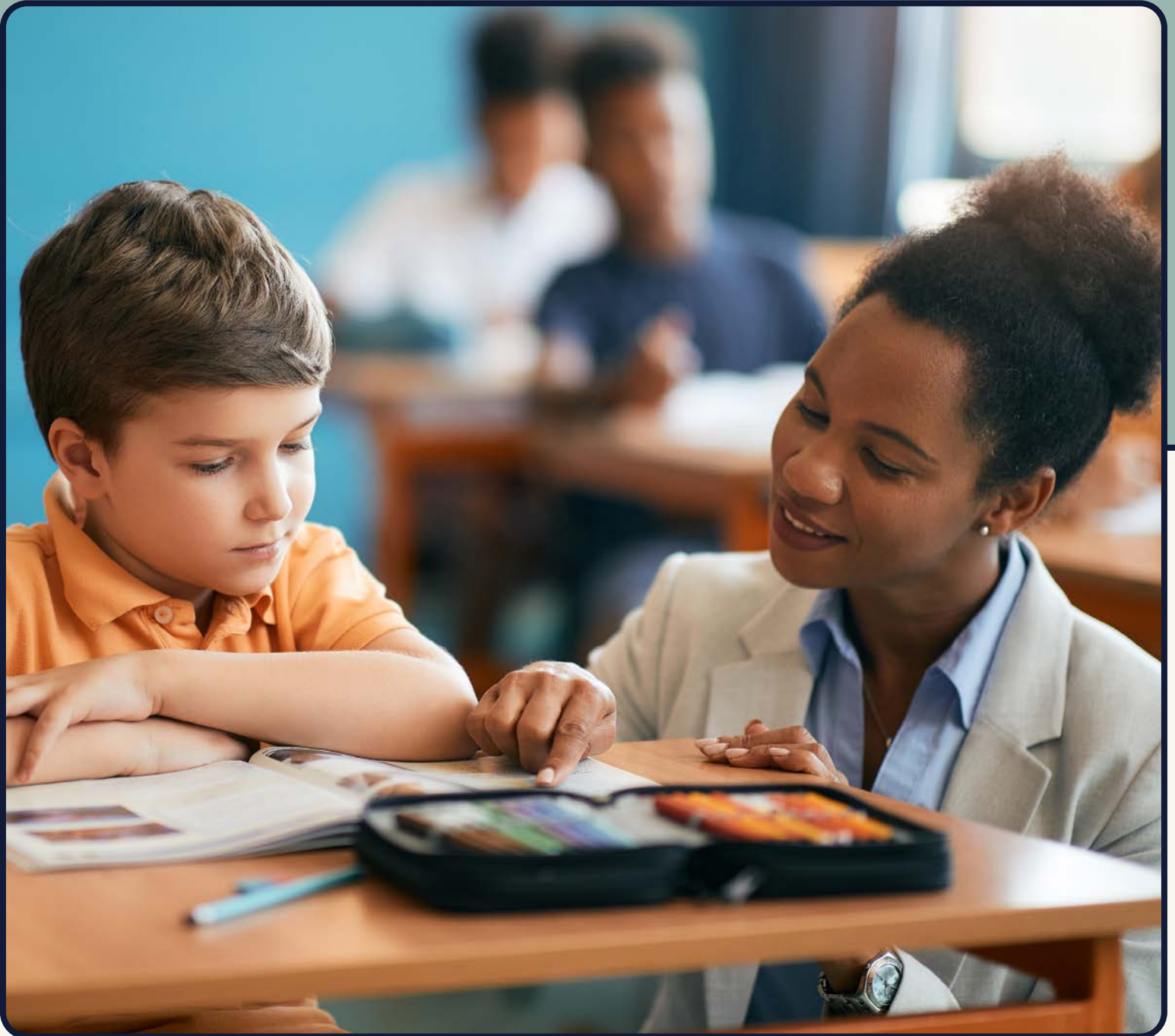


High-Leverage Practices of Teaching



August 2026



Harnessing the power of teaching to create a more just society.

Our mission is to ensure that teachers are prepared and supported to help all young people thrive. We partner with teacher preparation programs and PK–12 districts to help teachers prioritize their students’ thriving by building relationships, actively teaching complex content, and creating classroom communities to advance justice. Skillful teaching plays a powerful role in contributing to building a more just and equitable society.

We design resources and learning experiences to help teachers and teacher educators build the capacity for justice-centered teaching.

Contact TeachingWorks

TeachingWorks
University of Michigan
Marsal Family School of Education
610 East University Avenue, Suite 1111
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1259

- 734.763.8583
- teachingworks.org
- Resource library
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Vimeo

Suggested citation

TeachingWorks. (2026). *High-leverage practices of teaching*. <https://www.teachingworks.org/wp-content/uploads/2026-High-Leverage-Practices-of-Teaching.pdf>

Table of Contents

Executive Summary4

Introduction6

What are high-leverage practices, and where did they come from? ...6

 What is a high-leverage practice? 6

 Origins of the TeachingWorks high-leverage practices 6

 Foundational ideas about teaching and learning 7

 What’s different about the 2026 list of high-leverage practices? 9

 The 2026 list of high-leverage practices 10

 “Grain size”: Decomposing practice for novice teacher learning 16

 High-leverage practices across the subjects 18

 High-leverage practices and the use of technology 19

 High-leverage practices and equity 19

High-leverage practices in teacher education20

 What is the purpose of having a list of HLPs? 21

 The value of a written decomposition 22

 High-leverage practices for *teacher educators*:
 Pedagogies of teacher education 23

 “Bundling” high-leverage practices in teacher education 23

High-leverage practices in PK–12 teachers’ professional learning ..26

Conclusion: Using high-leverage practices to support the learning of teaching28

Endnotes29

Appendix: Decompositions of high-leverage practices

Executive Summary

The TeachingWorks **high-leverage practices (HLPs)** identify central components of PK–12 teaching that are especially important for supporting students’ learning, participation, agency, and flourishing. Since 2012, TeachingWorks has curated and revised a list of these practices to support teacher education programs, professional learning for practicing teachers, and shared standards for the work of teaching. The 2026 list reflects more than fifteen years of use, study, and refinement in collaboration with teacher educators, teachers, and other partners across varied contexts.

The high-leverage practices are grounded in five principles about teaching and learning:

1. The goal of classroom teaching is to help students learn worthwhile knowledge and skills and develop the ability to use what they learn for their own purposes.
2. **All** students deserve the opportunity to learn at high levels.
3. Learning is an active sense-making process.
4. Teaching is interactive and relational work.
5. The contexts of classroom teaching matter, and teachers must manage and use them well.



The practices are included not simply because they are common teaching behaviors, but because they help teachers enact these commitments in daily classroom work.

The 2026 list includes 18 practices that span interactive instruction, communication with families, classroom learning environments, planning, assessment, and professional reflection. Revisions to the list make several priorities more explicit. These include a stronger emphasis on equity through the addition of *acknowledging competence* and *attending to identity in interactions with students and families*; expanded attention to how teachers elicit, interpret, and respond to student thinking; and recognition of the growing role of high-quality instructional materials in teachers’ planning and preparation. Other changes streamline language, clarify purposes, and better reflect the current work of teaching.

A central feature of the TeachingWorks approach is the **decomposition of practice**. Each high-leverage practice is broken into areas of work and more specific techniques so that novice teachers and practicing teachers can see, study, and improve aspects of teaching that are often invisible in expert practice. These decompositions are not intended to reduce teaching to a checklist.





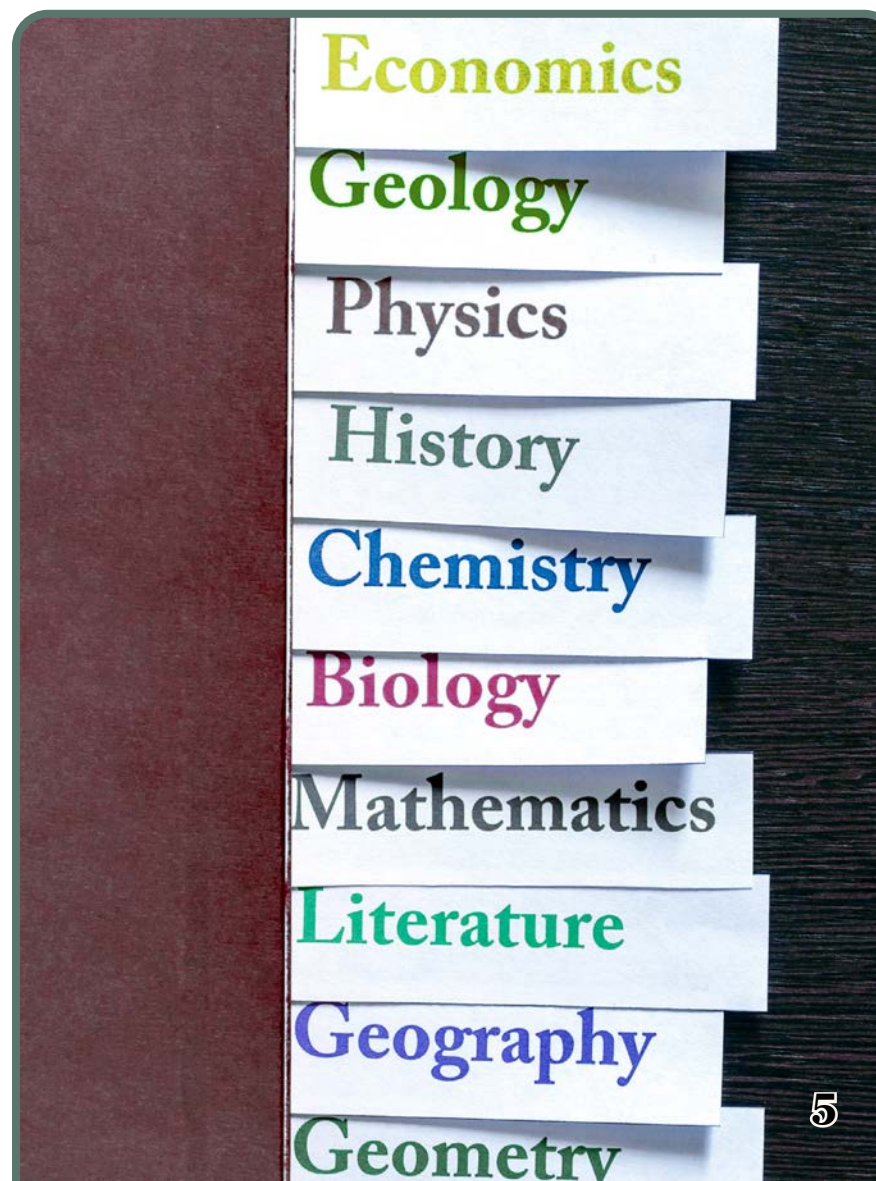
Rather, they help teachers and teacher educators examine the details of practice while keeping those details connected to larger instructional purposes.

The document also explains how high-leverage practices can be used across subject areas, with attention to the content knowledge required to enact them well. Although many practices apply across English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, as well as other areas such as art and computer science, they cannot be learned in subject-neutral ways. Teachers must develop the content knowledge needed to explain content, interpret student thinking, lead discussions, assess learning, and provide feedback in particular fields.

The 2026 HLPs also address the changing role of technology. Digital tools can support aspects of teachers' work, such as analyzing student work, adapting materials, or generating instructional supports. However, technology should not replace teachers' professional judgment or the human interactions at the heart of classroom learning.

For teacher education programs, the HLPs provide a framework for curriculum design, coherence across coursework and fieldwork, rehearsal and coaching, candidate assessment, and shared expectations for beginning teachers. For practicing teachers, coaches, school leaders, and professional learning communities, the practices offer a common language for studying instruction, organizing cycles of inquiry, analyzing classroom video and student work, and refining teaching over time.

Ultimately, the TeachingWorks high-leverage practices are offered as a resource for the ongoing learning of teaching. They name consequential parts of classroom work, provide tools for studying and improving that work, and support teaching that is purposeful, evidence-based, equity-focused, and responsive to students, families, communities, and content.



Introduction

Since our founding in 2012, TeachingWorks has curated a set of practices fundamental to the work of teaching. The set is intended to serve as a foundation for teacher education programs and as a resource for professional learning for in-service teachers.

This document presents the 2026 version of the TeachingWorks high-leverage practices (HLPs), explains the ideas and commitments that underlie them, and describes how they can be used in teacher education, professional learning, and the ongoing improvement of teaching. Additional resources, including decompositions, examples, and instructional materials, are available through the [TeachingWorks Resource Library](#).

For more information about TeachingWorks—including our workshops and events for teachers and teacher educators—please visit the [TeachingWorks website](#).

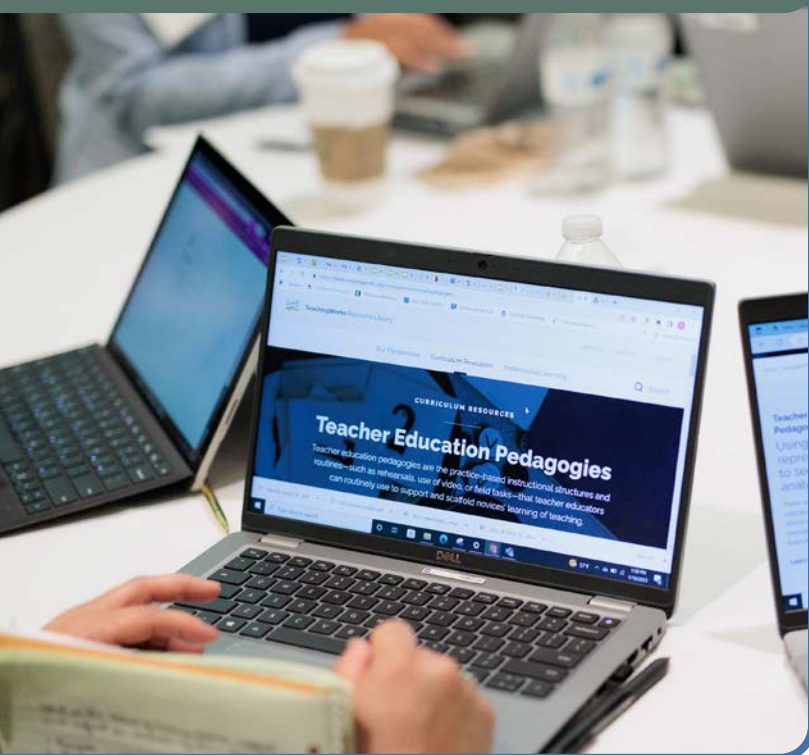
What are high-leverage practices, and where did they come from?

What is a high-leverage practice?

High-leverage practices name the work fundamental to most PK–12 classroom instruction, including *eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking, setting learning goals, and preparing for teaching using instructional materials*. The TeachingWorks list reflects evidence that students are active sense-makers, and that participating in disciplinary discourse and engaging with others' ideas promote learning.¹

Origins of the TeachingWorks high-leverage practices

An original version of the TeachingWorks list of HLPs was authored by faculty members at the Marsal Family School of Education at the University of Michigan, where it continues to anchor the teacher education programs. The list was created to form a common reference point for the curriculum in the teacher education programs, grounded in the work of teaching, and to support coherence across every part of our programs. Teacher preparation program faculty members working across multiple school subject areas and in education psychology, multicultural education, and education policy contributed to the development of the list, along with a group of classroom teachers from across grade levels, subject areas, U.S. states, and teaching contexts.



Foundational ideas about teaching and learning

Both the original list and the current TeachingWorks list of high-leverage practices are rooted in ideas about what is worth learning, what the purposes of school are, and how young people learn. Five principles undergird items on our list:

1. *The goal of classroom teaching is to help students learn worthwhile knowledge and skills and develop the ability to use what they learn for their own purposes.* By “worthwhile knowledge,” we mean understanding in depth the big ideas of different disciplines and cultures and how those ideas have contributed to the communities, political systems, economies, and problems of the past and the present. And by “skills” we mean the development of practices of thinking, analyzing, creating, reasoning, and problem-solving. In the case of academic subjects such as English language arts and mathematics, this means equipping students to analyze texts critically, compose persuasive arguments both orally and in writing, and use practices of scientific analysis and mathematical reasoning to understand and navigate complex problems. Other subject areas, such as music and physical education, sometimes require other teaching practices, but the core goal remains to develop students’ knowledge and skill in the specific domain. Classroom teaching in any subject also helps students appreciate the perspectives and knowledge of diverse groups and communities and learn to interact respectfully and with interest across difference. In short, teaching supports the development of students’ agency and identity, enabling them to participate in a democracy and supporting their social and emotional development.



2. **All** *students deserve the opportunity to learn at high levels.* All students have the capacity to learn. Teaching is founded on the principle that all children have the right to learn and are capable of learning. Acting on this principle requires commitments, skill, and knowledge to help students succeed. Because of patterns that have historically marginalized or excluded particular groups, acting on this commitment requires intentionality. Among other things, this means being able to unpack and represent content in ways that work for particular students, to scaffold learning, to teach strategies explicitly, to ensure equitable access to opportunities to participate in classroom discussion and take on challenging roles in group projects, and to be mindful of how students’ cultural and community resources and experiences intersect their experiences in school.

