THE ESSENTIALS

PSB
NEW MEXICO

INTRODUCTION

The day-to-day responsibilities and learning curve for new teachers can be overwhelming. In most schools, new teachers assume the same responsibilities as veteran teachers on day one. They are also tasked with getting the same student performance gains as their experienced counterparts. To support, develop, and retain these talented new educators, the PSB has cultivated partnerships with teacher development specialists and delivered new teacher training and support programs such as Achieve Excellence – Rising. Building on experience and lessons learned from the field, PSB developed this guide to help beginning teachers understand the essential systems and processes they must create and the actions they must take to prepare for, plan, deliver, and assess high-quality instruction and improve student performance.

The information included in this guide was obtained through numerous surveys and interviews with beginning and veteran teachers, teacher coaches, mentors, and school and district leaders from across New Mexico. These educators were asked to reflect on their first years of teaching and their experience supporting beginning teachers. The information provided from these reflections was used to identify the essential understandings necessary for new teachers to overcome the most common challenges and thrive in the classroom. Also captured in this guide are personal stories and highlights from new and veteran teachers who shared their successes and challenges, always emphasizing the importance of building schoolwide professional relationships.

The essential understandings are organized under overarching themes identified in survey responses and interviews. The themes include Establishing Relationships, Preparing for Instruction, Planning for Instruction, Delivering Instruction, and Improving Instruction. Within each theme, there are two to nine topics that new teachers should consider when preparing, planning, delivering, and improving instruction. Each topic is divided into three sections.

1. Essential Teacher Understandings - A brief introduction addressing the "why" or importance of the topic.
2. Essential Teacher Moves - A presentation of successful models, steps, or strategies to approach the work.
3. References and Resources for Further Learning - A list of resources to dive deeper into the topic.

If the reader finds the topic summary relevant and meaningful to their development, we encourage further exploration of the subject by:

- Reviewing the Resources for Further Learning.
- Working with a mentor, coach, colleague, or school leader to develop a deeper understanding.
- Seeking additional professional development.
- Pursuing other means of learning and individual growth opportunities.

In conclusion, as you approach this critical work, always strive to do your absolute best to establish a balance between your personal well-being and your work obligations. Finding this balance will safeguard your physical and mental health and increase your ability to support your students. Throughout this journey, remember, as a beginning teacher, you are embarking on an extraordinary career that will significantly impact the lives of the students and families you
serve. We wish you success as you take on some of the most fulfilling and vital work of your career in education.

This manual was developed to provide guidance and technical assistance to Performance Coaches supporting RISE, THRIVE, and LEAD School Leaders in 2021-2022. The materials developed may be used for training only to support RISE, THRIVE, and LEAD School Leaders.

Elisabeth Peterson
Director Priority Schools Bureau
New Mexico Public Education Department
Email: Elisabeth.Peterson@state.nm.us

CONTRIBUTORS TO DESIGN AND WRITING

Elisa Begueria
Superintendent, Lake Arthur Public Schools

Kelly Bowles
Education Consultant

Valerie Brea
Executive Director, Southwest Regional Education
Cooperative

Ashley Ingram
High School Teacher, Roswell Independent School
District

Michael Kight
Kight & Associates, LLC

Valerie King
Education Consultant

Nicole Lambson
Executive Director of Curriculum, Instruction, &
Assessment, Farmington Municipal Schools

Bryan Moffitt, PhD
Assistant Professor, Eastern New Mexico University

Rachel Nance
Intentional Design Consulting

Eileen Reed
ESR Consulting, LLC

Matthew Vetterly, Ed. D
Assistant Professor, Eastern New Mexico University

Denise Woody
Senior Consultant, Partners in Learning

NEW MEXICO TEACHER INTERVIEWEES

Josh Acuna
Santa Fe Public Schools

Joe Allred
Los Lunas Public Schools

Theresa Ambrogi
Albuquerque Public Schools

Lori Baca
Lordsburg Municipal Schools

Alisa Cooper de Uribe
Albuquerque Public Schools

Molly Crosby
Clovis Municipal School

Erin Gockel
Farmington Municipal Schools

Becki Hammond
Lake Arthur Municipal Schools

Lisa Michaud
Clovis Municipal Schools

Thalia Pantoja-Gruis
Roswell Independent School District

Sharla Rusk
San Jun Municipal Schools

Meredith Scott
Santa Fe Public Schools

Ralph Torres
Pojoaque Valley School District

Jamie Torres
Santa Fe Public Schools

Amy Wadkins
Farmington Municipal Schools

Kristen Winfrey
Farmington Municipal Schools

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- John C. Maxwell

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH STUDENTS

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The storyteller, the hoodie wearer, the quiet and shy, the angry, and the eternally cheerful; our students have many personalities and bring exciting stories to the classroom every school year. Not to mention that we, as educators, bring our personalities and character traits to the classroom as well. Great teachers know that instruction can be far less effective when they do not make personal connections with their students. They have learned that teacher-student relationships are the foundational structure upon which authentic learning is built. Without positive relationships between teachers and students, learning is often reduced to simple task completion and grade assignment, frequently lacking engagement. So, how do we merge pedagogy and relationships to create a pathway for authentic and meaningful learning? It's a matter of finding the balance between the two, investing the time, and being open to feedback.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Balancing competence and relationships

"In classrooms where caring is exhibited in abundance, but competence is lacking, strong teacher-student relationships will decay and ultimately collapse" (Cotton, 2016). Teachers must not sacrifice the number one priority when building relationships: teaching. When students understand that a teacher is competent and willing to fulfill their most important duty, this opens relationship-building opportunities. "We are not their parent. We are not their older sibling. We are not their savior. We are their teacher. In some cases, they will want to be close to us and have a stronger connection. In some cases, they won't. In all cases, it will be our job to teach" (Lemov, 2018).

Before a meaningful connection can be made and maintained, students must be confident that the teacher can do their primary job with fidelity. Below are a few traits of competent teachers.

- Consistent and reliable.
- Makes expectations known, explained, and transparent.
- Communicates feedback regularly.
- Diligent when responding to student and parent communications such as calls, requests for help, emails, etc.
- Plans lessons that are rigorous and meaningful.

- Personalizes lessons based on student interests and curiosities.

- Consistently holds students accountable for doing their best work.

- Continually reminds students their primary job is to learn, and theirs is to teach them (with some fun thrown in, of course!)

- Are positive, uplifting, and persistent in their endeavors even when the content is complex, and the struggle is real.

