most students to be passive or merely compliant. The lesson has a recognizable structure; however, the pacing of the lesson may not provide students the time needed to be intellectually engaged.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Some students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.
- Learning tasks are a mix of those requiring thinking and recall.
- Student engagement with the content is largely passive, learning primarily facts or procedures.
- Students have no choice in how they complete tasks.
- The teacher uses different instructional groupings; these are partially successful in achieving the lesson objectives.
- The materials and resources are partially aligned to the lesson objectives; only some of them demand student thinking.
- The pacing of the lesson is uneven; it is suitable in parts, but rushed or dragging in others.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *In three of the five small groups, students are figuring out an answer to the assigned problem.*
- *Students are asked to fill in a worksheet following an established procedure.*
- *There is a recognizable beginning, middle, and end to the lesson.*
- *The teacher lectures for 20 minutes, and provides 15 minutes for the students to write an essay; most students are able to complete it during this time.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

The learning tasks and activities, materials, resources, instructional groups, and technology are poorly aligned with the instructional outcomes, or require only rote responses. The lesson has no clearly defined structure, or the pace of the lesson is too slow or rushed. Few students are intellectually engaged or interested.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Few students are intellectually engaged in the lesson.
- Learning tasks require only recall or have a single correct response or method.
- The materials used ask students only to perform rote tasks.
- Only one type of instructional group is used (whole group, small groups) even when variety would better serve the instructional purpose.
- Instructional materials used are unsuitable to the lesson and/or the students.
- The lesson drags or is rushed.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *Most students are playing video games during the lesson.*
- *Students are able to fill out the lesson worksheet by copying words from the board.*
- *The teacher lectures for 45 minutes.*
- *Most students don't have time to complete the assignment, but the teacher moves on in the lesson anyways.*
- *And others...*

Component 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction

Assessment of student learning plays an important role in instruction. It no longer signals the end of instruction, but is now recognized to be an integral part of instruction. While assessment of learning has always been and will continue to be an important aspect of teaching (it's important for teachers to know whether students have learned what they intended), assessment for learning has increasingly come to play an important role in classroom practice. And in order to assess student learning for the purposes of instruction, teachers must have their finger on the pulse of a lesson, monitoring student understanding and, where appropriate, offering feedback to students.

Although a teacher's actions in monitoring student learning may superficially look the same as those for monitoring student behavior, monitoring learning has a fundamentally different purpose. When teachers are monitoring behavior, they are alert to students who may be passing notes or bothering their neighbors; when teachers monitor student learning, they look carefully at what students are writing, or listen carefully to the questions students ask, in order to gauge whether they require additional activity or explanation in order to grasp the content. In each case, the teacher may be circulating in the room, but the purpose in doing so is quite different in each situation.

On the surface, questions asked of students to monitor learning are fundamentally different from those used to build understanding; in the former, teachers are alert to students' revealed misconceptions, whereas in the latter, the questions are designed to explore relationships or deepen understanding. Indeed, for the purpose of monitoring, many teachers create questions specifically meant to elicit the extent of student understanding, and they use techniques (such as exit tickets) to ascertain the degree of understanding of every student in the class. Indeed, encouraging students to monitor their own learning against clear standards (and actually teaching them the necessary skills to do so) is demonstrated by teachers at high levels of performance in this component.

In addition to monitoring student learning and providing feedback to students, a teacher's skill is greatly strengthened by the capability to make mid-course corrections when needed, to seize on a teachable moment or enlist students' particular interests to enrich an explanation.

The elements of component 3d are:

- **Assessment criteria**

Teachers can't incorporate assessment strategies into their teaching, nor can students monitor their own learning, if the criteria for assessment are not clear to teachers and publicly known by students. At the highest level, students themselves have had a hand in articulating the criteria (for example, of a clear oral presentation).

- **Monitoring of student learning**

A teacher's skill in eliciting evidence of student understanding is one of the true marks of expertise. This is not a hit-or-miss effort, but is planned carefully in advance. Even after careful planning, skilled teachers use a variety of techniques to weave the monitoring of student learning seamlessly into the lesson.

- **Feedback to students**

Feedback on learning is an essential element of a rich instructional environment; without it, students are constantly guessing as to how they are doing and how their work can be improved. Valuable feedback should be timely, constructive, and substantive, and provide students the guidance they need to improve their performance.

- **Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress**

The culmination of student assumption of responsibility for learning is monitoring their own learning and taking appropriate action. Of course, students can do this only if the criteria for learning are clear and if they have been taught the skills of checking their work against those criteria.