3. *Learning is an active sense-making process.* We understand the process of learning, particularly the learning of challenging material, to be an active and interactive one on the part of students. We know the deepest and most lasting learning is developed as students encounter new ideas and practices, try them out, consider feedback from both the teacher and their peers and try again, and listen and observe the similar attempts of their classmates. Rather than receiving new information passively or magically developing skills by watching others demonstrate them, students learn and grow through active sense-making and through practice.
4. *Teaching is interactive and relational work.* Teaching that helps students learn worthwhile knowledge and skills is not the direct transmission of ideas to students, but strategic work to facilitate interactions between and among the teacher and what they know, the students and what they know and can do, and the content being taught.² Young people must learn for themselves, but teachers are responsible for increasing the probability that students learn and thrive. Teachers recognize what students need to work on; design and pose questions or tasks accordingly; choose appropriate examples, representations, texts, and problems; and explain and model content in ways that are responsive to students' needs—thereby managing students' relationship with the content. They help students learn

from one another by teaching norms and skills for academic discourse and for collaboration, and they engage students in discussion and small group work in order to help surface diverse ideas and give students practice using each other's thinking as a resource—facilitating students' relationship with others, as well as with the content. They deliberately develop their own relationships with students to build trust and to demonstrate authentic care to support students' learning.

5. *The contexts of classroom teaching matter, and teachers must manage and use them well.* Because the work that teachers and students do together in classrooms is influenced and sometimes determined by the school and local communities and by both local and national educational and policy contexts, the work for the teacher also includes managing the influence of broader environments on teaching and learning, including buffering them as needed, and using these contexts as resources for instruction. Practices such as *communicating with families, learning about students, setting learning goals, and preparing for teaching using instructional materials* are used by teachers to do this work.

These ideas are a key part of the justification of the list in its entirety and of specific practices on the list. The practices are on our list because they help teachers teach, and learners learn, in the ways and for the purposes described here.



What's different about the 2026 list of high-leverage practices?

As we work with teacher educators and teachers from all over the U.S. and abroad, TeachingWorks has several times made adjustments to the original list of HLPs. Changes reflect conversations with colleagues and partners and are made to ensure that the language we use to describe teaching communicates what we intend it to, and that the list foregrounds practices that are common priorities in teacher preparation programs and school districts.

Most of the practices in the current list have been in place for more than fifteen years, since we first published the list of TeachingWorks HLPs. A few recent modifications are intended to make clearer commitments that were previously obscured, and to reflect the changing nature of teachers' work:

- **A more clearly articulated emphasis on equitable teaching:** Two new practices, *attending to identity in interactions with students and families* and *acknowledging competence*, attend deliberately to the role teachers play in disrupting inequitable patterns in classroom actions and promoting equitable access to learning for all students. Previously, these practices were encompassed in other practices, including *communicating with families* and *providing feedback to students*; we made them stand-alone practices to communicate their central importance.
- **Compression of practices:** Two former practices have been incorporated into other practices. The work of *attending to patterns of student thinking* is now included in *eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking*, and the work of *coordinating and adjusting instruction during a lesson* is now included in *analyzing and using instructional materials*.
- **Inclusion of responding to student thinking:** The practice originally called *eliciting and interpreting student thinking* has been expanded to include the work of responding to student thinking and is now called *eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking*. This change names the connection between eliciting and interpreting student thinking and other practices on the list, and emphasizes the importance of teachers using what they learn about student thinking as they determine how to take up and respond to their students' ideas and knowledge.
- **Attention to the prevalence of high-quality instructional materials:** Teachers working today are much more likely than they used to be to have access to and be expected to use high-quality instructional materials. Consequently, the practice that used to be called *designing single lessons and sequences of lessons* was replaced with *preparing for teaching using instructional materials*. This new practice describes the work teachers do to prepare to teach using instructional materials accessible to them and assumes that new teachers will primarily use materials that they did not design themselves.



- **Emphasis on a safe and productive learning environment:** The practice that was called *establishing and maintaining community expectations* is now called *cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment*. This is a name-only change intended to emphasize the purposes of the work teachers do to build a classroom community (there have been no changes to the decomposition).
- **More efficient language:** Several practices, including those now called *explaining and modeling content* and *interpreting student work to inform instruction*, have more efficient names.



The 2026 list of high-leverage practices

1. Leading a group discussion
2. Explaining and modeling content
3. Eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking
4. Acknowledging competence
5. Implementing norms and routines for discourse
6. Implementing organizational routines
7. Cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment
8. Setting up and managing small group work
9. Building respectful relationships
10. Communicating with families
11. Attending to identity in interactions with students and families
12. Learning about students
13. Setting learning goals
14. Preparing for teaching using instructional materials
15. Designing, adapting, and using formative assessments
16. Interpreting student work to inform instruction
17. Providing feedback to students
18. Analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it



Short descriptions

Short descriptions for each high-leverage practice are listed below. Please click on the name of each practice to access a detailed decomposition of the work involved in each one, along with other resources. Decompositions are also included as an appendix to this document.

01 Leading a group discussion

In a group discussion, the teacher and all of the students work on specific content together, using one another's ideas as resources. The purposes of a discussion are to build collective knowledge and capability in relation to specific instructional goals and to allow students to practice listening, speaking, interpreting, and agreeing and disagreeing. The teacher and a wide range of students contribute orally, listen actively, and respond to and learn from others' contributions. Teachers work to ensure students are positioned as competent among their peers, that patterns of interaction are respectful, and that the collective work of the group uses the strengths of and benefits each student.

02 Explaining and modeling content

Explaining and modeling are practices for making a wide variety of topics, academic practices, and strategies explicit to students. Teachers determine when explaining or modeling can help to make explicit content and practices that often remain tacit or invisible. Teachers might use simple explanations when working with straightforward content. They might choose modeling, which includes verbal explanation as well as thinking aloud and demonstrating when sharing the metacognitive process, to provide greater access to students about strategies and practices.

03 Eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking

Eliciting and responding productively to student thinking is the core work of teaching. Children's ideas are fundamental resources for instruction, and teachers deliberately unpack each student's thinking and use what they learn to design instruction for that student and for the whole class. They seek to understand students' ideas, questions, and ways of thinking, including possible misconceptions, and work continuously to identify students' strengths and areas for growth. Teachers draw out student thinking and skills through carefully chosen questions and tasks, and attend closely to what students do and say. They consider and check alternative interpretations of student ideas and methods. Teachers are attentive to how students might hear their questions and to how students communicate their own thinking. Teachers use what they learn about student thinking for formative assessment, to guide instructional decisions, and to surface ideas that will benefit other students.

04 Acknowledging competence

Teachers deliberately broaden and label both (1) what counts as competence in a given domain and (2) who is seen as competent in that domain. A “domain” includes academic subject matters and disciplines, but also other areas of learning and practice. To broaden what counts as competence, teachers explicitly name and highlight students’ contributions of specific knowledge, skills, and practices, both individual and collective, that are central to engaging and learning in the domain.

To achieve this core goal of acknowledging competence, teachers attend carefully to who is seen and acknowledged as contributing and who is seen as “struggling” or “not smart.” They explicitly consider social identities. They intentionally call attention to specific competences in what those students say or do. These moves must be done in timely and authentic ways with sensitivity to how students and their peers are likely to interpret and respond to the attention. Teachers can acknowledge competence publicly in whole or small groups, or in one-on-one situations, at various points across a lesson or school day. When done well, acknowledging competence disrupts narrow, reductive conceptions of content, inequitable patterns in who is seen as “smart” or “good,” and negative and deficit views that students carry of themselves.

05 Implementing norms and routines for discourse

Every content area has norms and practices for how people construct and share knowledge. These vary across subjects but often include establishing hypotheses, providing evidence for claims, and explaining one’s reasoning to others. Teachers name these norms and practices, provide scaffolds, model, and offer opportunities for students to use the norms and practices. These norms and practices support students to engage productively in content-area learning.

We use the term “norms” to refer to a widely shared and accepted standard for work in a discipline. Subject-specific norms exist outside of individual classrooms and are often the standards of a discipline. This is not determined by a single teacher in a classroom, but by the broad community of disciplinary experts. It is through routines or practices that a norm is regularly carried out in a particular context and content area.

06 Implementing organizational routines

Teachers organize time, space, and materials to support students to engage in the regular tasks of classroom life. Through the selection and use of organizational routines, teachers establish learning environments in which students have equitable access to resources, time, space, and voice in the classroom. Teachers introduce students to routines and provide opportunities to practice, analyze, and modify the routines. In some cases, they develop and enact routines collaboratively with students.



07 Cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment

Teachers set and maintain collective expectations and establish classroom environments that ensure a safe and productive classroom community. They distinguish between the helpful use of boundaries to provide structure and the use of power to control. They develop specific approaches and routines to establish, maintain, and respond to these expectations and behaviors in ways that build a classroom community that supports students' learning and flourishing. Choosing and using expectations and agreements requires explicit care to avoid reinforcing values and patterns of control and behavior that privilege dominant ways of being related to race, class, and gender.

09 Building respectful relationships

Teachers intentionally build and sustain respectful relationships with students in the classroom. Teachers who form respectful relationships with students are able to work collaboratively with children and manage power dynamics in ways that increase student participation, engagement, and achievement. Respectful teacher-student relationships are characterized by trust, care, and appreciation of students' cultures and communities. Teachers develop these relationships in all aspects of their teaching, including through small conversations with individual students, notes to students, nonverbal signals, and in how they respond to and acknowledge students during lessons.

08 Setting up and managing small group work

Teachers use small group work when the learning goals benefit from interaction and collaboration among students. To do this, they choose tasks that require and foster collaborative work, provide clear directions that enable groups to work independently, and hold students accountable for collective and individual learning. Teachers use their own time strategically, deliberately choosing which groups to work with, when, and on what. Teachers work to ensure students are positioned as competent among their peers, that patterns of interaction are respectful, and that the collective work of the group uses the strengths of and benefits each student.

10 Communicating with families

Careful and sensitive communication between teachers and families supports student learning. Teachers communicate with families to learn more about children from the people who know them best. Teachers share information about children's activities, learning, and development, and seek ways to partner with families. Communication may take place in person, in writing, or in phone calls. Every conversation with a family is a chance for the teacher to communicate a respectful, open attitude and create a space for a two-way conversation. Teachers must be attentive to considerations of language and culture, respectful and valuing of families, and oriented to working with families to support children.



11 Attending to identity in interactions with students and families

A teacher's outward communication style, markers of identity, and views about children and their families can play a major role in their capacity to connect with and instruct others—and also influence others' connections to them. When interacting with students and families, teachers attend to the ways their identities, habitual patterns of talk and behavior, and expressive communication styles (e.g., tone of voice, body language, etc.) show up. They think critically about how they and their communication styles are “read” by students or their families. Teachers then make adjustments so that the impact they have on others is positive and strategic, and conveys appropriate feelings of respect, welcome, and engagement.

12 Learning about students

Teachers learn about their particular students in order to design instruction that will support their learning and flourishing. They create opportunities within the classroom for students to show who they are and share parts of their identities if they wish. Teachers regularly check in with students outside of the classroom, including through one-on-one conversations and attendance at school events, and with families and community members. Teachers make use of their learning to tailor instruction for students.

13 Setting learning goals

Identifying goals for students' learning is fundamental for skillful teaching that supports students' growth. This is because the design of lessons, whether from instructional materials or independently, depends on articulating what students are to learn. For some subject areas, such as mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies, standards are articulated by professional organizations and by states. These provide guidance for the process of setting learning goals. In other areas, such as physical education, schools or districts may specify learning targets. And in still other areas, such as developing organizational skills or communicating across difference, teachers may identify them on their own.



14 Preparing for teaching using instructional materials

School- or district-provided instructional materials are key resources as teachers work to support learning and ensure that what students learn is aligned with local, state, and national goals. To use them effectively, teachers analyze materials carefully, becoming deeply familiar with the scope and sequence of a unit and with the core academic content, tasks, and activities of individual lessons. They then adapt them to meet the needs of specific learners and contexts.

15 Designing, adapting, and using formative assessments

Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what students are learning during and at the end of lessons. These include simple questions, short performance tasks, journal or notebook entries, surveys, or end-of-class “exit tickets.” These frequent checks provide information about students’ current understandings and their sense of themselves as knowers and doers of the content and help the teacher adjust instruction in the moment or from one lesson to the next. Teachers design formative assessments that account for procedural and conceptual understandings, disciplinary practices, metacognitive processes, and development of productive identities, and should value multiple, diverse expressions of what counts as “knowing.”

17 Providing feedback to students

Feedback supports learning by focusing students’ attention on specific aspects of their work and supporting their ongoing learning. Good feedback is specific, focused, and not overwhelming in scope, and supports students’ positive perceptions of their own capability. Giving skillful feedback requires the teacher to make strategic choices about the frequency, method, and content of feedback and to communicate in ways that are understandable by students. Feedback can be provided in many forms, including written and oral, and these each require consideration of how the mode of communication might shape students’ experience of the feedback.

16 Interpreting student work to inform instruction

Teachers regularly analyze student work, including classwork, homework, and assessments, to inform instruction. They identify individual students’ strengths and areas for growth and look for patterns in student thinking and capability across groups. To do this, they determine and apply criteria to student work, making sure to maintain broad conceptions of competence; analyze work against those criteria, guarding against bias and deficit-based interpretations; and then make inferences about what students know and can do. Teachers plan instructional responses to what they learn from analyzing student work, making decisions about where and what kind of additional or differentiated instruction is required.

18 Analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it

Learning to teach and continuing to improve require regular analysis of instruction and its effectiveness. Teachers study their own teaching and that of their colleagues in order to improve their practice. Analyzing instruction may take place individually or with colleagues and involves identifying patterns, opportunities, and specific moves, and making hypotheses for how to improve. Teachers pay close attention to and study their students’ contributions, work, and engagement, and challenge themselves to see and understand more, and to consider how their own actions are supporting or impeding their students to flourish. They systematically interrogate their underlying assumptions and seek to develop new instructional habits and strategies that support students to thrive.

“Grain size”: Decomposing practice for novice teacher learning

Decomposing teaching into its constituent parts is challenging. The purpose of decomposition is to make it easier for both novice* and experienced teachers to see fine-grained elements of the work of teaching, so that they can understand what they need to learn, practice, or improve—and eventually recompose those details into fluent, purposeful teaching practice. Many of the component parts of teaching are nearly invisible in expert practice. At the same time, if teaching is decomposed into parts that are too small, the goals and purposes that give teaching its meaning can become obscured. “Asking questions,” for example, is certainly part of the work of teaching, but questions are asked for particular reasons. It does not make sense for novice teachers or practicing teachers to work on asking questions, even “open-ended” questions, apart from broader instructional purposes, such as leading a group discussion or eliciting student thinking about a specific question, text, problem, or phenomenon.



A related challenge is that teachers are rarely doing only one thing at a time. Many practices are carried out concurrently or draw on one another in ways that make them difficult to separate. A teacher who is leading a group discussion, for example, may also be eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking; acknowledging competence; implementing norms and routines for discourse; and cultivating a safe and productive learning environment. Acknowledging competence is itself a form of feedback, even though providing feedback to students is also a separate practice on our list. These overlaps are not problems to be eliminated; they reflect the integrated nature of teaching.

In developing the TeachingWorks HLPs, we addressed these challenges by creating nested decompositions for each practice. Our decompositions are written documents that identify the areas of work involved in carrying out a practice. These areas of work are “nested” under the main practice, and a set of more specific aspects is nested under each area of work. The purpose of this structure is to make visible the detailed elements of purposeful practice.

This nested structure also explains why there is sometimes overlap across decompositions. Some version of “asking questions,” for example, appears in multiple practices because teachers ask questions for many different purposes: to elicit student thinking, to press for evidence or reasoning during discussion, to support students’ collaboration in small groups, or to help a student reflect on feedback. The question itself is only one part of the work; its meaning depends on the practice in which it is embedded and the instructional purpose it serves.

* “Novice” teacher refers in this document to teachers in any stage or form of preservice preparation, including teacher candidates, student teachers, residents, interns, etc.



Decisions about when to compress practices and when to separate them were deliberate. *Acknowledging competence*, for example, was formerly implicit in several practices, including *eliciting*, *interpreting*, and *responding to student thinking*. However, as we worked with novice teachers, practicing teachers, and teacher educators, we saw that this work was not receiving the attention needed for teachers to enact it well. We made *acknowledging competence* a stand-alone practice in order to emphasize its importance and to ensure that it is understood as a central component of teaching practice. We also wanted to make clear that acknowledging competence is not merely a way to praise students. It is a practice aimed at building students' academic identities, broadening students' and teachers' conceptions of what counts as competence, and disrupting unjust patterns in who is seen and treated as "smart," "capable," or "good" at school. Separating this practice also foregrounds the careful attention teachers must pay to students' identities and to the ways classroom interactions shape students' opportunities to participate and learn.