Balancing time and relationships

Do you know all your students' names? Which ones are involved in extracurricular activities? Who has extenuating circumstances outside of school? Who is shy, outspoken, and self-conscious? Which students are susceptible to pet peeves, sensory loads, and insecurities? Have you gotten to know them as individuals outside of their data and your seating assignments? As educator Wozniak states, "When we know who our students are and are able to speak to their interests, we will see exponential increases in their motivation and their cognitive abilities." This tends to occur more naturally and faster for self-contained classrooms at the elementary level than at the middle and secondary levels.

Despite time constraints, getting to know students, even when you feel overwhelmed by the day-to-day teaching tasks, is well worth the sacrifice in the long run. When students feel individualized, acknowledged, and known, they are more likely to build a rapport with their teachers based on mutual understanding and openness. Below are a few tips that may help you balance your time and connect with your students.

- Do "Getting to Know You" activities at the beginning of the year.

- During activities and interactions, pay attention to body language, gestures, and posture.

- Initiate conversations between class periods or when approached at recess, lunch, or while on duty.

- Allow room for autonomy and expression in assignments.

- Have fun with your students: Need a brain break? Take one! Want to dive into a relatable off-the-subject topic (for only a minute)? Do it!

- Attend your students' extracurricular activities (tournaments, games, awards ceremonies, performances, etc.).

- Don't be afraid to be relatable. Share appropriate learning stories and how they shaped you as a person.

- Set boundaries for appropriate and inappropriate topics.

- Be a safe adult: don't share what a student tells you in confidence or share information regarding a student with other students. It's generally wise to listen more than you talk. If you think a conversation is moving in an inappropriate direction, let the student know and direct them to the appropriate staff member or adult.

- Always remember your duty as a mandated reporter. See the topic *Supporting Students with Personal Issues, Trauma, and Abuse.*

Soliciting feedback and input

Educators are always encouraged to provide feedback to students regarding their assignments, behaviors, and overall learning. We expect feedback from administrators and mentors as an integral part of our learning cycle. However, how often do we ask our students how their learning is going? How do they feel about the effectiveness of our instruction and materials? How do they feel about the classroom and learning environment?

"Students have a comprehensive view of how their teachers educate and motivate. Student evaluations can be collected cheaply, quickly, and regularly, giving teachers the opportunities to make real-time adjustments to their teaching. Teachers can learn about their students from feedback questionnaires — how they learn, whom they know well in the class, and with whom they work best" (Shafer, 2017). Giving students a voice and a safe place to be heard is vital in building relationships. Teachers should solicit and value the input their students provide and avoid feeling personal offense. In addition to asking for student feedback, teachers should be willing to listen and change when students provide good feedback. Below are a few suggestions for getting input from your students.

- Administer a class feedback survey at the end of each nine weeks or semester.
- Establish clear expectations for student responses by giving examples and non-examples before administering student feedback forms.
- Ask students to rate lessons on a 1-5 or 1-10 scale in different areas (interesting, fun, challenging, easy, learning level, etc.).
- Ask more than content questions and include modes of learning questions: Did you learn in your small group? Was the writing piece beneficial?
- Use exit tickets, "If you were able to change one thing about the unit/lesson/semester/assignment, what would it be and why?"
- Use information from student responses to make meaningful and reasonable changes.
  » State to your students, "I am making a change based on the feedback you provided…" or "I can't completely change x, but we can compromise by…" or "I heard many of you state that you would like to do an assignment based on x… here's what I've come up with."
- Allow students to create classroom rules or social contracts cooperatively.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Am I exhibiting strong competency, confidence, and ability to teach my students?
2. Do students and parents view me as a competent teacher? What evidence do I have that supports my answer?
3. Are students willing to take learning risks in my classroom environment?
4. Have I set clear boundaries with students?
5. Am I approachable and open to listening to students' feedback?
6. What is my process for soliciting feedback from my student and parents?
7. Do I engage with students through content with opportunities for personal connection and fun?

8. Have I regularly greeted my students by name and checked in on their interests and extracurricular involvements?

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Teacher Tip

Take time to talk!
Find time to talk with your students. Getting to know them and building meaningful relationships will improve academics, student behavior, and the overall quality of classroom experiences for the students and the teacher.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COLLEAGUES

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

One of the benefits of the teaching profession is the friendships you establish with other teachers. In their Q12 assessment of workplace engagement, the Gallup Organization lists one of the criteria for an engaging work environment as a positive response to the statement: "I have a best friend at work." While not every teacher will be your "best friend," having friends you can count on will go a long way to helping you navigate the many challenges of the teaching profession and potentially form the foundation for some lifelong friendships.

Joining the "school family" is an important part of your early teaching career. In many ways, schools are more intense than other organizations in terms of the relationships among colleagues because you spend so much time together united around the common goal of helping students learn. Teachers typically meet daily to plan together in department or grade-level teams, PLCs, or other structured collaborative settings. In addition, teachers attend faculty meetings, engage in professional development, and often observe one another teach. This engagement leads to more "contact time with colleagues" than in many other professions.

The quality of the relationships among teachers is an important ingredient in the culture and climate of the school. Is the culture among colleagues one of mutual support and respect, or is it competitive and toxic? The answer to this question will either contribute to or detract from a teacher's success and career satisfaction. There are schools with an established culture that welcomes and supports new teachers and schools where it's "every teacher for themself." The difference is profound!

As a professional, you want to do everything you can to positively influence the school while building positive relationships and friendships with your colleagues that will enrich your teaching career.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

The article, *9 Ways to Build Strong Teacher Relationships with Colleagues* by Nancy Barile suggests nine strategies teachers can use to build effective relationships with colleagues. A brief explanation of the nine strategies can be found below.

1. **Be Trustworthy** – Whenever people talk about essential elements in successful work relationships, they almost always include trust. When looking for people we can trust, we often overlook that trust is a two-way street. If you want "trust" in relationships, you must be trustworthy. As Barile states: "Few things damage a teacher's relationship with their colleagues more than spilling secrets, gossiping, or talking smack about administrators. When someone tells you something in confidence, keep it to yourself."

2. **Listen** – Remember that you are the "newbie." While you may be enthusiastic and have a lot to offer your colleagues, remember they have the experience you can benefit from. Learn to listen first and then present your ideas. Difficult Conversations, a topic included in this guide, provides an example of how to do this when your colleagues are unwilling to listen. In general, however, veteran teachers want to listen to your ideas and often recognize that you may have new learning or strategies they

don't know. So, listening first and then following up with a statement like, "I'd like to share an idea I have ... or I'd like to share something I observed during my student teaching that might help here" will bring you into the conversation in a way that demonstrates respect and your willingness to contribute.

3. **Ask Questions** – Asking questions is an easy and effective way to build relationships with your colleagues. Sharla Rusk, one of the interviewees for this guide, stated, "...Reach out for help early and don't be embarrassed or don't be afraid because all the teachers have been where you are... reach out early and get help." Your success as a teacher contributes to the school's success, so ask for information and support when needed.