- **Lesson adjustment**

Experienced teachers are able to make both minor and (when needed) major mid-course corrections, or adjustments to a lesson. Such adjustments depend on a teacher's store of alternate instructional strategies and his or her confidence to make a shift when needed.

Indicators include:

- The teacher paying close attention to evidence of student understanding
- The teacher posing questions specifically created to elicit evidence of student understanding
- The teacher circulating to monitor student learning and to offer feedback
- Students assessing their own work against established criteria
- The teacher adjusting instruction in response to evidence of student understanding (or lack of it)

Component 3d: Using Assessment in Instruction

Level 4

Assessment is fully integrated into instruction through extensive use of formative assessment. Students appear to be aware of, and there is some evidence that they have contributed to, the assessment criteria. Students self-assess and monitor their progress. A variety of feedback, from both the teacher and peers, is accurate and specific and advances learning. Questions/prompts/assessments are used regularly to diagnose evidence of learning, and instruction is adjusted and differentiated to address individual student misunderstandings.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

In addition to the characteristics of a level of performance 3,

- There is evidence that students have helped establish the evaluation criteria.
- Teacher monitoring of student understanding is sophisticated and continuous; the teacher is constantly taking the class's pulse.
- The teacher makes frequent use of strategies to elicit information about individual student understanding.
- Feedback to students is provided from many sources, including other students.
- Students monitor their own understanding, either on their own initiative or as a result of tasks set by the teacher.
- The teacher's adjustments to the lesson are designed to assist individual students.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher reminds students of the characteristics of high-quality work (the assessment criteria), suggesting that the students themselves helped develop them.*
- *While students are working, the teacher circulates and provides specific feedback to individual students.*
- *The teacher uses popsicle sticks or exit tickets to elicit evidence of individual student understanding.*
- *Students offer feedback to their classmates about their work.*
- *Students evaluate a piece of their writing against the writing rubric and confer with the teacher about how it could be improved.*
- *And others...*

Level 3

Assessment is regularly used during instruction through teacher and/or student monitoring of progress of learning, resulting in accurate, specific feedback that advances learning. Students appear to be aware of the assessment criteria; some of them engage in self-assessment. Questions/prompts/assessments are used to diagnose learning, and adjustment to instruction is made to address student misunderstandings.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- Students indicate that they clearly understand the characteristics of high-quality work.
- Feedback includes specific and timely guidance on how students can improve their performance.
- The teacher elicits evidence of individual student understanding during the lesson, for at least some groups of students.
- Students are invited to assess their own work and make improvements.
- When necessary, the teacher makes adjustments to the lesson to enhance understanding by groups of students.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher circulates during small-group or independent work, offering suggestions to groups of students.*
- *The teacher uses a specifically formulated question to elicit evidence of student understanding.*
- *The teacher asks students to look over their papers to correct their errors.*
- *And others...*

Level 2

Assessment is sporadically used to support instruction through some teacher and/or student monitoring of progress of learning. Feedback to students is general, and students are only partially aware of the assessment criteria; few assess their own work. Questions/prompts/assessments are rarely used to diagnose evidence of learning. Adjustment of the lesson in response to the assessment is minimal or ineffective.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- There is little evidence that the students understand how their work will be evaluated.
- The teacher monitors understanding through a single method, or without ensuring that all students understand.
- The teacher requests global indications of student understanding.
- Feedback to students is not uniformly specific, nor oriented toward future improvement of work.
- The teacher makes only minor attempts to engage students in self- or peer assessment.
- The teacher's attempts to adjust the lesson are partially successful.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *The teacher asks, "Does anyone have a question?"*
- *When a student completes a problem on the board, the teacher corrects the student's work without explaining why.*
- *After receiving a correct response from one student, the teacher continues without ascertaining whether all students understand the concept.*
- *And others...*

Level 1

There is little or no assessment or monitoring of student learning; feedback is absent or of poor quality. Students do not appear to be aware of the assessment criteria and do not engage in self-assessment. There is no attempt to adjust the lesson as a result of assessment.

CRITICAL ATTRIBUTES

- The teacher gives no indication of what high-quality work looks like.
- Assessment is used only for grading.
- The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the lesson.
- Feedback is only global.
- The teacher does not ask students to evaluate their own or classmates' work.
- The teacher makes no attempt to adjust the lesson based on student confusion.

POSSIBLE EXAMPLES

- *A student asks, "How is this assignment going to be graded?"*
- *A student asks, "Does this quiz count toward my grade?"*
- *The teacher forges ahead with a presentation without checking for understanding.*
- *The teacher says, "Good job, everyone."*
- *And others...*