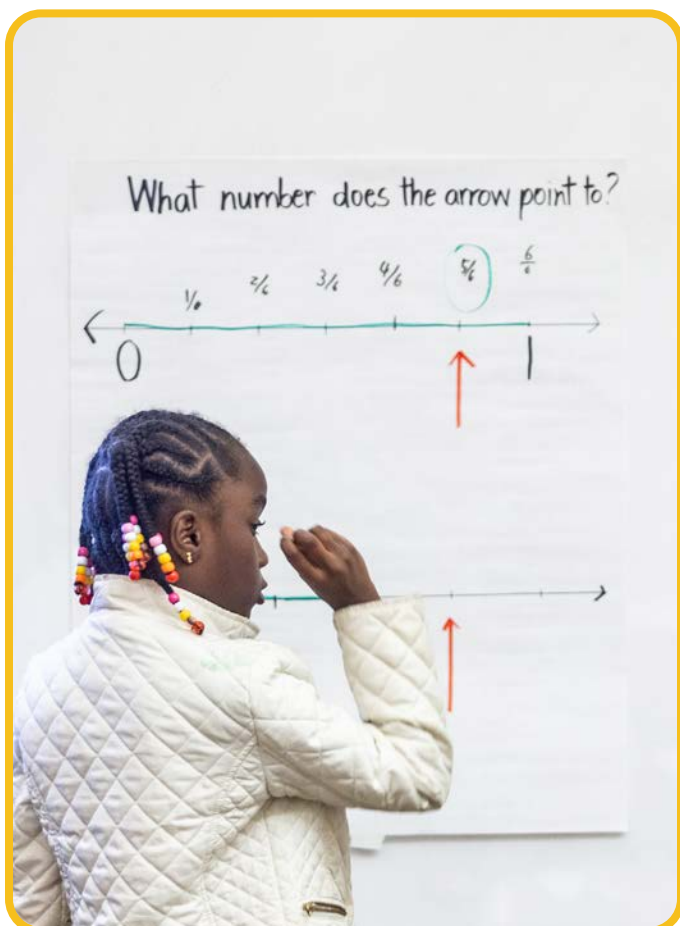
There is no single right way to decompose teaching, and, again, no single best list of teaching practices. Different teacher educators, teachers, programs, and professional learning communities may parse practice in different ways, and all will need to grapple with difficult decisions about grain size, overlap, and purpose. What matters most is that any list of practices makes clear not only what teachers do, but also why they do it. High-leverage practices are useful when they help teachers and teacher educators study the details of teaching while keeping those details connected to the larger purposes of instruction: supporting students' learning, participation, agency, and flourishing.

High-leverage practices across the subjects

Each practice on our list is applicable across the main school subjects (English language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies), as are the accompanying decompositions. These practices are also relevant to teaching in other areas. Many of the moves that teachers make in the context of each HLP are the same, no matter the domain. Teachers leading a group discussion, for example, provide an engaging launch; elicit student thinking and orient students to one another's ideas; make strategic contributions to the discussion; and bring the talk to a productive close. This is the case whether the focus of the discussion is different strategies for solving a math problem, varying interpretations of a character's motivations in a book, or some other academic topic. What might count for a "productive close" varies across domains, but the aim of some sort of closing is common to multiple areas.

Subject	Verb 'to be'
I	am
We	are
You	are
They	are
He	is
She	is
It	is

As we say above, however, engaging skillfully in each of the high-leverage practices requires ways of knowing the content for teaching. **This special kind of content knowledge is not represented in our list of high-leverage practices, even though the practices cannot be implemented effectively without it.** For example, consider the work of leading a group discussion outlined above. In order to effectively lead a content-focused discussion, teachers must understand the core ideas related to the content so that they can identify when to lift up a student's idea and orient others to the idea, when to make contributions and which contributions are likely to support student understanding, and when and how to close the discussion so that students all take away the most important points. Likewise, formulating and posing questions, giving explanations and modeling academic thinking, analyzing student work and providing feedback, and acknowledging competence, among other practices, each require that teachers understand the content they are teaching broadly and in detail. We recognize that some teacher education programs offer general methods courses rather than subject-specific ones, often due to small program size, but we emphasize that novice teachers cannot learn HLPs in subject-neutral ways. They must develop the specific kinds of knowledge needed to use the high-leverage practices, and practice and receive coaching in subject-specific contexts.



High-leverage practices and the use of technology

Classroom teaching and learning are primarily carried out through human interactions, even in an age of digital tools. A synchronous classroom with live students is full of resources for students' learning found nowhere else, including the diverse ideas, capabilities, interests, and backgrounds of students themselves, along with opportunities to learn to speak, to listen, and to empathize, challenge, and debate. Academic and social-emotional learning go hand-in-hand. Even in the presence of technology, teaching matters for facilitating productive interactions among students and between students and the curriculum, in the context of a supportive classroom community. The high-leverage practices and accompanying decompositions describe the core of this work.



Still, there are areas of work in the decompositions for many practices on our list where digital tools can increase efficiency or help differentiate instruction to meet the needs of individual students. Such technologies can create drafts of or suggest modifications to lesson plans, analyze trends in student work, and quickly produce supports for students with particular learning needs, among other things. A teacher using the practice of *interpreting student work to inform instruction*, for example, could employ digital resources to look for patterns in student essays or math tests, and study the results. Other tools help identify strategies for providing instruction that is responsive to the patterns identified.

Like all tools, however, these resources need to be used purposefully. The decompositions continue not only to lay out the areas of work for each practice but also to make clear to what ends each area of work should be put. Digital tools can be applied throughout, but are never a substitute for the teacher or for the interactions students have in classrooms. In the case described above, for instance, in which a teacher uses powerful tools to identify and study patterns in student work, that teacher still must consider whether the summaries provided by the tool are accurate, and judge how to respond.

High-leverage practices and equity

The TeachingWorks high-leverage practices are fundamental components of classroom instruction. But like any resource, how they are used, and the ends to which they are put, can produce dramatically varied results. A group discussion in a classroom, for example, can invite all students into a dialogue, present a range of perspectives, and support students to develop sophisticated arguments and engage in collegial disagreement. But without care it can also marginalize some students, prioritize particular points of view or the voices of particular students, and reinforce students' negative perceptions of their peers as less competent.

Explicit attention to equity is incorporated into our list of high-leverage practices, and each HLP's decomposition specifies how it advances equity. Two practices on the current list, *attending to identity in interactions with students and families* and *acknowledging competence*, are intended to help disrupt inequitable patterns in classroom teaching and learning. Other equity practices appear inside the decompositions for the practices, in some cases repeatedly across multiple practices. The work of maintaining high expectations for every student and providing accompanying supports, for example, is part

of the decomposition for *explaining and modeling content* and *preparing for teaching using instructional materials*. Providing supports for multilingual learners is present in the decomposition for every practice of interactive classroom instruction, as well as for *preparing for teaching using instructional materials*. There are many decompositions in which we lay out the work of building on students' cultural backgrounds in curriculum, instruction, and other classroom and school interactions.

High-leverage practices in teacher education

The TeachingWorks HLPs are part of the effort to design and implement practice-based teacher education that provides novice teachers the opportunity to unpack and practice the components of complex, ambitious classroom teaching, with close coaching and feedback.³ They are intended to help ensure that everyone associated with a teacher education program, including instructors, mentor teachers, and novice teachers, shares a vision of what program graduates should be able to do. They set the standard for the core capabilities and orientations that new teachers should have when they begin teaching, and they continue to define the primary work of instruction for practicing teachers working to develop expertise over the course of their careers.

HLPs also have great potential use in national and state standards for teacher preparation programs, and in teacher certification and licensure. Too often, standards are vague for what new teachers should be able to do before they are certified. Many name just a single standard for instructional practice rather than representing the intricacies of the work by including specific standards



for the individual instructional practices in which teachers need to be able to engage. Similarly, standards for teacher preparation programs rarely hold programs accountable for ensuring that graduates can engage in specific practices of teaching. Because the high-leverage practices articulate specific teaching practices, making them central to standards for preparation programs, certification, and licensure could help make it more likely that new teachers have the skill they need to support student learning.

In our home state, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) formally integrated the original 19 TeachingWorks HLPs directly into its state standards for Educator Preparation Institutions (EPIs). To maintain state approval, university-based teacher preparation programs across Michigan must align their curricula with these practices. Rather than just evaluating novices on course grades, programs must assess how well they execute actual skills like leading discussions, eliciting student thinking, and managing small groups.



What is the purpose of having a list of HLPs?

In a practice-based program, high-leverage practices guide decisions about what novice teachers learn. Each HLP requires not only teaching skill, but also a mix of content knowledge for teaching; knowledge of children, communities, schools and the school context; and understanding of how children learn. These areas of knowledge, along with the skill required to carry out each HLP, are the foci of a practice-based program. Before or while learning to explain and model content, for example, novice teachers deepen their own understanding of the content they will explain or model, including different ways to represent it and different examples to provide, what others often find difficult about it, any terms or vocabulary useful for explaining it for others, and how to label areas of work for students. Other practices, such as *building respectful relationships* and *communicating with families*, depend upon knowledge of communities, culture, and language. A practice-based program ensures that graduates develop capacity in core areas of knowledge and skill, along with the ethical considerations and reasoning that are central in practice. Importantly, it also includes repeated opportunities for novice teachers

to practice each HLP, in both simulated and real classroom settings, and to receive coaching and feedback. It is through this practice that novice teachers learn to put knowledge into practice. Ideally, novice teachers are assessed on their ability to carry out each practice on a program's list.

In most programs, time is short. Having a clear list of HLPs can make it easier to determine what topics are essential and what might be better left for learning at a later time. If understanding a given topic isn't necessary to carrying out one of the high-leverage practices, it might not be critical to include in a preservice program. Because education is a broad field and teachers' work intersects many aspects of education that are not actually essential to classroom teaching and learning, many non-critical topics have found their way into the teacher education curriculum. History and philosophy of education are good examples, along with the details of school finance and many topics in the sociology of education. Given the brevity of most teacher education programs, these issues are best left to teachers' in-service learning, or even to graduate study. Having a list of high-leverage practices can help focus syllabus planning and discussion of the content of a program across instructors.

The value of a written decomposition

Teaching practice is complex and involves integrating many different kinds of knowledge and skill. Often what it takes to do particular aspects of the work is invisible. A detailed decomposition provides a resource for designing and enacting teacher education. It helps novice teachers see parts of a practice and helps teacher educators attend to the different things that novice teachers need to learn to do.

The teaching of teaching usually involves three related components: *representation* of practice, including using direct observation of practice and of videos of teaching to show practice; *decomposition* of practice, or the breaking down of the work of teaching into its constituent parts; and *approximation* of practice, or simulation of teaching through role-plays and rehearsals.⁴ Written decompositions of practice are foundational resources in each component.⁵

As a canonical representation of a teaching practice, a written decomposition serves as a reference point as teacher educators and novice teachers engage in studying

representations, decomposing the teaching they see in representations, and approximating practice through activities such as rehearsal.⁶ During representation and decomposition activities, [viewing tools](#) based on the decomposition support novice teachers to notice specific aspects of teaching when they observe live classroom instruction or view videos of teaching.⁷ As novice teachers prepare to rehearse, planning tools that are aligned to the decomposition for the practice being approximated can help novice teachers get ready by supporting them to anticipate student thinking and reminding them of the moves they might make. Handouts listing, for example, “talk moves” that teachers can use while leading science discussions also serve as handy scaffolds. During rehearsal debriefs or analytic discussions of novice teachers’ field tasks, the decomposition serves as a constant reference document. It is a concrete reminder of the teaching practices to be learned and a shared artifact that supports the identification of and problem-solving for problems of practice that arise in many contexts. Additional examples of decomposition-based tools can be found on the [TeachingWorks Resource Library](#).

Discussion enabling	Discussion leading			
• Selecting a task • Anticipating student thinking • Setting up the task • Monitoring student work	Framing	Orchestrating	Framing	
	Launching	• Eliciting • Orienting	• Probing • Making contributions	Concluding
	Recording and representing content			
	Maintaining a focus on the instructional point			
Seeing and disrupting patterns that reproduce inequity				

Visual representation of the decomposition of leading a group discussion

High-leverage practices for *teacher educators*: Pedagogies of teacher education

High-leverage practices must be carefully taught in teacher education to help novice teachers develop skill with them. Representation, decomposition, and approximation provide a framework for teaching novice teachers to use the high-leverage practices. Within that framework, specific pedagogies of teacher education are useful for supporting novice teachers to identify, understand, and begin to develop skill with the practices. [Using video to see and analyze practice](#), for example, is commonly used during the representation and decomposition phases, whereas [coached rehearsals](#) and [simulated student interactions](#) are useful forms of approximation. These pedagogies of teacher education—high-leverage practices for teacher educators, they could be called—are described on the [TeachingWorks Resource Library](#). Additional resources are also there for carrying out each pedagogy.

“Bundling” high-leverage practices in teacher education

We are often asked about which HLPs should be taught or “bundled” together, and in what type of course each HLP should be taught. There is no one right answer to either of these questions.

As a starting place only, in the table on the following pages we suggest one way to “bundle” the teaching and learning of high-leverage practices in particular course types. By “bundle,” we mean that these practices are worked on in close proximity to one another, in the same course and perhaps during adjacent weeks. Program leaders and course instructors should also consider alternative approaches to bundling practices, based on their own needs and reasoning.



Although the order in which the bundles are presented in the following table is not necessarily intended to suggest a sequence, programs might consider teaching the first two bundles first. The practices in these bundles represent much of the work of interactive classroom instruction. Understanding this core teaching work, and particularly what is involved in carrying out practices like *explaining and modeling content* and *leading a group discussion*, provides helpful context for novice teachers’ subsequent learning about how to plan for that work (e.g., *preparing for teaching using instructional materials*) and communicate about it (e.g., *attending to identity in interactions with students and families, communicating with families*).



Table 1: Sample “bundles” of high-leverage practices

Course Type	HLPs	Rationale for the bundle
Methods	● Explaining and modeling content ● Eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking ● Leading a group discussion ● Implementing norms and routines for discourse	These are core practices of interactive classroom instruction across the content areas. Each practice in this bundle builds upon the skills of the practice listed above it, so we recommend that they be taught in the order listed, though this is not essential. Note: This is a large bundle, and these practices are complex. This bundle could occupy an entire semester-long methods course, if time permitted.
Methods	● Acknowledging competence ● Interpreting student work to inform instruction ● Providing feedback to students	Each of these practices offers opportunities to learn about common patterns of student thinking as well as novel interpretations of content, and to begin to develop instructional responses that are appropriate and equitable.
Methods or curriculum materials course	● Preparing for teaching using instructional materials ● Designing, adapting, and using formative assessments ● Setting learning goals	These are practices of instructional planning.
Education foundations or multicultural education	● Learning about students ● Attending to identity in interactions with students and families ● Building respectful relationships ● Communicating with families	These are practices of relationship-building and communication.

Course Type	HLPs	Rationale for the bundle
Education psychology/ Learning	• Cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment • Setting up and managing small group work • Implementing organizational routines	These practices are used by teachers to create productive learning communities in the classroom, and to help students learn to interact with each other and with materials in the classroom.
Field seminar or the equivalent	• Analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it	This practice could be added to any of the other bundles, since the work of analyzing one's own instruction applies to all practices. It makes particular sense to address it during a field seminar, however, given that one of the primary purposes of these seminars is to support novice teachers to learn from their field work.



High-leverage practices in PK–12 teachers’ professional learning

Although the TeachingWorks high-leverage practices were originally developed to support the design of teacher education programs, they are also powerful tools for the ongoing professional learning of PK–12 teachers. The practices name central aspects of classroom teaching that teachers continue to refine across their careers. Experienced teachers often carry out many of these practices fluidly, drawing on extensive knowledge of students, content, curriculum, families, and school contexts. Precisely because expert practice can become seamless, however, the component parts of teaching can become difficult to see, name, and study. The HLPs and their decompositions help make this work visible.

For practicing teachers, the HLPs provide a shared language for examining instruction. In professional learning communities, coaching conversations, lesson study, instructional rounds, and other collaborative settings, teachers can use the practices to identify specific aspects of their teaching they want to understand or improve. Rather than discussing teaching only in broad terms—such as whether a lesson “went well” or whether students were “engaged”—teachers can focus on particular practices and questions: How did I elicit student thinking? What did I do with what I heard? Whose competence was acknowledged, and how? Did the small group task require genuine collaboration? How did my explanation make the content more accessible? What patterns in student work should inform tomorrow’s instruction?

The HLPs are especially useful because they focus professional learning on the daily work of teaching while keeping that work connected to larger purposes. A teacher might decide to study how they lead group discussions, for example, not simply in order to increase the amount of student talk, but to support students to listen to and build on one another’s ideas, use evidence, engage in disciplinary reasoning, and participate more equitably. Similarly, a group of teachers might focus on interpreting student work to inform instruction in order to better understand patterns in student thinking, identify strengths that may otherwise go unnoticed, and design more responsive next steps. In this way, the practices support improvement that is specific and actionable without reducing teaching to a set of isolated techniques.