4. **Support Your Colleagues** – In addition to daily teaching responsibilities, most teachers typically have additional responsibilities such as serving on committees and project-focused teams tasked with building assessments or developing lessons for their team. Ask how you can help and be willing to step up and participate.

5. **Offer Your Help** – What unique skills or interests do you possess that may assist your colleagues? Are you particularly good with technology? Maybe you could help colleagues resolve technology issues in their classrooms? Demonstrating your willingness to help your colleagues is an opportunity to "give back" for the many hours teachers often dedicate to supporting new teachers in their school. It demonstrates your willingness to be a team player.

6. **Respect Boundaries** – In her article, Barile states, "Respecting your fellow teachers' boundaries is critical to building bridges—and keeping the workplace civil." She points out that it's essential to give your colleagues their space. Don't hover or interrupt if you see them in a phone conversation or reading alone. Remember that while you have many concerns as a new teacher, every teacher has a private life and responsibilities, so finding the balance between asking and offering help while respecting boundaries is a behavior you should be mindful of.

7. **Be Real** – The basic message here is to be authentic. When you interact with your colleagues, be your authentic self, and be honest. Barile also suggests that you should focus on building genuine relationships with your fellow teachers, not simply transactional relationships.

8. **Celebrate** – One thing that schools and faculties typically do well is celebrating. Be a participant - show up for school social events, sporting events, etc. While you don't have to attend all events, be mindful that showing up and participating outside of your school day responsibilities communicates a willingness to get to know your colleagues beyond their role as a teacher

9. **Branch Out** – This strategy speaks to developing work-based relationships beyond your teacher colleagues. For example, building relationships with administrators. While Barile shares that some of her 'bosses' have become dear friends. She cautions teachers to avoid the

complications that come from building friendships with administrators. Keep relationships healthy and based on mutual respect. When necessary, avoid blurring lines by saying something like "I'm speaking to you as a friend now," or "As a member of the faculty, I think…"

These nine strategies and good intentions can provide a roadmap for building positive and effective relationships with your work colleagues.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. As you think about trust in the workplace, what behaviors do you want to commit to demonstrate you are trustworthy?

2. From your perspective, reflect on the five most important qualities of a satisfying work environment. List three behaviors you can exhibit or commit to for each that support the identified quality.

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New Mexico Educator Highlight

Sharla Rusk
San Jon Municipal Schools

Sharla Rusk was a microbiology major at Eastern New Mexico University in 2014. She now teaches various science courses for 7th and 8th grade, including Biology and Chemistry, in a small rural middle school in the San Jon Municipal School District. So, how did a microbiology student end up teaching science in a rural New Mexico school district, and what insights does she have to share with other new or prospective teachers?

Like many teachers who pursue teaching through an alternative route program, Sharla had an experience that ignited her interest in teaching. During her master's program, she was required to teach lower-level labs and, in her words, "...*I really, really, enjoyed it!*" And then, taking the advice of her mother-in-law, a retired teacher herself, she took on substitute teaching opportunities to earn extra money while completing her graduate degree. During a long-term substitute opportunity teaching seventh-grade science for Clovis Municipal Schools, Sharla felt she found her calling. And, like many good principals, the one at her school recognized her talents and offered her a teaching position on the condition that she meet the NM PED teacher credentialing requirements.

With a new goal in mind, Sharla enrolled in and completed the Alternative Educator Preparation Program offered by *NMPED, called the OPAL program (Online Portfolio for Alternative Licensure).* While the alternative route to licensure programs provides a valuable and much needed teacher pipeline, there are many challenges program graduates face due to the unique design of these programs. In Sharla's case, the lack of a semester-long student teaching experience left her unprepared for the classroom management issues facing beginning teachers. In addition, she felt her lesson design strategy was lacking and that it may compound the classroom management issues.

Fortunately, during her first year in the classroom, Sharla was assigned a highly qualified mentor who took her under her wing and shepherded her through her first year. One of the many things Sharla appreciated about her mentor was that she was in the same school and taught the same subject. She was also encouraging and positive in her support of Sharla. In her own words, Sharla said, "*I think it was really important for me and my career to have a mentor. Someone there who was in the same field as me, someone to help me get through that first year. My mentor helped me be the teacher I am today and stay in education. I probably would have quit my first year if I hadn't had that support.*"

So, what did Sharla's mentor do? She helped improve her instructional planning and delivery strategies, decreasing classroom disruptions.

Along with addressing the downtime during transitions, her mentor helped her clarify the vision for her classroom. Sharla said, "*Classroom management was the worst for me and discipline. My mentor sat me down and said: When you think of a classroom, how do you want your classroom to go? What are the things that you want, and how do you want your kids to interact? Then, she helped me make a discipline plan and how to be consistent with it. She also observed me in the classroom and noticed that there was a lot of downtime and how that affected management.*"

Sharla also credits her mentor with deepening her understanding of the New Mexico content standards. She helped her understand how to break down the standards and backward plan—deciding what students need to know and determining the strategies and learning activities she would implement to get them there.

Fast-forward six years, Sharla is a veteran teacher and mentor for new teachers. She now teaches in the San Jon School District, supporting her students and community and living closer to family.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH COACHES AND MENTORS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Teaching is a complex art that takes time and support to master. As a first-year teacher, hopefully, you will have multiple support systems to help you as you begin to master the craft of teaching. Typical support systems include your grade or content area team, school leaders, instructional coach, and a school-based mentor. This section speaks to forming an effective relationship with your coach and mentor.

Instructional coaches and mentors have a unique role, with some overlap, when supporting new teachers. Coaches are typically focused on teaching practice and its impact on student achievement. In contrast, a mentor's focus is broader, helping teachers adapt to the school climate and culture, access resources, and offer guidance on curriculum and teaching strategies.

ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Like most relationships, we get more when we invest in them. Taking the time to get to know your coach and mentor and let them know a bit about you will help build a sense of partnership. In addition, establishing a clear understanding of how and when you will work together provides structure and clarity to the working relationship, reduces the likelihood of misunderstandings and miscommunication, and helps build a strong foundation for the work as you move forward.

One way of developing an effective relationship is to think about it in two categories (1) Personal and (2) Professional. The following provides suggestions for both areas.

Personal Relationship – *Begin with a "Getting to Know You" Conversation.*

A conversation like this is helpful from the perspective of helping the teacher know a little more about their coach or mentor beyond their assigned role. It also demonstrates an interest in and recognition of their expertise and contributions to the profession. Especially in the case of a school-based mentor, their acceptance of this role is typically in addition to their regular teaching responsibilities.

Here are some ideas about possible topics to discuss in an initial conversation:
- "What was your experience in your first year of teaching?
- "What was the greatest challenge you faced, and how did you overcome it?"

- "Why did you decide to teach? Why this profession?"
- "What content area do you particularly like and why?"
- "What has been your greatest success in supporting new teachers?"

The teacher should also feel free to share a bit about their background. What motivated them to select teaching as a profession? What concerns do they have about their first year of teaching?

Professional Relationship – *Clarify the Specifics of the Working Relationship.*
This conversation is about creating clarity around the mechanics of the working relationship and agreements that both parties need to make to ensure that the relationship is productive and achieves the desired outcomes.

Typically, there is more structure around the coaching relationship as it is often under the direction and guidance of either the central office or the campus principal. While the principal typically assigns the mentor, the expectations for the work and the frequency of contact between the teacher and mentor are generally less defined. Teachers and mentors can benefit from conversations that clarify agreements for the working relationship.

In the article, A Solid Foundation for a Mentoring Relationship (Weinberg, 2021), the author identifies three categories of agreements between the mentor and mentee:

1. Mentor-mentee interactions
2. A professional, reciprocal, goal-oriented relationship
3. Confidentiality and trust

While these agreements speak to the mentor relationship, many also apply to the relationship between a teacher and coach.

1. **Mentor-mentee interactions:** This is where the teacher and mentor reach agreements about the basics of the relationship. It includes topics such as:

    • Meeting time, frequency, and location

    • Norms for rescheduling or canceling a meeting

    • Preferred mode of communication (email, text, etc.)

    Taking the time to plan these agreements collaboratively elevates the relationship. It increases the teacher's likelihood of receiving the support they need in a way that is not burdensome to the mentor.

2. **A professional, reciprocal, goal-oriented relationship** – Agreements in this area focus on helping the teacher grow professionally through reflective thinking. Depending on the mentor's experience and professional development, this may come naturally. However, less-experienced mentors may default to "telling and showing" rather than helping teachers grow through self-reflection. The teacher can reduce "telling and showing" behaviors by asking questions like, "Can you share a little about your

mentoring style?" "When is it best to show me or tell me something, and when is it best for you to help me figure it out on my own through coaching strategies?" "Can I share a little about how I learn best?"

3. **Confidentiality and Trust** – Confidentiality and trust are the foundation of a productive relationship. Teachers need to feel safe to take risks, share where they need support, and know that conversations about their difficulties will stay between them and their mentors. If the mentor or coach does not address this, it is helpful to state something like: "Can we talk about confidentiality?" "Is it safe for me to share where I'm struggling and know that it will remain between us?" Of course, this does not mean that if the mentor sees an area where the teacher needs additional support, they cannot request it on the teacher's behalf. However, it does mean that it is done professionally and with the teacher's knowledge and agreement.

Taking the time to invest in getting to know the mentor and coach and clarifying how the teacher will work with them is an empowering step toward securing the support they will need as a developing teacher.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

It can be said that mentorship is a relationship in which a more experienced or knowledgeable person helps guide a less experienced or knowledgeable person. It is a learning and development partnership between someone with experience and someone who wants to learn.

1. Think of a time in your personal or professional life that you served as a mentor, whether formally or informally?

   • What did you do to make the relationship work?

   • What attributes did your mentee exhibit that made it easy and rewarding for you to serve in this capacity?

2. What would I like to get from my coaching or mentoring relationship? What are my goals? What would I like to accomplish?

3. What are my strengths? How can I build upon them and continue to grow them? Are there places where I can use my strengths and leverage them?

4. What are my opportunities for improvement? How can my coach or mentor help me best?

5. How disciplined am I? Will I need my coach or mentor to take an accountability role, or am I self-motivated?

6. What do effective teachers do well? What can I do to improve in these areas?

7. What are three of the most significant barriers to my success as a teacher? What can I do to overcome these barriers? How can my coach or mentor help me?

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Teacher Tip

Find a mentor or coach!
If you are not assigned a mentor or coach, or the one you have is not helpful, seek one out. An experienced and trusted mentor can guide you, praise you when you do well, offer advice on how to improve, and provide reassurance and support. When choosing your "real" mentor or coach, be sure to find someone who has demonstrated success, is respected by peers and students and has the time to give you the attention you will need.

PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH PARENTS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Healthy parent-teacher relationships contribute significantly to student success. The Consortium on Chicago School Research found that schools with strong connections with parents were ten times more likely to improve in math and four times more likely to improve in reading than schools that measured weak in this area (O'Bryon, 2021).

Positive parent-teacher relationships foster effective home-school connections. Early in the year, teachers should make every effort possible to get to know their students' parents and establish a mutual relationship of trust. Creating a safe and welcoming environment where parents feel they can share their concerns and desires for their children is vital if teachers want to increase student achievement, particularly for our most challenging families and students.

In *Unmistakable Impact*, Jim Knight offers five partnership communication strategies; listen, ask good questions, find common ground, control difficult emotions, and love your partners. Teachers who embrace these communication strategies as they develop relationships with parents will find success for all involved. As teachers begin forging the gap between home and school, they should consider which communication strategies listed above could help them improve their parent-teacher relationships.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Parent-Teacher Communication

Open the lines of communication with parents as soon as possible. Communication should be a priority from the first day of school. Distribute a "Get to Know Me" letter. If parents cannot meet in person, they will still have a connection. Gather parent contact information and distribute your information and hours of availability to parents right away. You can do this during "Meet the Teacher" nights, the first day of school, or for secondary teachers, in an initial letter or email to parents that accompanies your class syllabus or outline. Communicate with parents regularly regarding student progress, behavior, praises, concerns, and school events. Ideally, you want to have at least one or two interactions with parents before the first parent-teacher conference.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

If possible, conduct parent-teacher conferences in person and make additional efforts to accommodate parents with work schedules that prevent them from attending during the designated times. Prepare for the meetings by collecting student data, work samples, and student self-reflection statements. Create a comfortable area in the classroom that ensures student confidentiality during the conference. During the

conference, review student goals and use data to support the student's progress towards these goals. Keep the tone kind, encouraging, and positive. The effort put into these exchanges will pay off in the end. If students know that parents and teachers are on the same page, they will rise to the expectations of the collective group and will be less likely to misbehave or be off task. If students are experiencing difficulty in a class, do not wait until parent-teacher conferences to inform the parents. Keep an open dialogue year-round to avoid damaging confrontations.