The decompositions are particularly important in professional learning. They give teachers and those who support them—coaches, instructional leaders, mentor teachers, facilitators, and colleagues—a common reference point for observation, feedback, and reflection. A decomposition can help teachers analyze video of their own teaching, study artifacts such as student work or lesson materials, plan for an upcoming lesson, or debrief an instructional attempt. It can also support peer feedback by making the focus of observation more precise and less evaluative. Instead of offering general praise or critique, colleagues can point to specific areas of work within a practice, notice evidence of student participation and learning, and collaboratively consider alternative moves.

Using HLPs in professional learning also supports teachers to connect individual growth with collective improvement. When a team, department, grade level, or school adopts a small number of practices as a focus, teachers can build shared understandings of effective instruction and accumulate knowledge together. They can try out similar instructional moves, compare what happens across classrooms, study student responses, and refine their practice over time. The HLPs can therefore serve as an organizing framework for cycles of inquiry: selecting a practice, studying examples, planning with the decomposition in mind, trying out the practice, collecting evidence, analyzing what occurred, and making adjustments.

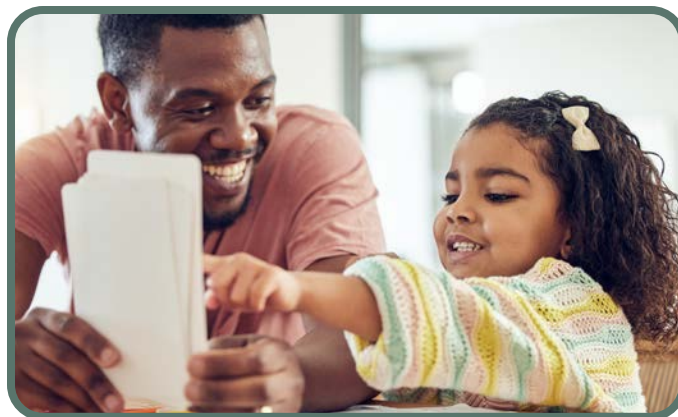
Importantly, using high-leverage practices in professional learning should not mean treating them as a checklist or a generic evaluation tool. The practices are always enacted in particular classrooms, with particular students, content, materials, histories, and relationships. The specific use of a practice must be determined in relation to its purpose and its effects on students' opportunities to learn and flourish. Professional learning centered on HLPs should therefore create opportunities for teachers to examine not only whether they used a particular move, but also how students experienced it, whose participation it supported, what kinds of thinking it made possible, and what inequitable patterns it may have interrupted or inadvertently reproduced.

In this sense, the HLPs support both individual and collective professional judgment. They help teachers slow down and study the complexity of familiar work; identify specific areas for continued learning; make principled decisions about instruction; and give and receive feedback grounded in evidence from classroom practice. They are useful not because they capture everything teachers need to know or do, but because they name consequential parts of the work that teachers can continue to investigate, practice, and improve throughout their careers.

Conclusion: Using high-leverage practices to support the learning of teaching

The TeachingWorks high-leverage practices are intended to name and make visible consequential parts of the work teachers do to support students' learning, participation, agency, and flourishing. They do not constitute a complete theory of teaching, nor do they replace the professional judgment, content knowledge, knowledge of students and communities, or ethical commitments that skillful teaching requires. Rather, they provide a shared language and practical framework for studying, learning, assessing, and improving teaching.

Across teacher education and professional learning, the central idea is the same: teaching is complex work, but it can be studied, decomposed, practiced, coached, and improved. In teacher education, the HLPs can support coherence across coursework and fieldwork, help clarify what beginning teachers should learn to do, and guide the design of rehearsals, assignments, feedback, and assessments. In professional learning, they can help practicing teachers, coaches, and school leaders examine instruction with greater precision, focus feedback on specific aspects of practice, and organize cycles of inquiry grounded in evidence from classrooms.



The practices and decompositions are resources for learning and analysis, not checklists or scripts. Each practice must be understood in relation to its purposes, the content being taught, the students in the room, and the broader classroom, school, community, and policy contexts in which teaching occurs. Used well, the HLPs help teachers and teacher educators focus closely inside the work of teaching, see its parts more clearly, and make more deliberate and responsive instructional decisions.

Ultimately, the value of high-leverage practices lies in their capacity to improve students' opportunities to learn. They help focus attention on the daily interactions through which teachers build relationships, make content accessible, elicit and respond to student thinking, support equitable participation, and use evidence of learning to guide instruction. Teaching is never finished work, and the contexts in which teachers teach continue to change. The TeachingWorks high-leverage practices are offered as a resource for that ongoing learning: a common language, a set of instructional priorities, and a collection of tools for improving practice in ways that are purposeful, evidence-based, equity-focused, and grounded in commitments to students' learning and flourishing.



Endnotes

¹Bruner, J. (1960). *The process of education*. Harvard University Press; Cazden, C. B. (2001). *Classroom discourse: The language of teaching and learning* (2nd ed.) Heinemann; Gee, J. P. (2000). Identity as an analytic lens for research in education. *Review of Research in Education*, 25, 99–125; Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, 32(3), 465–491; Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation*. Cambridge University Press; Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press; Webb, N. M., Franke, M. L., Ing, M., Wong, J., Fernandez, C. H., Shin, N., & Turrou, A. C. (2014). Engaging with others' mathematical ideas: Interrelationships among student participation, teachers' instructional practices, and learning. *International Journal of Educational Research*, 63, 79–93; Wells, G. (1999). *Dialogic inquiry: Toward a sociocultural practice and theory of education*. Cambridge University Press.

²Cohen, D. K., Raudenbush, S. W., & Ball, D. L. (2003). Resources, instruction, and research. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 25(2), 119–142; Lampert, M. (2001). *Teaching problems and the problems of teaching*. Yale University Press.

³Ball, D. L., & Forzani, F. M. (2009). The work of teaching and the challenge for teacher education. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 60(5), 497–511; Grossman P., & McDonald, M. (2008). Back to the future: Directions for research in teaching and teacher education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 45(1), 184–205.

⁴Grossman, P., Compton, C., Igra, D., Ronfeldt, M., Shahan, E., & Williamson, P. (2009). Teaching practice: A cross-professional perspective. *The Teachers College Record*, 111(9), 2055–2100.

⁵Boerst, T., Sleep, L., Ball, D. L., & Bass, H. (2011). Preparing teachers to lead mathematics discussions. *Teachers College Record*, 113(12), 2844–2877; Kavanagh, S. S., & Danielson, K. A. (2020). Practicing justice, justifying practice: Toward critical practice teacher education. *American Educational Research Journal*, 57(1), 69–105.

⁶Kavanagh, S. S., Metz, M., Hauser, M., Fogo, B., Taylor, M. W., & Carlson, J. (2020). Practicing responsiveness: Using approximations of teaching to develop teachers' responsiveness to students' ideas. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 7(1), 94–107.

⁷Schutz, K. M., Danielson, K. A., & Cohen, J. (2019). Approximations in English language arts: Scaffolding a shared teaching practice. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 81, 100–111.

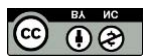
Leading a Group Discussion

Overview of leading a group discussion

In a group discussion, the teacher and all of the students work on specific content together, using one another's ideas as resources. The purposes of a discussion are to build collective knowledge and capability in relation to specific instructional goals and to allow students to practice listening, speaking, interpreting, and agreeing and disagreeing. The teacher and a wide range of students contribute orally, listen actively, and respond to and learn from others' contributions. Teachers work to ensure students are positioned as competent among their peers, that patterns of interaction are respectful, and that the collective work of the group uses the strengths of and benefits each student.

Advancing justice through leading a group discussion

The free and fair exchange of ideas is foundational for democracy. This requires the ability to share, justify, and defend one's ideas and to listen attentively and respectfully to the ideas and perspectives of people different from oneself. In classrooms, students practice the skills of reasoned argument, debate, and collective knowledge-building toward common goals. Group discussions provide opportunities for students to make sense of complex ideas together and support one another to speak and listen in ways that advance the classroom community and common good. Group discussions run the risk of reproducing patterns of inequity in classrooms, so teachers work to identify and disrupt these patterns in all areas of the discussion, from selecting a task that will make space for a wide range of student contributions to concluding in a way that positions students as capable.



Decomposition of leading a group discussion

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Leading a Group Discussion

Areas of work for leading a group discussion	Techniques for leading a group discussion
Preparing	• Identify the content point of the discussion. • Select a discussable task or text. • Anticipate student thinking. • Consider whose thinking might be overrepresented in the discussion and adjust the task to be open to multiple perspectives. • Set up independent or small group work with task or text. • Monitor student work. • Identify students to share thinking in whole group with attention to who and what is represented.
Framing	Launching • Tell students the goal. • Activate prior knowledge (if necessary). • Pose an open-ended question or issue related to the content point. • Review norms for discussion (as necessary). • Efficiently engage students in the discussion. Concluding • Support students to remember or make sense of content. • Take stock of where the class is in the discussion. • Acknowledge student competence.



Areas of work for leading a group discussion	Techniques for leading a group discussion
Orchestrating	• Encourage and support students to participate. • Elicit multiple ideas. • Probe students' thinking to clarify and expand student ideas. • Orient students to the contributions of others. • Attend to whose ideas are being attributed and highlighted. • Ensure that students are attending, listening, and responding to the ideas of others. • Support students in connecting ideas. • Make strategic contributions. • Use moves such as redirecting, revoicing, and highlighting to keep the discussion on track.
Recording and representing key content	• Determine what content to record and in how much detail. • Decide whether to attach student names to ideas. • Attend to the accuracy of records and representations. • Decide when to use student informal language and when to support the use of conventional academic language. • Record in ways that are clear, organized, and visible to the class. • Use language and/or representations that support student understanding and participation.



Visual representation of leading a group discussion

Discussion enabling	Discussion leading			
• Selecting a task • Anticipating student thinking • Setting up the task • Monitoring student work	Framing	Orchestrating		Framing
	Launching	• Eliciting • Orienting	• Probing • Making contributions	Concluding
	Recording and representing content			
	Maintaining a focus on the instructional point			
Seeing and disrupting patterns that reproduce inequity				



Explaining and Modeling Content

Overview of explaining and modeling content

Explaining and modeling are practices for making a wide variety of topics, academic practices, and strategies explicit to students. Teachers determine when explaining or modeling can help to make explicit content and practices that often remain tacit or invisible. Teachers might use simple explanations when working with straightforward content. They might choose modeling, which includes verbal explanation as well as thinking aloud and demonstrating when sharing the metacognitive process, to provide greater access to students about strategies and practices.

Advancing justice through explaining and modeling content

Explaining and modeling content makes visible strategies, processes, and practices that may remain hidden to some students. Access to the kinds of knowledge most valued by and represented in traditional school settings is differentially distributed across lines of race and class. Making this content explicit by explaining, demonstrating, and modeling is critical to ensuring access to these skills across a range of learners. However, modeling can also convey low expectations of students and impede students' opportunities to make sense of content themselves. Teachers make judgments about whether and when to model specific content or practices, and ensure that students are supported and also have opportunities to think on their own.



Decomposition of modeling

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Modeling

Areas of work for modeling	Techniques for modeling
Planning to model	Evaluating: Decide whether modeling is appropriate in terms of the specific content and student learning. Selecting: Choose the content, practice, or strategy to be modeled. Selecting: Choose strategic examples and appropriate representations.
Framing	Connecting: Link ideas that are about to be shared to other topics or experiences (e.g., to previous learning, work, or trends). Locating the work in the trajectory: Explain the purpose of the content about to be modeled, which may include stating what is already known and what needs to be determined and/or stating the ways content being modeled is typically used in the content area. Closing: Reinforce the purpose of the modeling OR recap the key points of the modeling, and emphasize the result of the modeling.
Doing the content area work	Demonstrating: Work through the content, practice, or strategy in real time in front of students.



Areas of work for modeling	Techniques for modeling
Highlighting core ideas	Backgrounding: Avoid highlighting aspects of the content or task that are distracting or may lead to misconceptions. Foregrounding: Use explicit verbal markers to draw students' attention to important aspects of the content or the work (e.g., "Watch as..." "First ... then...") and elaborate and emphasize the part of the explanation that is most complex or confusing. Marking: Highlight or draw attention to important ideas by naming key elements while progressing in a logical fashion and being careful not to skip any elements.
Making thinking visible by emphasizing thinking and key elements	Annotating: Add or fill in ideas necessary to support students' understanding, including clearly articulating what you are doing and why you are doing it. Marking metacognition: Use markers (verbal, tone, or visual) to indicate when thinking is being made visible. Thinking aloud: Make appropriate thinking visible through narration.
Using language and representations carefully	Connecting representations: Make explicit correspondences between the problem, the text or task, the verbal/written explanation, and any representations. Using consistent verbal and visual representations: Use content-specific terms and representations clearly, concisely, and consistently throughout the modeling and use language and representations that are developmentally appropriate and accessible to learners. Defining content terminology: Use and define terms related to the content being modeled. Recording and representing: Translate verbal ideas into a visual form in the public space in ways that are likely to support student understanding, are clearly labeled, and are accurate. Use and explain (if necessary) representations that illustrate your thinking and record the process used.



Visual representation of modeling content

Planning to model	Active modeling		
- Determining whether modeling is an appropriate strategy - Selecting content to be modeled - Choosing strategic examples and appropriate representations	Framing	Doing the content area work	Closing
		Highlighting core ideas	
		Making thinking visible by emphasizing thinking and key elements	
		Using language and representations carefully	



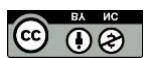
Eliciting, Interpreting, and Responding to Student Thinking

Overview of eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking

Eliciting and responding productively to student thinking is the core work of teaching. Children's ideas are fundamental resources for instruction, and teachers deliberately unpack each student's thinking and use what they learn to design instruction for that student and for the whole class. They seek to understand students' ideas, questions, and ways of thinking, including possible misconceptions, and work continuously to identify students' strengths and areas for growth. Teachers draw out student thinking and skills through carefully chosen questions and tasks, and attend closely to what students do and say. They consider and check alternative interpretations of student ideas and methods. Teachers are attentive to how students might hear their questions and to how students communicate their own thinking. Teachers use what they learn about student thinking for formative assessment, to guide instructional decisions, and to surface ideas that will benefit other students.

Advancing justice through eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking

When teachers understand and appreciate a student's thinking, they are better able to support that student to contribute in class and to position them as capable among their peers. Patterns of inequity lead to the risk that some students' thinking will get prioritized in the classroom, while the thinking of others will be seen through deficit lenses. Teachers must be attentive to disrupting these kinds of patterns both in how they interact with individual students as well as in whose thinking is publicly elicited, raised up, and responded to. Teachers' interpretations of students are often biased by patterns related to race, gender, and other social identities. Interrupting those biases requires listening with a broad understanding of the subject area and a commitment to recognizing the many assets each student brings to school.



Decomposition of eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Eliciting, Interpreting, and Responding to Student Thinking

Areas of work for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking	Techniques for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking
Formulating and posing questions designed to elicit and probe student thinking, with sensitivity to how students might hear or respond to the questions	• Develop general, open-ended questions. • Use native language to pose questions, or using translation support (if possible). • Slow the pace of questioning and use repetition or leveled prompts to allow students time to process language and develop a response. • Use gestures, visuals, or sentence stems to support questioning and student response. • Choose aspects of the student's expressed thinking or work to focus on, and develop appropriate questions using common patterns of student thinking to guide your focus. • Develop hypotheses about the student's thinking. • Pose questions that are culturally relevant and draw on the particular experiences and background knowledge of the learner. • Allow students to communicate in their preferred mode (e.g., drawing, writing, speaking, etc.).