Family Engagement

Family engagement consists of school events such as Science Night, Math Night, Reading Night, sports events, or choral presentations. It can also encompass single classes displaying a program or works of art based on recent content learned. Do not limit engagement activities to these in-school functions, as many families may not be able to participate because of socioeconomic reasons, childcare difficulties, or work obligations. Bachman et al. (2021) described family engagement as equipping caregivers with strategies that best fit the students' developmental stage, providing opportunities for feedback, and sharing their perspectives

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Parent-Teacher Communication

1. Have I provided my contact information and hours of availability to caregivers?
2. Do I offer various options that promote parent/teacher communication? (PowerSchool, Class Dojo, Email, Telephone, Newsletters, Syllabus, Office Hours, etc.)

Parent-Teacher Conferences

1. Did I send out a notice in advance for in-person parent-teacher conferences?
2. Are there alternate forms for the meeting if parents cannot attend in person? (Zoom, phone, email)
3. Do I have student work samples and data to support the discussion centered around student progress?

Family Engagement

1. What opportunities do parents have to attend programs, games, events, etc.?
2. Beyond coming into the school building, are efforts made to include parents in the learning process?

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PROFESSIONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH SCHOOL LEADERS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

For teachers, few relationships are as important to their professional growth and career satisfaction as between them and their school leaders. When relationships between teachers and school leaders are supportive and healthy, it enhances job satisfaction and positively impacts relationships with students and colleagues.

When building effective relationships with administrators, it's important to remember that everyone has the same goal – to help students succeed academically and in all aspects of their lives. It's also helpful to think about the unique role and responsibilities of the school leaders. While teachers have a primary and necessary focus on their classroom, school leaders must maintain a whole-school perspective responsible for meeting the needs of all stakeholders. Understanding this whole-school perspective can sometimes help teachers understand why their school leaders may ask or require them to complete specific tasks that may not seem essential or related to their classroom.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

One of the most important responsibilities of a school leader is to develop and nurture the talent of their teachers. Excellent leaders understand that when their teachers are successful, their students are successful. Put another way, school leaders support their students by supporting their teachers. The more positive and productive the relationship between teachers and school leaders, the more likely teachers will enhance their development and, thus, their effectiveness with students.

Nancy Barile, an award-winning teacher, lists six characteristics principals look for in their teachers. These characteristics allow you to shape your approach to the professional you want to be.

- **Don't Be Afraid of Change** – Principals are constantly responding to changes in curriculum, district requirements, state mandates, etc. Consequently, desirable characteristics of their teachers include maintaining a flexible mindset and willingness to adapt. Remember, you're on the same team, and working together to implement new programs and practices can lead to new professional growth and improved outcomes for your students.

- **Be Positive** – There are many stressors that teachers and administrators face every day. When teachers exhibit optimism over negativity, it positively impacts their students and colleagues. As a new teacher, you will find that every school has "naysayers" and grumpy teachers who tend to see the worst in everything. Avoid these types of conversations and find teachers with an optimistic "can do" attitude. Avoiding these negative people will increase your ability to build positive relationships and improve your overall state of mind and well-being as a human.

- **Get the Job Done** – Teachers are often asked to take on additional responsibilities beyond their classroom, such as serving on committees, attending professional development, school events, etc. You don't always have to say yes. There will be times when you are at capacity and cannot do one more thing! However, if you do commit, follow through. Principals value teachers who follow through and get the job done when they accept additional responsibilities.

- **Be a Problem-Solver** – One of my favorite teacher friends used to say: "Be a problem-solver, not a problem-glorifier." Principals are constantly confronted with problems such as teacher resistance to change, student behavior issues, upset parents, and interactions with district bureaucracy. When sharing problems, do your best to offer solutions or possible workarounds. This may not always be possible, but it conveys that you are not a problem-glorifier.

- **Grow Professionally** – As a new teacher, your first year can feel like drinking from a firehose when you think about everything you need to learn. Demonstrating your willingness to seek support, participate in professional development, and accept the resources and support your school and district leaders provide sends the message that you are a learner and committed to improving your practice.

- **Contribute to the School's Culture** – How you show up to work every day and engage with your colleagues are integral to the fabric of the school's culture. The following quote sums it up beautifully: "Good teachers know how to solve conflict, and they don't create drama. Teachers who lift each other up, help with issues, create opportunities for students, and serve as sounding boards for ideas, are appreciated and valued by their principals."

These six characteristics can serve as a road map for you as you engage with school leaders and reflect on how you can exhibit and improve your professionalism as a teacher.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Think about the best organization you've ever been a part of:

   • What characteristics of that organization made it the "best?"

   • What behaviors did people exhibit that helped create the favorable climate and culture?

   • How many of those behaviors are referenced in the Six Characteristics principals look for listed above?

2. How would you describe the relationship between you and your school leaders now? How would they describe it?

3. What would your list look like if you ranked ordered the behaviors from the one you do the most to the one you do the least? Would you like to make changes in the future? If so, where, and why?

4. How would you rate or describe your school's culture? Is there anything you could do as a teacher to help improve it?

5. How do you handle negative, grumpy, or naysaying staff members?

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https://www.edutopia.org/blog/when-teachers-and-administrators-collaborate-anne-obrien

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Teacher Tip

Relationships are important!
Get to know the school secretary, office staff, custodians, cafeteria staff, and other school support team members. Never underestimate their ability to make your job much easier or more difficult. In many ways, these are the people who run the school and know how to get things done!

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

"With the right approach, you can talk to anyone about almost anything without damaging the relationship" (Grenny et al., 2011). That sounds very encouraging, but this can be a daunting task for a new teacher who needs to have a difficult conversation with a peer, administrator, or parent.

When you think about difficult conversations, one of the first questions you need to ask yourself is, "should I even have the conversation?" Several considerations help you answer this question relative to the issue you want to discuss:

- Is it negatively impacting my ability to do my job well?
- Is it negatively impacting the work of our team?
- Is it negatively impacting students?
- Is it affecting my morale or the morale of the team?

If the answer to any of these questions is "yes," it is worth having the conversation. Know that there are many reasons that we tend to delay or put off holding these conversations. Let's face it, no one likes to wake up, go to work, and have what they consider a challenging conversation. There is a lot of inertia around "living with it and making do." Some of the common reasons you might delay or avoid these conversations include:

- You may lack the confidence to think you can do it effectively.
- You may define it as an either/or situation. For example, "I can either maintain a positive relationship with teacher X or address how she speaks to me during our team meetings."
- You may worry that you will not handle the reactions or emotions the conversations may elicit.
- You may want to keep the peace and not rock the boat.

Sometimes it may seem easier to "go along to get along," but this strategy will not serve you, your team, or your students well, as problems tend to build and compound themselves over time.

What is a "Difficult Conversation?"

A Difficult Conversation in this context is one where you know there are different perspectives about the issue at hand. The stakes are high, and strong feelings are involved that create the potential for an emotional response. When these elements are present, it is best to take time to map out a strategy for the conversation using an effective conversation model or guide. We suggest the four-phase framework adapted from the work of Grenny, Joseph, et al. in their book, Crucial Conversations Tools for Talking When Stakes are High (2011).

In the following pages, you will find a sample scenario that new teachers frequently encounter and guidance for applying the four-phase framework to this situation. After the framework, you will find additional information regarding considerations for speaking with supervisors and parents.

Before you plan the conversation, some "self-work" needs to happen. This list speaks to some of the most critical considerations:

- Have a mindset that the goal of the conversation is to be in dialogue with the individual. You want to hear their perspective rather than "tell" them yours.

- Be open that there may be information you do not have that could change or impact your perception of the issue.

- Make sure that your goals for the conversation are healthy. For example, you want to seek to understand rather than be right.

- Be clear about what you want as a result of the conversation. What does success look like?

- When holding a difficult conversation, it is not about what you talk about but rather how you talk about it.

The Four Phases of a Difficult Conversation

Learning the following framework and practicing it at home or with friends is an excellent first step. In the following example, we will apply the framework to a hypothetical conflict, "***The situation***," with one of your grade-level team members.

The situation: *You notice that whenever the team is planning together, one of your team members tends to dismiss your contributions, typically by saying something like..."Well, you're new and still learning. We've been doing this for years and know that this is the best approach." As a result, you feel shut out and start to shut down and not offer your ideas. You decide that you need to have a conversation with this team member.*

PHASE 1 - PREPARATION - Determining what you want

Establish the goal based on the problem or issue you want to address – What is your goal, and what do you want to accomplish? What needs to be different? Using data and behavioral language, describe the problem. What facts do you have to describe the situation you want to address? Using data rather than feelings to describe the problem tends to depersonalize the content and make it easier for the person to understand the issue.

Some questions to help you create clarity:

- What do you want as an outcome of the conversation? For yourself and for the person with whom you are meeting? Address/examine your motives – be honest with yourself.

- What are the facts of the situation? (Look at those facts as a neutral observer would describe them. Your perspective may change when you take a step back.)

- What does the resolution look like?

- How might the person you are speaking with react? And how would you then react?

Determining what you want - Example: You recognize that your team members are veteran teachers with many years of experience and expertise. However, you also have good ideas to contribute, and you would like those ideas to be considered equally. You especially do not want your ideas dismissed because you are a new teacher.

PHASE 2 – INITIATION: Create safety and enter the conversation

When individuals do not feel safe, they may be unable to listen to what you're saying. When emotions run high, they can "hijack the brain" and leave people unable to process or respond in a healthy way to what you have to say. Below are some simple strategies to create safety. When using these strategies, pay attention to your tone, body language, and overall effect as you begin the conversation. The two methods, Asking Permission and Establishing Mutual Purpose can go a long way to establishing emotional safety and, as a result, support a productive conversation.

1. Asking Permission
   Asking permission to have the conversation and pausing for the person to consent helps create a safe environment for the conversation. It helps to put both participants on a more even playing field and shows respect for their interests.

   Some sample statements to ask permission:
   • Can I speak with you about something that I think affects our team?
   • Can I speak with you about something that I believe is affecting the morale of our faculty?
   • May we have a conversation about…

   Caution: Do not use this "ask" to start talking about the problem – that comes later. Also, if the individual responds that they do not feel ready for the conversation, it is best not to push. Say something like, "Okay, well, can we set a time to meet tomorrow?"

2. Establishing Mutual Purpose
   Dialogue cannot begin until mutual purpose exists. Mutual purpose is the entrance condition for dialogue. Without mutual purpose, people are likely to hold back. When others think your goal is to blame, win, or chastise, they are likely to draw back and not engage in the conversation in a way that allows them to hear, learn, and understand.

   Mutual purpose is the foundation of trust. When individuals believe that your intent is positive, they are more likely to listen to the content of your message, even if it is painful.

Sample statements to establish Mutual Purpose:

- "I know we both want what's best for our students…"

- "I know that you're as committed as I am to have productive team meetings…"

- "I know both of us value healthy relationships with students and their families…"

Create safety and enter the conversation- Example: You want your team member to understand that you value her expertise and experience and that you both have the best interests of your students at heart. You also want to minimize any defensiveness she might have so that she can truly hear what you have to say. It might sound something like this: (Ask Permission) "Can I speak with you about something that's impacting the way we work as a team? (Establish Mutual Purpose) I really appreciate the ideas you bring to the team, and I know we both want the best possible instruction for our students…"

PHASE 3 – DISCUSSION: Hold the Discussion about the problem or issue

After you have opened the conversation by asking permission and establishing mutual purpose, it is time to engage in the actual discussion of the issue at hand. Luckily, STATE's conversation guide provides a roadmap for this challenging conversation. Planning out what you want to say using the STATE conversation guide increases the chance of a successful outcome.

The **STATE** conversation guide is a mnemonic described below:

Share your facts – Experts in dialogue share tough messages by *beginning with what they see and hear and then moving to stories and feelings.* People less skilled in dialogue do the opposite. They typically begin with their emotions and stories but share few facts. *Starting with what you see and hear minimizes defensiveness.*

Identify the issue you want to address. What have you seen or heard? What have you seen or noticed that you want to share? What are the facts that are leading you to your conclusion/story?

Sample statements for sharing facts:
- "Although as a team, we've agreed to use exit tickets daily, during the last three team meetings, you said you didn't want our team to do that."

- "I've noticed that you've been 10-15 minutes late for data team meetings. Because we are learning this process together, we had to stop and bring you up to speed; as a result, we're not getting through the process, and we don't have our Teacher Action Plans completed."

Tell your story – This is where you share what you have concluded and how you feel. What conclusions have you reached? What do you think is going on?

Sample statements for Telling your story.
- *I'm wondering* if you're on board with this practice."

- *I'm beginning to fee*l that you may not be committed to implementing Teacher Action Plans."

<u>A</u>sk for others' paths – Invite others to share their viewpoint. Carefully listen to what they have to say. Be willing to abandon or reshape your story as you gain more information. How do you make it safe for them to share their perspective, even if it differs from your own?

Sample statements for Asking for others' paths:

- "I'd like to hear your perspective on this issue."
- "If I'm missing something here, I'd like to hear it."
- "Do I have it right? Is there something else going on here that I need to know?"

*These first three steps are "**What** you do," and the following two steps describe "**How** you do it."*

<u>T</u>alk tentatively – Strike a blend. It is important to do so tentatively when you share your facts and your interpretation of them (we call them stories). Tell your account as a story, not as fact. At the same time, you want to express confidence in your conclusions but leave room for the fact that you might have it wrong. You might learn something in the conversation that causes you to revise your perspective – your story.