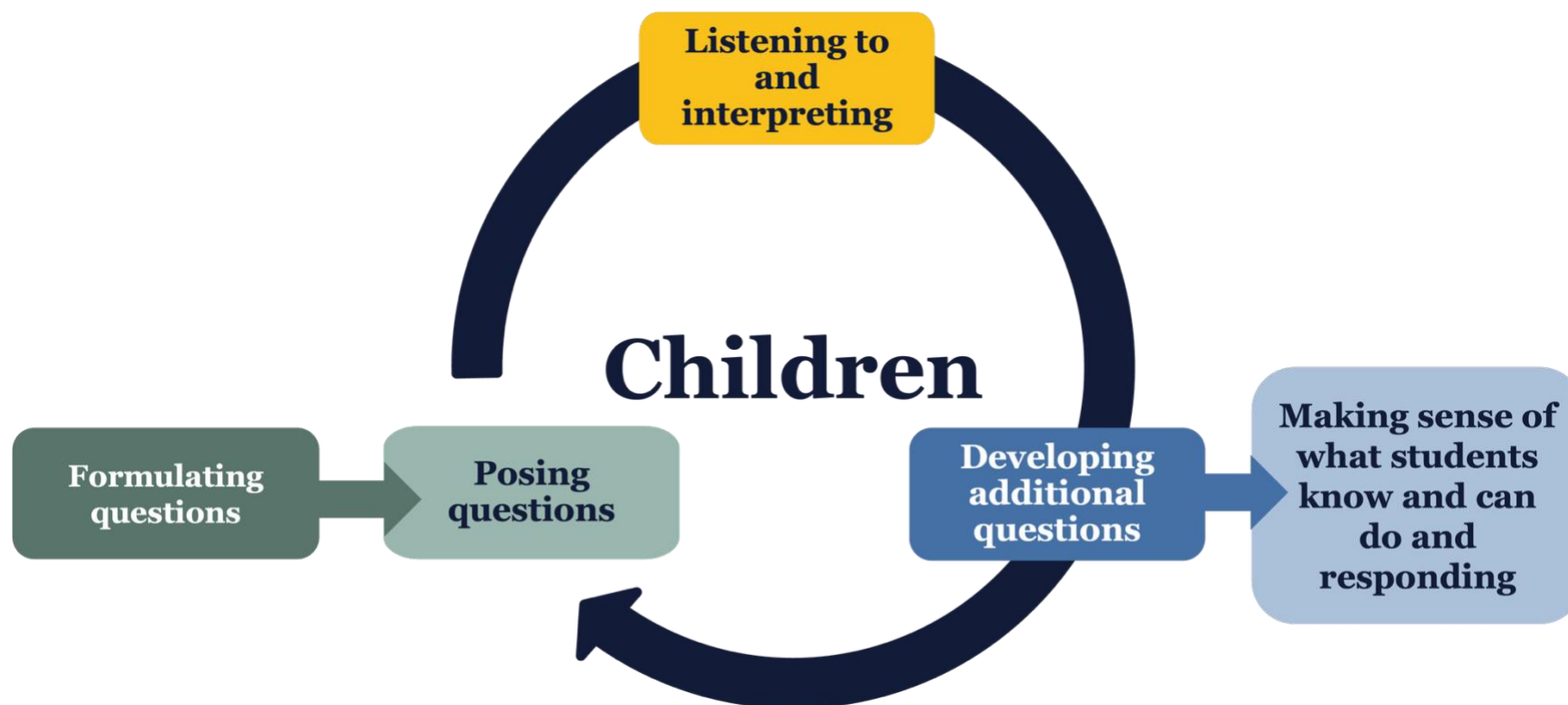
Areas of work for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking	Techniques for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking
Listening to and interpreting student responses	• Give students ample time to express themselves. • Allow supportive “thinking time” for students to interact with a peer, draw, or write so they can practice language and develop a response. • Pay close attention to what the student says, without unnecessary interruptions. • Listen for ideas rather than academic language. • Notice specific features of the student’s thinking: common patterns, strengths, strategies, novel ideas, areas of particular interest or engagement, weaknesses, and errors. • Use knowledge of the student to make sense of their responses. • Purposefully connect the particular background knowledge or experiences of students to content. • Listen for specific evidence of English language development.
Developing additional questions, prompts, and tasks to probe and unpack what students say and support their continued learning	• Identify elements of the student’s thinking that they have said little about, and probe further. • Identify particularly interesting or confusing (to the teacher) aspects of the student’s thinking and develop follow-up questions or prompts. • Focus on a particularly strategic aspect of the student’s thinking to probe further (i.e., a good starting point for the student, something they need to work on or develop more). • Develop additional questions that are attuned to the student’s English language learning. • Encourage emergent bilinguals who take risks to express themselves in English, and recognize that they have to do “double the work” as they engage in content discussion. • Question and probe emergent bilinguals with the same high expectations for all students, knowing that more planning and support may be needed.



Areas of work for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking	Techniques for eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking
Responding to student thinking	Identifying an appropriate response to student thinking - Consider what kind of response is most likely to help the student continue to develop their thinking. - Consider the situation: Is the interaction taking place in private or in front of other students? - Consider any time constraints: Is there time for a more drawn-out response (e.g., a class discussion), or is there a reason to move on quickly? Implementing an instructionally appropriate response - Ask another student to repeat what a student has said, without agreeing or disagreeing. - Ask other students to comment, add, or agree/disagree. - Pose another question to draw out a student's idea or reasoning. - Affirm a strength or notable aspect of a student's approach or idea. - Pose a strategic example to challenge the student to revise or extend their thinking. - Make a simple correction or addition to support the student's understanding. - Model or explain an aspect of the idea, concept, or reasoning. Deciding whether the response was effective, and implementing a next step - Observe student thinking and work, and evaluate and interpret their thinking. - Develop additional questions, prompts, or tasks (see row above) if necessary.



Visual representation of eliciting, interpreting, and responding to student thinking



Acknowledging Competence

Overview of acknowledging competence

Teachers deliberately broaden and label both (1) what counts as competence in a given domain and (2) who is seen as competent in that domain. A “domain” includes academic subject matters and disciplines, but also other areas of learning and practice. To broaden what counts as competence, teachers explicitly name and highlight students’ contributions of specific knowledge, skills, and practices, both individual and collective, that are central to engaging and learning in the domain.

To achieve this core goal of acknowledging competence, teachers attend carefully to who is seen and acknowledged as contributing and who is seen as “struggling” or “not smart.” They explicitly consider social identities. They intentionally call attention to specific competences in what those students say or do. These moves must be done in timely and authentic ways with sensitivity to how students and their peers are likely to interpret and respond to the attention. Teachers can acknowledge competence publicly in whole or small groups, or in one-on-one situations, at various points across a lesson or school day. When done well, acknowledging competence disrupts narrow, reductive conceptions of content, inequitable patterns in who is seen as “smart” or “good,” and negative and deficit views that students carry of themselves.

Advancing justice through acknowledging competence

A central purpose of this practice is to disrupt patterns in which race and gender, as well as home language and ability status, shape who is seen as “smart” in class. These patterns not only affect those students who are or are not seen as “smart,” but also shape the perceptions of the other students about the identities that tend to be associated with competence (e.g., the “model minority myth” that represents Asian American students as “good at math” or the common interpretation of Black girls as disrespectful).

Teachers must understand how learning practices in school have been dominated by white Western cultural norms and preferences and work to expand their own understanding of what counts as competence in the content domains they teach. Additionally, they must consider how broader systemic factors shape everyday micro-interactions related to racism and other forms of oppression (sexism, linguicism, ableism, classism) and may contribute to risks and patterns of status hierarchies in their own classrooms. Teachers’ decisions to acknowledge particular student competence must be informed by what they know about their students as individuals and their students’ intersecting identities in order to disrupt larger patterns associated with race, gender, language, and who and what are seen as “smart.”



Decomposition of acknowledging competence

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Acknowledging Competence

Areas of work for acknowledging competence	Techniques for acknowledging competence
Attending to classroom dynamics and social positioning to identify focal students	• Notice who is seen or labeled as “smart” or “struggling” in different content domains. • Notice how students see and position themselves relative to their peers, to content, and to learning practices. • Notice how students interpret and respond to feedback and previous instances of acknowledging competence. • Using your observations, identify which students would benefit from having their competence publicly acknowledged, with particular attention to the influence of race, gender, class, language, and ability.
Eliciting demonstrations of competence	• Anticipate opportunities and plan moves to invite focal students to make meaningful contributions. • Use tasks and activities that allow students to participate and make contributions in a broad range of ways. • Listen to and observe focal students closely to notice instructionally and content-significant contributions. • Invite focal students to share their thinking and/or make meaningful contributions to classroom activity and discourse with sensitivity to their needs, preferences, and identities.



Areas of work for acknowledging competence	Techniques for acknowledging competence
Naming and highlighting competence	To broaden <i>what</i> is seen as “competent” • Develop and broaden one’s own understanding of the different kinds of competence inherent in a particular domain. • Actively listen and watch for a broad range of competence in students’ contributions. To broaden and/or disrupt <i>who</i> is seen as “competent” • Name in specific terms the significance or value of a contribution made by a focal student in the moment. • Attach the names of focal students to public records of their thinking and/or contributions. • Invite other students to listen and respond to the contributions of focal students (see orienting students to one another’s thinking tool in the TeachingWorks Resource Library). • Invite students to reflect on whom they learned from today. • Invite students to reflect on what they did that was “smart” or an important contribution or practice. • Give verbal and written feedback to focal students that makes explicit for them what was significant about what they said or did in class. To broaden and/or disrupt <i>what</i> counts as “competent” • Name, model, and explain a broad range of practices involved in learning. • Call explicit attention to significant, but often overlooked, examples of content-specific competence or learning practices. • Represent a broad range of practices involved in learning content (e.g., reasoning, developing ideas, focusing on meaning, creating and using methods and strategies, building on previously established ideas, asking questions, etc.).



Implementing Norms and Routines for Discourse

Overview of implementing norms and routines for discourse

Every content area has norms and practices for how people construct and share knowledge. These vary across subjects but often include establishing hypotheses, providing evidence for claims, and explaining one's reasoning to others. Teachers name these norms and practices, provide scaffolds, model, and offer opportunities for students to use the norms and practices. These norms and practices support students to engage productively in content-area learning.

We use the term “norms” to refer to a widely shared and accepted standard for work in a discipline. Subject-specific norms exist outside of individual classrooms and are often the standards of a discipline. This is not determined by a single teacher in a classroom, but by the broad community of disciplinary experts. It is through routines or practices that a norm is regularly carried out in a particular context and content area.

Advancing justice through implementing norms and routines for discourse

Norms, practices, and routines for discourse and work are important for supporting students to engage in content area work. They make explicit for students the ways of thinking and working that are privileged by the disciplines and help position students as competent sense-makers in the content area. However, teachers must recognize when and how norms and routines for discourse and work may marginalize children. Because content-area norms and routines often reflect dominant power and privilege, they can marginalize the skills and perspectives some students bring to classrooms. When choosing and implementing norms and routines for discourse and work, teachers should consider carefully which norms and routines to introduce, whom they privilege, and how to manage their use in ways that structure students' work equitably.



Decomposition of implementing norms and routines for discourse

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Implementing Norms and Routines for Discourse

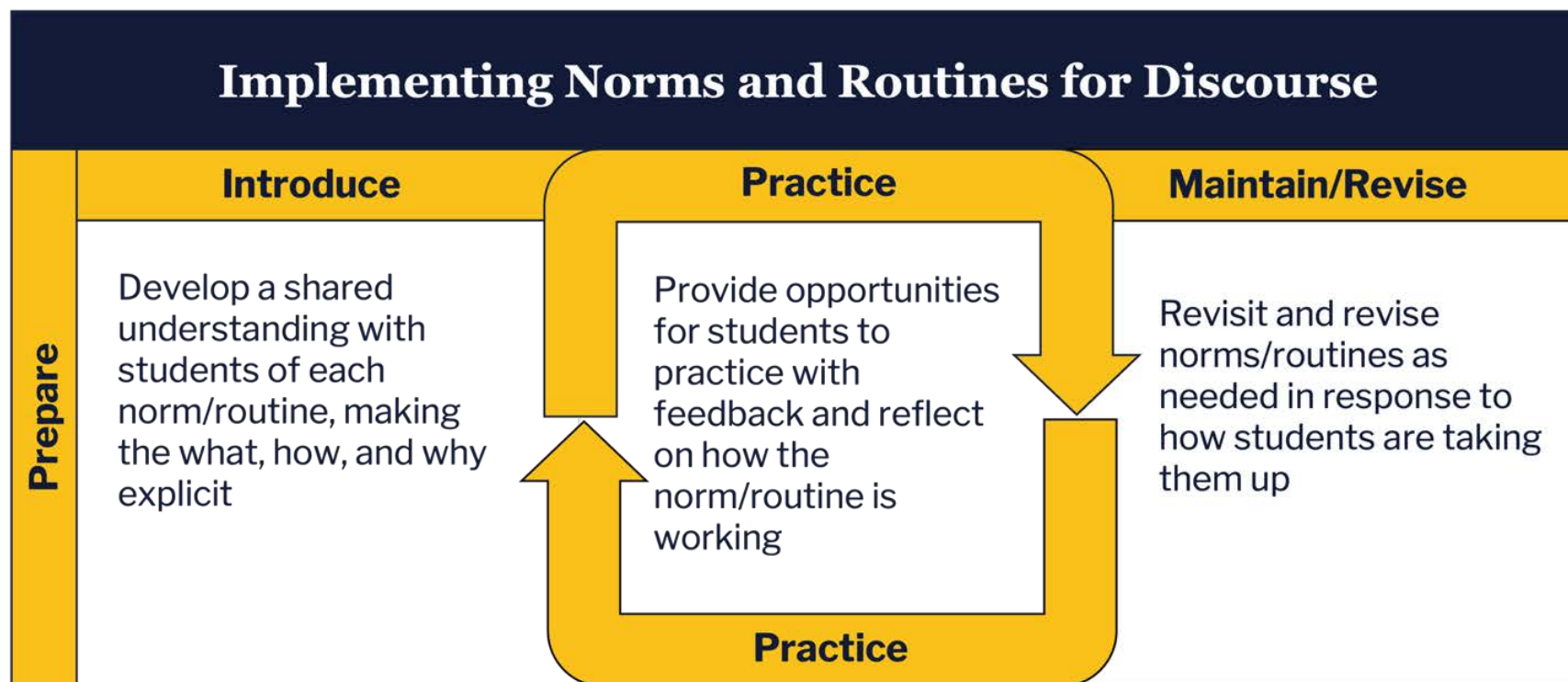
Areas of work for implementing norms and routines for discourse	Techniques for implementing norms and routines for discourse
Investigating	• Examine norms central to the discourse and work of the field. • Identify norms and routines necessary for classroom discourse and work. • Investigate other established norms and routines in the larger school context for connections across subjects and classes. • Learn about students' prior knowledge of norms and routines.
Analyzing	• Understand relationships between disciplinary norms and social and political power. • Consider the social and power implications of establishing specific norms/routines in the classroom. • Prioritize, sequence, and pace the introduction of norms and routines across the year. • Anticipate challenges students might have enacting the norm/routine.
Introducing	• Name and explain the norm/routine. • Justify the norm/routine. • Demonstrate/model the norm/routine. • Create public artifacts to serve as shared resources. • Support students in making connections and distinctions between the disciplinary norm/routine and others in the school and beyond.
Practicing	• Provide repeated opportunities for students to enact the norm/routine with guidance. • Provide specific feedback to students on their use of the norm/routine. • Use scaffolds and supports as students practice.



Areas of work for implementing norms and routines for discourse	Techniques for implementing norms and routines for discourse
Maintaining/Revising	• Provide repeated opportunities for students to enact the norm/routine with guidance. • Provide specific feedback to students on their use of the norm/routine. • Use scaffolds and supports as students practice. • Reference artifacts and use cues to revisit norms and routines. • Acknowledge students' use of a norm or routine. • Recognize when a norm/routine is not working as intended and develop revisions/improvements. • Support students in making connections across multiple norms and routines as more are introduced. • Provide opportunities for students to reflect on the impact of the norm/routine on their individual and collective learning.



Visual representation of implementing norms and routines for discourse



Implementing Organizational Routines

Overview of implementing organizational routines

Teachers organize time, space, and materials to support students to engage in the regular tasks of classroom life. Through the selection and use of organizational routines, teachers establish learning environments in which students have equitable access to resources, time, space, and voice in the classroom. Teachers introduce students to routines and provide opportunities to practice, analyze, and modify the routines. In some cases, they develop and enact routines collaboratively with students.

Advancing justice through implementing organizational routines

Creating a safe and positive learning community is crucial for students to learn and thrive. Organizational routines support students to interact as members of the learning community and to access the resources they need. At the same time, they can over-regulate students' bodies and voices and reproduce patterns that marginalize some groups and identities. Teachers are careful to select and use routines in ways that respect students' agency and treat them as integral members of the community. Choosing and using routines requires discretion because many routines silence and marginalize some students and propagate dominant ways of being related to race, class, and gender.