Encourage Testing – How you ask others for their views is another opportunity to balance confidence and humility. Remember your purpose. If it is to convince, compel, or control, this will carry through in your tone and manner and leave little room for the individual to share their views. After sharing your facts and telling your story, following up with statements like those listed below invites the other person to share their perspective.

Sample statements for Encouraging Testing:

- "Do you see it this way?
- "Does anyone see it differently?"
- "Is there something that I may not be seeing?"

During the discussion, you are performing three primary activities:

3. Communicating your ideas calmly and logically.
4. Listening to what the other person is saying. If notes or an outline help you to stay on track, use them. However, do not read from the page.
5. Monitoring safety.

Example - Hold the Discussion about the Problem or Issue

Let's look at an example. You want to present your concern calmly and rationally, focusing on facts rather than feelings. You also want to hear her perspective if there is something you can learn about her motives that you didn't anticipate. It might sound like this:

S–Share Your Facts – *"While we have a protocol for our team meetings that helps us consider everyone's input when we're planning instruction, I've noticed that in most of the meetings, when I offer my suggestion, you say things like 'well, we have more experience, and that idea just won't work.'*

T – Tell Your Story – *As a result, I'm beginning to feel that you don't recognize that I have contributions to make that could be of value to our team and our students. I'm starting to shut down in the meetings and hold back on what I can contribute. I don't think that's in line with our protocol or best for our students.*

A – Ask for Other's Path – *I'd really like to understand your perspective.*

T – Talk Tentatively – Notice that the approach didn't use language like "You always shut me down in meetings." Instead, it stayed in the realm of facts presented respectfully, leaving room for other possible interpretations.

E – Encourage Testing – *"Do you see it that way?"*

What do you do when things do not go as expected? When the conversation gets off track, you typically see two behaviors: defensiveness or silence.

1. **Defensiveness** – Step out of the content, focus on the process, and rebuild safety.

   • *Re-establish Mutual Purpose* – Say something like, "I can see you're getting upset, and that's not my intention." "I appreciate all your work with your students and the other projects you're involved in." "I just want you to understand how not showing up on time impacts the team's progress." "Is it okay for us to start the discussion again?"

2. **Silence** – If the individual goes into silence, ask questions that genuinely demonstrate your desire to learn and understand. Say something like:

   • "I'd like to hear your perspective on this."

   • "Please let me know if you see it differently."

   • "Don't worry about hurting my feelings; I want to hear your thoughts."

   • "Are you thinking that…"

If the person is upset, do not press on. If there is too much emotion, the conversation will not be productive. It may be better to delay and revisit it at another time. Say something like: "It seems like you're upset. Maybe you'd prefer some time to think about it and meet tomorrow?"

PHASE 4 – CONCLUSION: Problem solve agreements, make commitments, and create a follow-up plan.

• Problem-Solve Agreements

  » Listen to their perspective. You may find that things are going on that you are unaware of, impacting the issue.

  » Learn and respond to new information. Based on what you learn, restate, or revise the expectation.

  » Reach an agreement on what will be different.

As you listen to their perspective, remember that your goal is to seek understanding. You might hear something like, "*I didn't realize how it affected you. I just know that our planning time is tight, and the quicker we can get through the protocol, the better for everyone, and I just thought as a new teacher, it would be easier if you just learned what we've done in the past. I didn't realize it made you feel like you don't have any value to add to the team.*"

With this new understanding, you may respond, "*Thank you for sharing your perspective. Can we reach an agreement that lets my ideas be heard but doesn't slow us down?*" From here, you can discuss/problem-solve new agreements.

- Formalize the Agreements

  This is a step that most crucial conversations miss. The result is typically "groundhog-day conversations" where the issue returns repeatedly. Ensure that both parties understand the agreements reached, supports or consequences discussed, and when and how to follow up on expectations.

  Be sure to:

  » Restate the agreements you reached.

  » Follow the restatement to define who will do what, by when, and describe the follow-up plan. If appropriate, put it in writing.

  » Set a follow-up time to check to see how things are going.

  Formalizing agreements may sound like, "*This has been a productive meeting for both of us, and I am pleased we have a plan to meet our needs. To restate, so we are both clear, we agreed that I will… and you will… I'd really appreciate it if both of us could meet again in two weeks to check in and see how it's going. Does that work for you?*"

Additional Considerations for Other Audiences

Supervisors – When speaking to administrators or individuals in a supervisory relationship, there should be a strong emphasis on Phase 2 of the framework. You must demonstrate mutual purpose and respect. Be sure to acknowledge that you respect their positional power, and you're not arguing that point. Stating something like, "*Please understand that I completely respect your decision to implement the new reading program. I agree that we need to improve how we teach reading at our school, what we've been doing is not serving our students, and this new program can help. Can I speak with you about my concerns with how we're providing professional development for the program?*"

Parents – Parents want to know that you care about their child as a person and that you have respect for their role as parents. Creating a strong mutual purpose will go a long way toward minimizing defensiveness. Also, starting with some positive attributes or contributions of their student will help demonstrate that your intentions around the conversation are in the best interest of their student. Stating something like, "*I want to start by sharing how much I enjoy having your child in my class. He is great at helping his peers when they're struggling, and contributes creative ideas to our class discussions. I know we are both invested in your child's success and want him to have a great 4th-grade year. I do need to share a problem that I see around…*"

Sometimes parents can be very emotional - a key factor for when not to hold a difficult conversation. As a teacher, you should try to listen respectfully but be mindful that you are not required to stay in a conversation where you are experiencing verbal abuse. This is the time to refer the situation to your principal or other appropriate administrators.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Everyone has a personal conflict management style. Sometimes this style can make it easier or more challenging to hold a difficult conversation. For example, you will need more personal courage to hold a difficult conversation if you typically avoid conflict.

2. Think about how you typically approach conflict in your personal life. How might this help or hinder you as you contemplate holding a difficult conversation?

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Online, self-paced course for mastering Crucial Conversations.
https://cruciallearning.com/crucial-conversations-for-dialogue/

"The best teaching does not come from a political mandate...it comes from the heart of a prepared and caring teacher."

-Robert John Meehan

EQUITY OR EQUALITY: UNDERSTANDING THE DIFFERENCE

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Over the years, the word "equity" has become popularized in teaching and education, with many educators not fully understanding its meaning and implications in the school and classroom. Most recently, everything in education seeks the label of equitable. For example, we want an equitable curriculum, equitable assessments, equitable instructional strategies, or an equitable classroom. This overuse of the generic term equitable can be confusing and even frustrating for a beginning teacher. Teachers may ask, what do my district and school mean when they say equitable? This section will attempt to clarify the meaning of equity and what an equitable classroom includes. It is not meant to be a comprehensive guide. Rather a starting point for teachers who understand the importance of equity and want to ensure they meet the needs of every student in their classroom.