Decomposition of implementing organizational routines

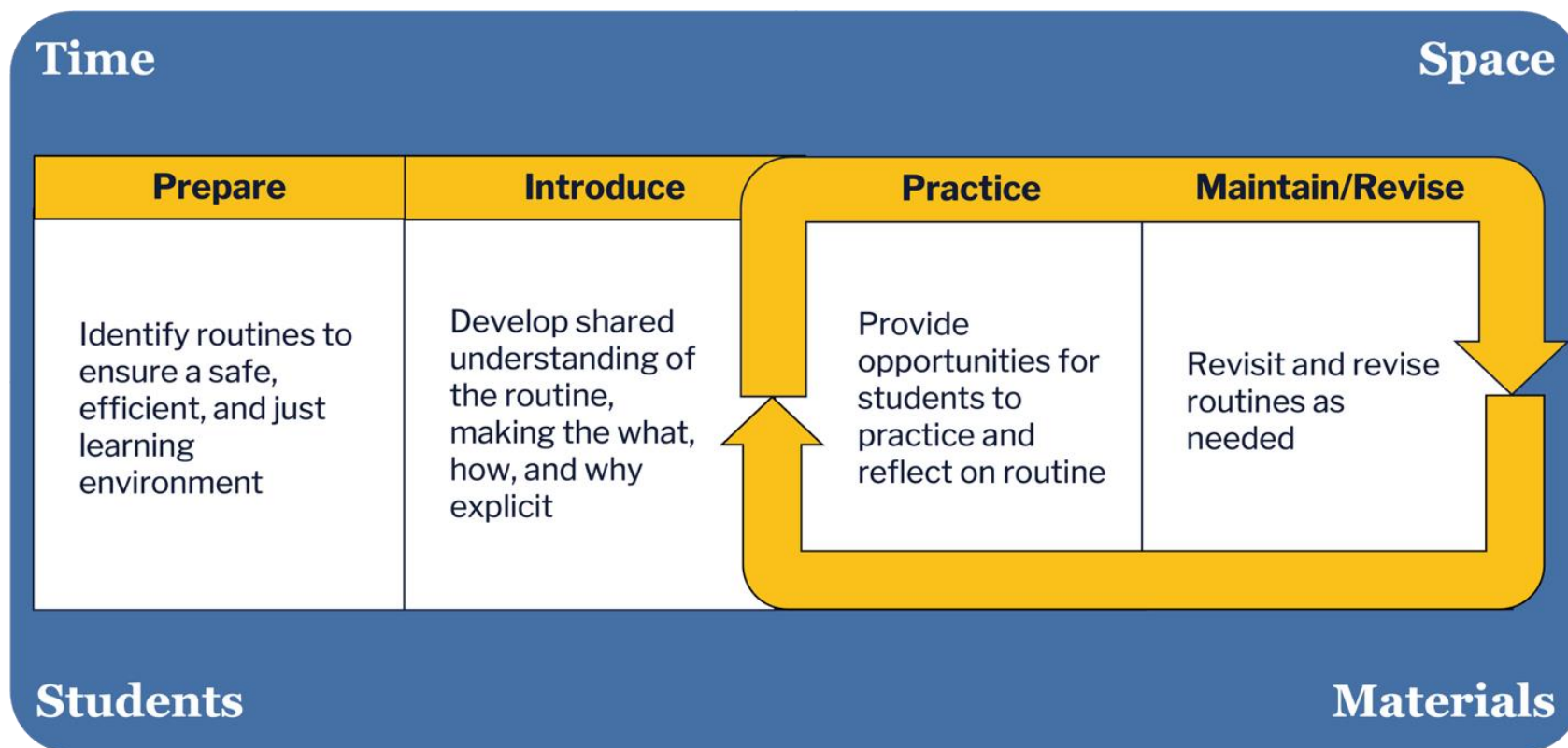
Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Implementing Organizational Routines

Areas of work for implementing organizational routines	Techniques for implementing organizational routines
Investigating	• Identify routines necessary for a safe and efficient learning environment. • Consider and decide whether to maintain routines already used in the context. • Use students' prior knowledge to inform the selection of routines.
Analyzing	• Consider the social and power implications of specific routines and revise as needed. • Consider whether a routine conflicts with community and family norms and how to respond to this. • Anticipate challenges students might have enacting the routine, and consider how to respond. • Prioritize, sequence, and pace the introduction of new routines.
Introducing	• Name, justify, and explain the routine. • Model the routine. • Create public artifacts as resources and reminders. • Communicate routines to families in ways that cultivate a home-school partnership. • Support students in making connections across routines.
Practicing	• Provide opportunities for students to practice the routines. • Support students to carry out the routines responsibly. • Provide feedback on students' enactments of routines. • Offer scaffolds, supports, and reminders for routines. • Support students to reflect on the impact of the routines on individual and collective learning.



Areas of work for implementing organizational routines	Techniques for implementing organizational routines
Maintaining/Revising	- Discuss, analyze and revise norms and routines, as needed. - Reference artifacts and use other cues to revisit routines. - Analyze collectively whether a routine is working and improve as needed.

Visual representation of implementing organizational routines



Cultivating and Maintaining a Safe and Productive Learning Environment

Overview of cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment

Teachers set and maintain collective expectations and establish classroom environments that ensure a safe and productive classroom community. They distinguish between the helpful use of boundaries to provide structure and the use of power to control. They develop specific approaches and routines to establish, maintain, and respond to these expectations and behaviors in ways that build a classroom community that supports students' learning and flourishing. Choosing and using expectations and agreements requires explicit care to avoid reinforcing values and patterns of control and behavior that privilege dominant ways of being related to race, class, and gender.

Advancing justice through cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment

Teachers' perceptions of students' behavior, understanding, effort, and engagement are shaped by assumptions related to students' social identities. Because of the close relationship between dominant norms and the culture of schooling, teachers' interactions with children, as well as the classroom environment itself, can limit opportunities for students who do not share these norms. In contrast, this practice calls on teachers to manage the classroom environment in ways that do not exclude students, that make positive, significant differences for children, and that disrupt inequitable patterns that reflect broader sociocultural patterns. Central to this practice is a teacher's high level of regard for students as full humans and an unwavering respect for their rights. It is interwoven with the work of building strong relationships with students as individuals and as a community. It differs from traditional notions of "classroom management," which have been associated with ideas and systems related to compliance, control, and exclusion.



Decomposition of cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Cultivating and Maintaining a Safe and Productive Learning Environment

Areas of work for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment	Techniques for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment
Examining discipline practices and existing agreements	• Consider whether the school and classroom environment and discipline practices privilege some cultures, identities, or experiences over others. • Consider how individual children might be affected by different expectations, rules, and agreements. • Examine critically the relationship between the broader school environment and classroom-level discipline and community practices. • Interrogate, revise, and broaden one's own preferences and biases about student behavior.
Establishing agreements and expectations	• Work with students to establish and try out agreements and expectations for a safe and positive learning environment. • Center the input of children who might be marginalized. • Be explicit about and ensure shared understanding around what expectations and agreements look and sound like in practice. • Communicate about agreements with caregivers. • Create public artifacts about the uses and purposes of the agreements and expectations. • As needed, create individual supports to promote students' community involvement.



Areas of work for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment	Techniques for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment
Highlighting, reinforcing, and maintaining agreements	• Enact agreements and norms consistently and equitably. • Be consistent, explicit, and brief with requests and redirections. • Name student words and actions that support the classroom community. • Establish proactive structures to maintain and reinforce agreements and grow community (e.g., regular class meetings). • Regularly use non-judgmental language that reminds students of and reinforces expectations. • Reach out to and collaborate with caregivers to better support and gain insight about students. • Refrain from exclusionary practices such as removing students from the classroom, publicly shaming children, or evaluating their behavior with respect to their peers.
Repairing harm and engaging in conflict resolution	• Use language that preserves the student's dignity. • Engage in conflict resolution processes as needed (whole group, small group, or individually): ○ Acknowledge and take responsibility for one's own mistakes as a teacher. ○ Demonstrate care and compassion. ○ Create room for choice and agency. ○ Establish logical next steps that strive to repair harm.



Areas of work for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment	Techniques for cultivating and maintaining a safe and productive learning environment
Revising agreements and conflict resolution structures as needed	• Create consistent space for recognizing when community agreements are and are not working. • Solve and refine agreements together. • Ensure that agreements protect children’s individual rights as well as the rights of the collective, and revise as needed. • Legitimate, value, and model learning from conflicts and revising agreements.



Setting Up and Managing Small Group Work

Overview of setting up and managing small group work

Teachers use small group work when the learning goals benefit from interaction and collaboration among students. To do this, they choose tasks that require and foster collaborative work, provide clear directions that enable groups to work independently, and hold students accountable for collective and individual learning. Teachers use their own time strategically, deliberately choosing which groups to work with, when, and on what. Teachers work to ensure students are positioned as competent among their peers, that patterns of interaction are respectful, and that the collective work of the group uses the strengths of and benefits each student.

Advancing justice through setting up and managing small group work

During small group work, students' relationships, identities, and the ways they position one another affect their learning opportunities. In particular, biases related to race, gender, and other social identities, as well as stereotypes about subject matter competence, are all part of small group dynamics. Teachers must work carefully to ensure that group tasks and structures support respectful collective work. Teachers must actively support the interruption of harmful discourse patterns and interactions.



Decomposition of setting up and managing small group work

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Setting Up and Managing Small Group Work

Areas of work for setting up and managing small group work	Techniques for setting up and managing small group work
Planning for small group work	• Confirm that small group work is appropriate for your learning goal(s). • Design a task appropriate for small group work (e.g., specifying students' tasks, specifying outcomes and products, etc.). • Select effective group structures for work on the task (e.g., group roles, etc.). • Determine how groups will be formed. • Consider patterns of interaction that privilege some students or groups over others, and design strategies to intervene on these patterns.
Teaching and/or reinforcing small group roles and routines	Always: • Provide clear directions. • Name task and outcomes for group work. • Explain how time will be used. • Name the structure (roles and routines) to be used for the work. When appropriate: • Identify and justify roles and routines specific to small group work. • Model and explain roles and routines. • Provide feedback on students' use of the roles and routines. • Provide students options for what to do if they finish early. • Coach students on what to do if they need help.



Areas of work for setting up and managing small group work	Techniques for setting up and managing small group work
Monitoring and adjusting small group work	• Monitor student talk, participation, and interactions, and involve students in learning to do this themselves. • Attend to progress toward learning goal within and across groups. • Check in with groups or individuals. • Elicit and interpret the thinking of individuals or small groups. • Recognize individual students' competence and position them relative to their peers in order to interrupt status hierarchies.



Building Respectful Relationships

Overview of building respectful relationships

Teachers intentionally build and sustain respectful relationships with students in the classroom. Teachers who form respectful relationships with students are able to work collaboratively with children and manage power dynamics in ways that increase student participation, engagement, and achievement. Respectful teacher-student relationships are characterized by trust, care, and appreciation of students' cultures and communities. Teachers develop these relationships in all aspects of their teaching, including through small conversations with individual students, notes to students, nonverbal signals, and in how they respond to and acknowledge students during lessons.

Advancing justice through building respectful relationships

The quality of the relationships that students have with their teachers affects their success and flourishing. Teachers' relationships with students can help students feel valued and supported, positively shape students' academic identities, and help engage them in learning. A teacher who has strong relationships with students will be better positioned to leverage that knowledge in favor of curriculum and learning activities that are relevant to students' lives and draw on their experiences. However, because teacher-student relationships can also be harmful and oppressive, and can reproduce patterns of racism, care with developing positive relationships is foundational to everything teachers do.



Decomposition of building respectful relationships

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Building Respectful Relationships

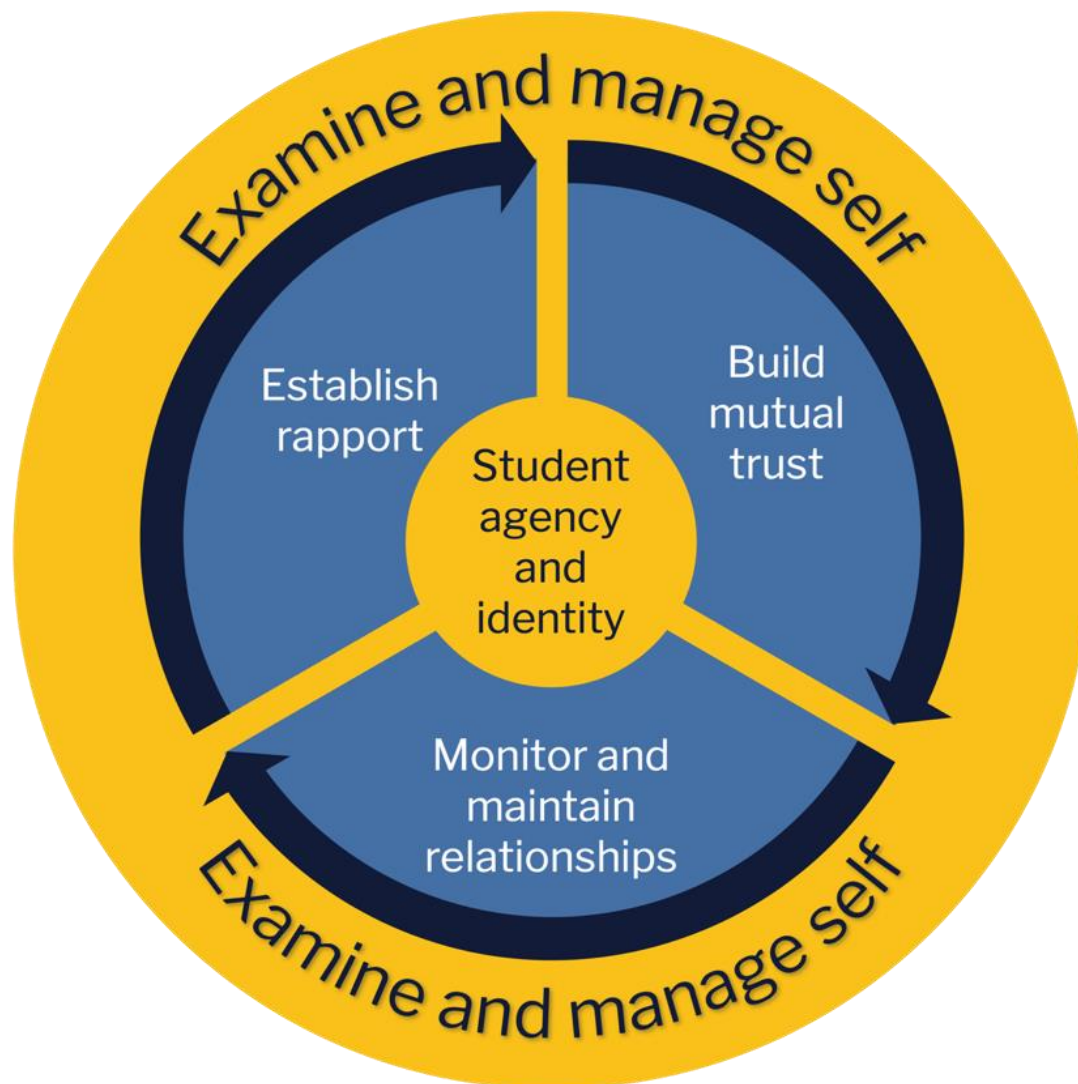
Areas of work for building respectful relationships	Techniques for building respectful relationships
Establishing rapport	• Seek to learn about and connect with every student as a human being. • Provide opportunities for students to learn about and connect with you. • Use work on content to both convey appreciation/regard for and connect with students. • Find small moments to connect with children.
Building mutual trust	• Demonstrate trustworthiness. • Treat students as trustworthy. • Support students to engage in productive struggle with content and to persevere. • Invite and take seriously students' questions, challenges, criticisms, and disagreements without taking it personally.
Monitoring and maintaining relationships with students	• Establish routines for connecting with students on a regular basis (e.g., greeting students at the door). • Build communication systems (e.g., interactive journaling, regularly scheduled check-ins, surveys) in order to gather individual student thinking and feedback. • Develop systems to track the quality and quantity of interactions with individual students. • Recognize and actively mediate conflict. Take ownership when mistakes are made, and adapt behavior based on the needs of the relationship.



Areas of work for building respectful relationships	Techniques for building respectful relationships
Examining and managing self in relationship with students	• Attend to who one is outside of the classroom and what aspects of that can be brought into relationship-building work. • Attend to who one is in the role of teacher (i.e., professional persona) and how to deliberately use aspects of oneself in relating to students. • Seek to surface and challenge biases and assumptions that affect relationships with students. • Attend to how one expresses oneself with students.



Visual representation of building respectful relationships



Communicating With Families

Overview of communicating with families

Careful and sensitive communication between teachers and families supports student learning. Teachers communicate with families to learn more about children from the people who know them best. Teachers share information about children's activities, learning, and development, and seek ways to partner with families. Communication may take place in person, in writing, or in phone calls. Every conversation with a family is a chance for the teacher to communicate a respectful, open attitude and create a space for a two-way conversation. Teachers must be attentive to considerations of language and culture, respectful and valuing of families, and oriented to working with families to support children.

Advancing justice through communicating with families

Teachers can partner with families to access the specialized knowledge they have about their child including: a deep understanding of their strengths, what they care about, conditions for how they learn best, and expertise about home culture and family life. Communication offers opportunities for teachers to learn about a child's past experiences in school, how different family members have experienced school themselves, the goals families have for their children, and ways to best support children based on families' knowledge. Talking with families opens doors for teachers to see their students as whole, multifaceted human beings. Without careful consideration, communication with families can reproduce patterns of injustice in home-school relationships.



Decomposition of communicating with families

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Communicating With Families

Areas of work for communicating with families	Techniques for communicating with families
Planning for communication with families	• Gather artifacts, practices, or tools such as student work, teacher or student notes, assessments, and/or data. • Learn about families' preferred modes of communication. Involve appropriate English language supports. • Learn about and attend sensitively to cultural differences that may shape how a family interprets schooling, teachers, and/or their child's education. • Be aware of personal identities and how they may be perceived by families. • If a meeting takes place at school, create a pleasant communication environment; arrange comfortable seating, avoid distractions, adhere to predetermined times, etc. • If a meeting takes place over the phone, confirm that the time is convenient for the family and each person can hear and be heard easily. Teachers let families know their phone numbers so that they can see who is calling. • Identify questions to ask of families. Focus on questions that make use of families' resources and knowledge. • Identify important information to share with families and consider how to communicate that information. • Prepare for a two-way conversation, and to truly listen to families.

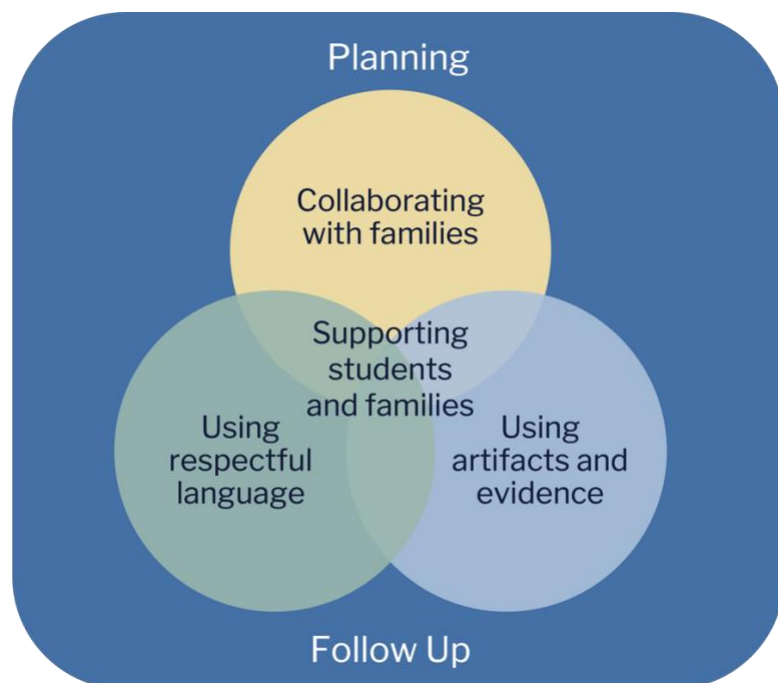


Areas of work for communicating with families	Techniques for communicating with families
Using open, respectful language and maintaining a professional tone	• Consider in advance some possible outcomes, suggestions, or actions from the conversation. • Begin interactions with families with a warm, genuine greeting. • Adhere to norms of good communication that are culturally appropriate; maintain eye contact while both speaking and listening, use appropriate body language, and monitor “talk time” that both you and the family members are given. • Make sure you give family members full opportunities to share their opinions, comments, concerns, or questions during an interaction. • Balance the conversation with information that demonstrates you care about, like, and appreciate the student, along with any concerns you want to discuss. Keep the conversation positive and constructive. • Do not divulge information about other students or families with whom you work. • Conclude interactions with a genuine, warm goodbye and appreciation for the opportunity to work with family members.
Using intentional language and evidence to share information about academic success, behavior, or development with families	• Use artifacts of practice and data to support what you describe about a student. • Use clear, plain language rather than acronyms or jargon. • Offer specific examples or anecdotes about student learning, behavior, or to demonstrate that you know and care about the student. • Use evidence-based language to describe student performance, growth, and/or interactions with classmates. • If students are present, involve them, inviting them to take ownership of their learning and speak to their own experiences. • Use, as appropriate, professional knowledge of content, language development, child development, and schooling.



Areas of work for communicating with families	Techniques for communicating with families
Collaborating with families to set goals for students and determine next steps	• Invite family members to share their goals for the meeting. Add those that were prepared in advance with care for how to express them. • Review main points of discussion; name the assets, resources, or supports that are identified; and determine next steps. • Recognize what you can accomplish in the given time, and be prepared to follow up if necessary.

Visual representation of communicating with families



Communicating With Families
Updated: April 2026

4



These materials were authored by the TeachingWorks team and licensed under the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/).

This content can be reused in other work with attribution to the authors. For more information, please contact info@teachingworks.org.

Attending to Identity in Interactions With Students and Families

Overview of attending to identity in interactions with students and families

A teacher's outward communication style, markers of identity, and views about children and their families can play a major role in their capacity to connect with and instruct others—and also influence others' connections to them. When interacting with students and families, teachers attend to the ways their identities, habitual patterns of talk and behavior, and expressive communication styles (e.g., tone of voice, body language, etc.) show up. They think critically about how they and their communication styles are “read” by students or their families. Teachers then make adjustments so that the impact they have on others is positive and strategic, and conveys appropriate feelings of respect, welcome, and engagement.

Advancing justice through attending to identity in interactions with students and families

Teachers' identities and the ways those identities manifest in their everyday interactions with students and families can play a crucial role in their capacity to connect with, motivate, instruct, and engage students (and their families). But teachers' identities and interactional styles can also impede those connections. Because teachers and children do not always share a common understanding of unstated norms and rules of communication and interaction in the classroom, misunderstandings of one another can be common. To that end, teachers should attend carefully to the self and how it is read by others, and consider ways to make adjustments to how they show up in interactions.



Decomposition of attending to identity in interactions with students and families

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Attending to Identity in Interactions With Students and Families

Areas of work for attending to identity in interactions with students and families	Techniques for attending to identity in interactions with students and families
Considering context and purpose	- Consider the context (one-on-one, in a group) of the interaction(s). - If applicable (for example at an IEP conference), also identify the goal of the particular interaction in question.
Accounting for the self	- Consider one's visible markers of identity (e.g., race, gender, age, etc.) and how they might be read by others. - Consider what personal information about oneself is appropriate to share in a school context, and what is not. - Consider how, in general, others might "read" you based on your identity, personal background, or assumptions about your background. - Consider habitual expressive behaviors (e.g., tone of voice, body language) and how they might be read or interpreted. - Consider habitual interactional behaviors (e.g., questioning styles, praise behaviors) and consider how they may be read or interpreted.
Accounting for with whom you are interacting	- Learn about the person/people. - Consider the assets, expertise, and sources of information others bring and how you might learn more about or leverage that in your interaction(s) with them. - Consider and plan for ways your "known" markers of identity might be read, both positively and negatively. - Consider how your communication style is typically read by others. - Support others to acknowledge/articulate their identities and any needs that would facilitate a safe and productive interaction.



Areas of work for attending to identity in interactions with students and families	Techniques for attending to identity in interactions with students and families
Constructing an outward identity	• Be intentional around expressive behaviors (voice, body language, etc.) and “habitual” interactional patterns (questioning styles, participation facilitation, praise behaviors). • Monitor one’s own contributions to an interaction to ensure equity in how/by whom/when contributions are made. • Monitor how one’s own body language and behavior is being perceived (e.g., through eliciting, feedback, exit tickets, gauging conversational dynamics in the moment, etc.). • Monitor the power dynamics at play in the reaction (e.g., between teacher and child, racial or cultural power dynamics, etc.) and consider how to support in interactions with uneven dynamics. • Think about one’s own identity when clarifying and/or co-constructing the goals of the interaction.
Monitoring and revising	• Check in with students, parents, and others about how they feel their interactions with you are going. • Invite feedback from observers about how your interactions are going. • Observe and correct any erroneous assumptions made about the others’ identity, needs, or motives. • Adjust habitual behaviors and interactional style to accommodate new information about child(ren). • Adjust habitual behaviors and interactional style to compensate for problematic, inconsistent, or privileging patterns.



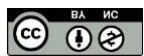
Learning About Students

Overview of learning about students

Teachers learn about their particular students in order to design instruction that will support their learning and flourishing. They create opportunities within the classroom for students to show who they are and share parts of their identities if they wish. Teachers regularly check in with students outside of the classroom, including through one-on-one conversations and attendance at school events, and with families and community members. Teachers make use of their learning to tailor instruction for students.

Advancing justice through learning about students

Students enter classrooms with experiences, expectations, and ideas about themselves, the content they are learning, and the individuals who support their learning. The communities and neighborhoods in which they live shape and contribute to who they are inside and outside of school. Learning about students' neighborhoods, communities, families, and previous schools can foster partnerships that can help to disrupt injustices that have persisted for historically marginalized groups. Teachers must believe that children matter and are sense-makers, acknowledging and appreciating the funds of knowledge students bring to school and seeing students' strengths. By learning about students both as individuals with intersecting identities and as a collective, teachers can develop classroom culture, norms, and routines that value every student in the classroom. The work of learning about students extends beyond the classroom. Students' families and community members are also fundamental sources of insight and resources for teachers. Learning from a variety of individuals and in different contexts builds a connection between teachers, students, families, and community members. It also provides teachers with the opportunity to gather information to support the improvement of instruction.



Decomposition of learning about students

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Learning About Students

Areas of work for learning about students	Techniques for learning about students
Learning about students within the classroom	• Make space for students to share their individual and collective identities and experiences through the use of surveys, questions, and activities to learn about features of student identity including home language, how they identify themselves, preferences, and how they engage with their community. Notice what they share. • Create structures, norms, and routines for students to share information about themselves including regular check-in conversations, tools such as end-of-class checks and journals, and activities that provide students space to share features of their identities. • Create opportunities for students to show who they are (e.g., their interests, experiences, languages) through work on content. • Track on interactional patterns with and between students, including participation in different activity types.
Learning about students within the school	• Check in with your students and other students in the school through quick conversations in the hallway, cafeteria, and other school spaces. • When possible, attend school events (e.g., club meetings, performances, sporting events) in order to learn about students in other contexts through observations and conversations with students, families, and community members. • Keep abreast of school climate, culture, and policies, making opportunities to check in with students about the impact on their own experiences in the school. • Learn about the perspectives of other school staff who have worked with students to supplement one's own learnings about your students.



Areas of work for learning about students	Techniques for learning about students
Learning about students within the community	• Check in with families and community members about how students engage with their communities through informal conversations. • Build awareness of local resources, locations, events, and organizations with which students and families are likely to engage. • Stay abreast of local, state, and national events and policies that impact your students.
Leveraging one's learning	• Make use of learning about students and their communities when designing and adapting lessons and assessments. • Ensure that students' identities and communities are represented in the curriculum.



Setting Learning Goals

Overview of setting learning goals

Identifying goals for students' learning is fundamental for skillful teaching that supports students' growth. This is because the design of lessons, whether from instructional materials or independently, depends on articulating what students are to learn. For some subject areas, such as mathematics, reading, writing, science, and social studies, standards are articulated by professional organizations and by states. These provide guidance for the process of setting learning goals. In other areas, such as physical education, schools or districts may specify learning targets. And in still other areas, such as developing organizational skills or communicating across difference, teachers may identify them on their own.

Advancing justice through setting learning goals

To plan and enact instructional activities and classroom discourse to support students' learning, teachers must consider carefully what students know and can do. They set high expectations for their students and support their engagement in learning. Because over-helping students can actually reduce opportunities to learn as well as communicate a lack of confidence in students' capability, teachers exercise critical awareness of these risks and make careful judgments about the amount and kind of support that a student needs. In some cases, students thrive from having to puzzle about a problem or a task, and in others, such experiences are merely frustrating and discouraging. Teachers are watchful to monitor that activities are focusing on the learning goal and that appropriate supports are provided.



Decomposition of setting learning goals

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Setting Learning Goals

Areas of work for setting learning goals	Techniques for setting learning goals
Reviewing standards, materials, and information about students	• Review external standards for student learning of specific content. • Review learning goals in instructional materials. • Identify other learning goals important to developing competence in the subject (e.g., reasoning, explaining, academic identity). • Consider what students already know and can do.
Setting specific short- and longer-term learning goals	• Set learning goals for individual lessons, connected to longer-term goals. • Ensure coherence by articulating connection between prior learning and learning goals for individual lessons. • Express the learning goals in language that could be communicated to students.
Revisiting and revising short-term learning goals as needed in response to students' progress	• Revise learning goals based on students' uptake of instruction. • Review how students' progress aligns with external standards and guidance, and adjust next steps as necessary.



Preparing for Teaching Using Instructional Materials

Overview of preparing for teaching using instructional materials

School- or district-provided instructional materials are key resources as teachers work to support learning and ensure that what students learn is aligned with local, state, and national goals. To use them effectively, teachers analyze materials carefully, becoming deeply familiar with the scope and sequence of a unit and with the core academic content, tasks, and activities of individual lessons. They then adapt them to meet the needs of specific learners and contexts.

Advancing justice through preparing for teaching using instructional materials

States and school districts increasingly adopt specific instructional materials as a strategy for pursuing equity. In theory, well-designed instructional materials ensure that all students receive instruction in standards-aligned, grade-level appropriate content. When districts stipulate that teachers use them, they reduce the possibility that teachers will choose to use materials that result in some children receiving instruction in less challenging and less relevant material. To contribute to children's learning, however, instructional materials must be used with skill. In particular, teachers must understand how to adapt materials to the needs of specific learners and contexts and how to ensure that materials contain sufficient scaffolds and framing to support cultural relevance and equitable practice.



Decomposition of preparing for teaching using instructional materials

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Preparing for Teaching Using Instructional Materials

Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Unpacking and analyzing the unit	• Identify the primary learning goals. ○ Identify key objectives, terms, concepts, and practices. ○ Compare identified learning goals to one's own students' current knowledge and skill. • Identify and review the primary assessments and tasks. ○ Review any exemplars or answer keys that accompany primary assessments and tasks, and/or complete some or all of the exemplars and tasks yourself. ○ Evaluate whether assessments and tasks match the major goals of the unit. • Identify the sequence of major instructional activities and clarify how they relate to each assessment and major task. ○ Pinpoint "steps" students will need to take on their way to achieving lesson objectives that are critical for understanding. ○ Note terms, concepts, and practice that might be especially hard for students based on what we know about common patterns of student thinking. • Identify how the unit builds on prior learning and connects to future units. • Map the unit against one's own teaching schedule and note any necessary adjustments that will need to be made.



Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Unpacking and analyzing each lesson	• Identify the content point(s) of the lesson. • Review this content from the perspective of learners and identify what will be challenging to understand. • Do the student work and begin to anticipate students' responses. • Identify the role of the lesson in the larger unit and in the longer trajectory of the content. • Identify the most important tasks and activities, including digital teaching supports, and analyze whether and how they will help students meet the learning goals; determine whether the cognitive load is appropriate. • Identify what tools and resources are needed; if not available, determine where they will come from. • Analyze for cultural relevance and equitable practice, paying attention to activity framings, tasks, texts, directions to students, and other features through this lens.



Areas of work for preparing for teaching using instructional materials	Techniques for preparing for teaching using instructional materials
Making any necessary adaptations	• Determine any necessary scaffolds or changes in the unit and in individual lessons to maintain appropriate academic demand and support students' engagement with the material. ○ Ensure that students will be engaged in appropriately cognitively demanding work aligned with the learning goals. ○ Support equitable practice and cultural relevance. ○ Avoid fostering misconceptions. • If necessary, adapt the layout of lessons in the unit to match actual instructional time required and available teaching days. • Adapt the timings laid out in each lesson to match available time and the required time each aspect may take. • If necessary, adapt primary assessments and tasks, e.g., by removing or adding items or components, making language more accessible, or making the content more culturally relevant.
Creating a useable form of the unit and lesson plans to use during instruction	• If needed, create a new version of the unit plan, or annotate the existing one to reflect adaptations. • For each lesson plan: ○ Annotate the plan with any changes. ○ Create a quick agenda for teacher reference, with estimated timings for each activity. ○ Prepare all necessary materials and tools, including technology.



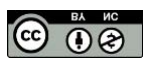
Designing, Adapting, and Using Formative Assessments

Overview of designing, adapting, and using formative assessments

Teachers use a variety of methods to assess what students are learning during and at the end of lessons. These include simple questions, short performance tasks, journal or notebook entries, surveys, or end-of-class “exit tickets.” These frequent checks provide information about students’ current understandings and their sense of themselves as knowers and doers of the content and help the teacher adjust instruction in the moment or from one lesson to the next. Teachers design formative assessments that account for procedural and conceptual understandings, disciplinary practices, metacognitive processes, and development of productive identities, and should value multiple, diverse expressions of what counts as “knowing.”

Advancing justice through designing, adapting, and using formative assessments

Teachers can check for understanding in ways that actively combat patterns of inequity in classrooms. Without skillful, frequent formative assessment, teachers risk perpetuating reductionist views of content (e.g., only checking for right/wrong answers), overlooking student knowledge and skill, and teaching lessons that do not attend to the students in their class. When well designed and used, formative assessments can provide teachers with useful insights about how students are engaging with the content, and this, in turn, helps teachers strengthen instruction to deepen students’ understanding. Because formative assessments can be frequent and varied in form, they can help teachers to see what each of their students knows and can do. The information garnered through diverse formative assessments informs the adaptation of instruction and supports every student where they most need it.



Decomposition of designing, adapting, and using formative assessments

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Designing, Adapting, and Using Formative Assessments

Areas of work for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments	Techniques for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments
Identifying key concepts for formative assessments	• Identify key objectives, terms, concepts, practices, and aspects of productive identities that are the focus of the lesson and unit. • Pinpoint “steps” students will need to take on their way to achieving lesson objectives that are critical for understanding and determining the next instructional steps. • Note terms, concepts, and practice that might be especially hard for students based on what we know about common patterns of student thinking.
Determining when to administer the formative assessments	• Determine whether formative assessment is likely to provide useful information about what individual students or the class as a whole know and can do at a particular point in learning. • Determine the optimal timing for checking students’ understanding and administering the assessment. For example: ○ After teaching something new for the first time ○ After teaching essential content, or content that might be challenging for students ○ Just before the lesson shifts to a new focus ○ After independent, group, or partner work to give the teacher a sense of what students did or thought • Consider how often particular understandings or development may need to be checked during the lesson. • Ensure that the teacher will be able to understand and interpret the results of the assessment—in some cases, in real time.



Areas of work for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments	Techniques for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments
Adapting a formative assessment	If formative assessments are included in curriculum materials, they may need to be adapted. • Check alignment between what the assessment is asking and what the teacher wants to understand. If it is not aligned, the question(s), structure, or method of gathering information may need to be adjusted. • Ensure that the language is clear and accessible to all students. • Ensure that students will be able to complete it in the time allotted.
Designing a formative assessment	• Focus the task on the identified content. • Determine whether the assessment will: ○ Offer immediate or delayed feedback to students and teacher. ○ Be answered individually, by a group, or by the whole class. ○ Be open-ended or constrained in some way. ○ Be process-oriented or metacognitive (e.g., a student reflects on their perseverance) or product-oriented (e.g., asking students to solve a problem). ○ Be oral or written. ○ Be used only if a particular situation arises. ○ Encourage student self-reflection, encourage dialogue about learning, or promote positive dispositions and beliefs about learning. • Ensure that the language is clear and accessible to all students. • Ensure that students will be able to complete it in the time allotted.



Areas of work for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments	Techniques for designing, adapting, and using formative assessments
Administering and interpreting a formative assessment	• Determine whether the formative assessment is likely to provide useful information about what individual students or the class as a whole know and can do at the time you plan to administer the formative assessment. • Frame the formative assessment for students (e.g., “I’d like you to show all of your thinking on this exit ticket so that I can make a good decision about how to use our time together tomorrow”). • Administer the formative assessment and use the results to make tentative inferences about student understanding of core ideas.
Determining next instructional steps	• Given the results of the formative assessment, determine what instructional practice might best support students. Some possibilities include: ○ A new task or problem that allows students to continue grappling with the ideas. ○ Modeling and explaining content to help solidify ideas. ○ A discussion, where students share their current thinking and press one another’s ideas forward.



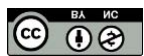
Interpreting Student Work to Inform Instruction

Overview of interpreting student work to inform instruction

Teachers regularly analyze student work, including classwork, homework, and assessments, to inform instruction. They identify individual students' strengths and areas for growth and look for patterns in student thinking and capability across groups. To do this, they determine and apply criteria to student work, making sure to maintain broad conceptions of competence; analyze work against those criteria, guarding against bias and deficit-based interpretations; and then make inferences about what students know and can do. Teachers plan instructional responses to what they learn from analyzing student work, making decisions about where and what kind of additional or differentiated instruction is required.

Advancing justice through interpreting student work to inform instruction

Teachers' interpretations of student work and the instructional decisions made as a result of those interpretations directly impact students' opportunities to learn and to develop academic identities. Interpreting student work enables teachers to appropriately challenge students. Misinterpretation of students' capabilities can perpetuate the denial of ambitious instruction to historically underserved groups. With this in mind, teachers must interpret student work in terms of student competence, seeking evidence of what they know and are able to do. Teachers must also identify what students seem not yet able to do, to plan instruction and supports that will enable students to thrive. Doing so requires teachers to monitor both their interpretations of student work for distortion or bias, and the efficacy of the assessments and assignments they are using to ensure that they are not impediments to students developing and demonstrating competence in a content area.



Decomposition of interpreting student work to inform instruction

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Interpreting Student Work to Inform Instruction

Areas of work for interpreting student work to inform instruction	Techniques for interpreting student work to inform instruction
Reviewing or developing criteria for analysis	• Remind yourself of the task/assignment features. ◦ Review what competencies the task enables students to demonstrate with regard to the learning goals. ◦ Review for barriers or biases (e.g., related to race, gender, class, language). • Review (or develop if necessary) criteria for evaluating the work. ◦ Explicitly name what counts as evidence of understanding or skill. ◦ Identify factors not salient to the focal skill or understanding (e.g., handwriting, spelling, fact error in mathematics). ◦ Ensure that criteria are not based on narrow understandings of the content, or personal preference (e.g., conventional algorithms, a single interpretation of a text). ◦ Consider how data collected from this analysis will be used (e.g., to learn about individual student competence, to see patterns across the class).
Applying criteria to student work	• Apply the criteria to individual examples of student work, ignoring non-salient factors. • Note whether and how the student work demonstrates the relevant competencies, keeping track of useful examples. • Recognize valid novel or non-standard approaches and revise criteria or definition of competence accordingly. • Note any indications that the task was not clear or did not allow students to demonstrate competence. • Consider whether various ways of knowing and doing are accounted for as criteria are applied. • Consider and note the ways patterns of bias might affect the application of criteria.



Areas of work for interpreting student work to inform instruction	Techniques for interpreting student work to inform instruction
Articulating inferences	• Describe relevant features of the student work sample (e.g., strengths, weaknesses, areas for growth, areas of misunderstanding, novel ideas). • Double check conclusions about the student's competence, looking closely at the amount and quality of available evidence. ○ Consider other plausible interpretations. ○ Check for the influence of personal preference or style, societal biases, teacher-student relationship, or factors that may be influencing one's interpretations of student work. • Check inferences for overgeneralizations based on limited evidence (e.g., overstatement of students' skill or understanding). • Consider how the design or implementation of the task might have affected student work.
Examining patterns and determining next steps	• Looking across a relevant batch of student work (e.g., from a class, or from all classes at a particular grade or level), identify common patterns in strengths, areas for growth, areas of misunderstanding, novel ideas. • Double-check conclusions about patterns in student work by, for example, counting the number of times a specific example of student thinking or misconception appears. • With patterns in mind, look back and look ahead. ○ Consider how instruction offered prior to the assignment might have impacted students' performance. ○ Consider instructional approaches to responding to specific patterns, including areas for additional instruction or a different instructional approach, opportunities to accelerate instruction, or possibilities for differentiating instruction for different groups of students.



Providing Feedback to Students

Overview of providing feedback to students

Feedback supports learning by focusing students' attention on specific aspects of their work and supporting their ongoing learning. Good feedback is specific, focused, and not overwhelming in scope, and supports students' positive perceptions of their own capability. Giving skillful feedback requires the teacher to make strategic choices about the frequency, method, and content of feedback and to communicate in ways that are understandable by students. Feedback can be provided in many forms, including written and oral, and these each require consideration of how the mode of communication might shape students' experience of the feedback.

Advancing justice through providing feedback to students

Feedback helps students to see their strengths and focus on areas for improvement. Skillful feedback, whether offered publicly or privately, positions learners as visible, valued, and in control of their learning. It demonstrates respect for students' ideas and work by taking them seriously. Equitable provision of feedback requires that teachers understand and intentionally work against normalized patterns by which Black, Latiné, and Indigenous children receive feedback that is negative, based on teachers' misunderstandings of children's thinking, or is non-academic.

The measure of feedback lies less in what the teacher says than in what students interpret the teacher as having said. Feedback that students interpret as affirming of their capacity and supporting their learning not only helps them improve their work or thinking in a particular moment, but also supports ownership of their learning and their identity as practitioners of an academic discipline.



Decomposition of providing feedback to students

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Providing Feedback to Students

Areas of work for providing feedback to students	Techniques for providing feedback to students
Preparing feedback	• Interpret student work or thinking in relation to the learning goal. • Determine the purpose and main points of the feedback. • Determine the timing and mode of the feedback. • Determine the audience for the feedback and how it might position students.
Using appropriate language and tone	• Use clear and respectful language. • Reference specific examples from student work or thinking. • Provide feedback while students are still working toward the goal, or contextualize feedback in regards to a current goal. • Offer next steps. • Offer a useable amount of feedback. Possible approaches • Begin by identifying strengths or understandings. • Open with a question that invites students to reflect on their progress or success.



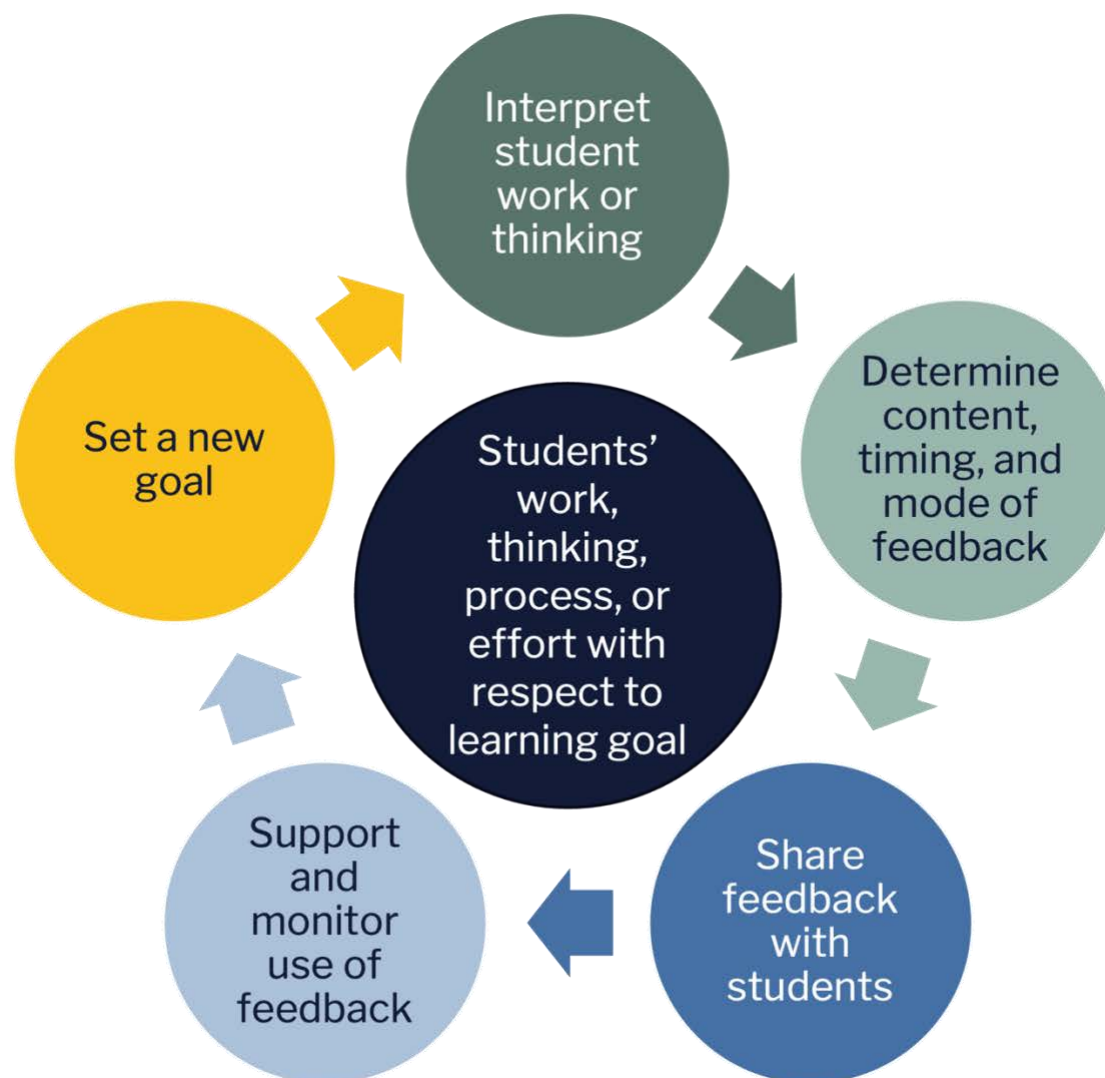
Areas of work for providing feedback to students	Techniques for providing feedback to students
Focusing students' attention on specific features of their work	• Direct feedback to the task, process, and/or effort rather than on students themselves. • Identify and build on what students already know and can do. • Support students to see their progress. • Name specific aspects of the work or thinking that are strong and those that need improvement. Possible approaches • Identify or elicit strengths or strategies and specific examples from the work. • Name or invite students to name a process or strategy they used and to identify the outcome it produced. • Describe or collaboratively determine discrepancies between the student work and the learning goal. • Identify or support students to identify errors or misconceptions. • Provide corrective or clarifying information.
Supporting students to use the feedback	• Give students time to consider the feedback. • Offer, or support students to articulate, concrete next steps to move toward their goals. • Design opportunities for students to apply the feedback. • Orient students to the ways current feedback is relevant to future work. Possible approaches • Invite students to respond or ask questions. • Model a process or strategy students might use to improve their work or thinking. • Name a specific opportunity that students will have to apply the feedback to improve their work or process. • Invite students to set a new goal.



Areas of work for providing feedback to students	Techniques for providing feedback to students
Monitoring students' response	• Interpret student work or thinking for evidence of new understandings, processes, or outcomes. • Acknowledge students' use of feedback. • Support students to seek feedback independently. • Support students to provide feedback to one another. Possible approaches • Invite students to reflect on the way they responded to feedback and how it affected their work or thinking. • Give students opportunities to request specific kinds of feedback or feedback on specific aspects of their work. • Ask questions to help students reflect on their progress and goals in relation to the feedback. • Reflect on how the language, content, amount, or timing of feedback may have shaped students' response.



Visual representation of providing feedback to students



Analyzing Instruction for the Purpose of Improving It

Overview of analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it

Learning to teach and continuing to improve require regular analysis of instruction and its effectiveness. Teachers study their own teaching and that of their colleagues in order to improve their practice. Analyzing instruction may take place individually or with colleagues and involves identifying patterns, opportunities, and specific moves, and making hypotheses for how to improve. Teachers pay close attention to and study their students' contributions, work, and engagement, and challenge themselves to see and understand more, and to consider how their own actions are supporting or impeding their students to flourish. They systematically interrogate their underlying assumptions and seek to develop new instructional habits and strategies that support students to thrive.

Advancing justice through analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it

Teachers make numerous moves and in-the-moment decisions every day. Their moves and decisions are often shaped by deeply held assumptions and dominant notions about students, the content, and teaching. By analyzing instruction, teachers attend to subtle patterns and biases and learn about how they might impact children. Analyzing instruction also provides opportunities to study students' work, which can support teachers to see students' strengths, deepen their own content knowledge, and develop new strategies and approaches that can intervene on patterns that reproduce inequity. Reflective teachers ask themselves continuously how they might be contributing to the perpetuation of racism and oppression through specific actions or failures to act and seek out resources to support these reflections, including colleagues with similar goals.



Decomposition of analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it

Table 1: Areas of Work and Techniques for Analyzing Instruction for the Purpose of Improving It

Areas of work for analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it	Techniques for analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it
Identifying a focus	• Identify specific areas of instruction to focus on. • Develop questions for inquiry that create opportunities to challenge assumptions and biases about students, content, and teaching practices. • Determine artifacts that will provide insight into the focus area such as: ○ Video records of instruction; ○ Records of student work or formative assessments; ○ Observation notes from others; and ○ Input from students.
Collecting artifacts of practice	• Collect the artifacts in ways that guard against biases. • Account for the limitations of a single observation or snapshot of teaching. • Identify elements of teaching and learning that are not captured by a given set of artifacts.
Analyzing artifacts of practice	• Seek patterns or trends and form hypotheses about students, learning, classroom environment, and teachers. • Consider how your own identities shape what you see and understand about your students and their learning. • Be careful to avoid jumping to conclusions and seek additional evidence to support or challenge hypotheses.



Areas of work for analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it	Techniques for analyzing instruction for the purpose of improving it
Identifying and using professional resources	• Seek recommendations from colleagues or coaches. • Draw on a wide range of resources, including those from other grades and content areas, and those developed by members of non-dominant communities and cultures. • Review materials from coursework or professional development. • Consult materials recommended or published by professional or community organizations.
Determining and implementing next steps	• Identify concrete actions, strategies, or techniques to try. • Determine what to collect to document work on next steps.





University of Michigan Regents

Jordan B. Acker
Michael J. Behm
Mark J. Bernstein
Paul W. Brown
Sarah Hubbard
Denise Ilitch
Carl J. Meyers
Katherine E. White

The University of Michigan, as an equal opportunity employer, complies with all applicable federal and state laws regarding nondiscrimination. The University of Michigan is committed to a policy of equal opportunity for all persons and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, marital status, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, disability, religion, height, weight, or veteran status in employment, educational programs and activities, and admissions.