The Priority Schools Bureau adheres to the definition of equity provided in *Building Ranks: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective School Leaders*, defining equity as "the behaviors, systems, processes, resources, and environments that ensure that each member of the school community is provided fair, just, and individualized learning and growth opportunities." To this end, PSB views equity as an educational component embedded and engrained in the education system to serve all students and close achievement and opportunity gaps rather than a stand-alone activity or action.

For teachers who understand that their classrooms are made up of diverse learners with a wide range of skills and backgrounds, equity in the classroom means that every student has the support and resources they need to succeed socially, emotionally, and academically. In an equitable classroom, individual factors like socioeconomic status, race, religion, gender, etc., do not stop students from reaching their full potential. Teachers who understand equity and equitable practices know that every student can succeed when given the proper support and instruction tailored to their individual needs.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

As a beginning teacher, it is important to distinguish between equity and equality since, sometimes, the terms are used interchangeably. Equality means **all** students receive the **same** resources and support required to succeed socially, emotionally, and academically. Equity means **each** student receives **individualized** resources and support required to succeed socially, emotionally, and academically. In other words, equality focuses on

the group's needs while equity prioritizes the individual student. An equitable classroom values students' individual needs and provides resources to overcome their specific challenges. For great teachers, equity is always the end goal.

Let's look at an example. Imagine a teacher giving their third-grade class a vocabulary assignment to complete with a partner. Every student has paper, a pencil, and access to a dictionary. While this is an equal classroom, it is not equitable. For that classroom to be equitable, the teacher must address the needs of individual students and provide support, or modifications, to meet those needs. These supports could include the following.

- Allowing English Learners to draw a picture instead of writing a definition.
- Giving the student diagnosed with ADHD the option to complete the assignment individually.
- Working with struggling students in a small group and allowing them to match the vocabulary words with the definition rather than writing the definition.

By providing equitable student support, the teacher ensures that individual factors like language or performance level do not negatively impact their students' ability to succeed in school.

A first step to ensuring equity in the classroom is recognizing the challenges impeding the students' success. By evaluating the needs of individual students, the teacher will gain the knowledge required to design strategies and opportunities to close the achievement and opportunity gap.

To support this complex but necessary task, below are a few sample practices that can promote a classroom culture and teaching and learning environment that supports all students.

PRACTICES THAT SUPPORT AN EQUITABLE CLASSROOM	
Classroom Culture	Hold every student to high expectations.
	Use inclusive language.
	Celebrate diversity and promote the use of the native language.
	Model a growth mindset.
	Emphasize effort.
	Create opportunities and rubrics for peer collaboration and heterogeneous groups.
	Promote self-reflection.
	Provide feedback.
	Provide encouragement and praise to all students.
	Provide leadership opportunities for all students.
	Involve students when making classroom decisions.
	Address inappropriate comments.
Teaching and Learning	Ensure access to grade-level standards.
	Accommodate different learning styles.
	Differentiate instruction to support different learning levels.
	Scaffold instruction for English Learners.
	Review classroom materials to ensure representation.
	Make connections to students' culture and prior knowledge.
	Create student assessments to complement standardized tests.
	Invite and engage all students in classroom discussions.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Is my instruction differentiated to meet the needs of each one of my students?

2. Do the materials and resources represent my students' diversity?

3. Have I created opportunities for students to reflect on their learning?

4. Do all my students have an opportunity to participate and engage in conversations in my class?

5. Have I praised all my students for their effort?

6. Do my students know I have high expectations for all of them?

7. How am I addressing my students' social and emotional needs?

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Teacher Tip

Shift your classroom focus from equality to equity!
Equity cannot be achieved by treating every student the same. Teachers must treat every student as an individual by planning for and meeting their specific needs and circumstances. Equitable teaching is more thoughtful. And while it's also more challenging, it is better at resolving disadvantages and improving student outcomes.

PREPARING THE CLASSROOM FOR INSTRUCTIONAL GROUPS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

One of the most exciting and sometimes daunting tasks for a beginning teacher is preparing their classroom environment for students. Teachers often spend countless hours brainstorming ideas, gathering materials, deliberating color schemes, and creating visually appealing and mentally stimulating classrooms. Great teachers know that a well-organized and thoughtful classroom setup makes their job easier and shows their students they care about them. These teachers also know their classroom is a home away from home for their students and themselves.

To meet the developmental needs of students and accommodate the differences in elementary and secondary school structures, elementary students generally enter classrooms filled with personalized wall charts, interactive workspaces, and multiple learning stations designed to instruct multiple subjects. At the same time, their secondary peers tend to find classrooms with walls covered with content-specific visuals and general roles and procedures for multiple classrooms of students. No matter the preference or design, the end goal of preparing a classroom is to create a learning space that promotes student engagement and supports the teacher in delivering differentiated instruction to all students.

No matter the grade level or subject area, one effective way to create an engaging learning environment is to consider four distinct learning zones, the whole-group instruction zone, small-group instruction zone, independent/partner learning zone, and content support zones. The following suggestions for setting up each zone provide guidance for creating a welcoming, comfortable, efficient classroom that maximizes instructional experiences.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Whole-group Instruction Zones

Begin by choosing an area designated as the whole-group instruction area. As much as possible, arrange student desks so all students can view this area without turning around or moving their chairs. The seating arrangement should also allow for quick collaboration between students when needed. Promethean boards and technology used for instruction should also be in working order and accessible to students.

Once the whole-group instruction zone is established and student seating is arranged, it is time to evaluate traffic flow. Visualize how each group of students will exit their desks to access other classroom learning areas. The student's flow in the classroom should be smooth, allowing for efficient transitions and ease when entering and exiting the workspace. A seamless flow will minimize behavior disruptions and create a safe and comfortable environment for students and teachers.

Finally, the whole-group instruction zone should include an organized teacher workstation with appropriate materials. The teacher must be able to move freely and quickly from this workstation to assist students with instruction and any other needs that may arise.

Small-Group Instruction Zones

When identifying the small-group instruction zone, begin by looking for an area that allows the teacher to see the independent learning zones. This will minimize behavior issues during independent work and enable the teacher to identify students struggling with independent tasks.

Once identified, the teacher should design a comfortable workspace for the direct instruction of two to six students. The space should contain all materials necessary to deliver effective instruction (whiteboards, curriculum guides, markers, pencils, sharpeners, manipulatives, tissues, small trash can, etc.). Students should be seated facing the teacher with their backs toward the independent learning zones to minimize distractions.

Independent and Partner Learning Zones

Independent learning zones, sometimes called student workstations, allow students to work independently in various areas around the classroom. Examples of independent/partner learning zone activities include reading silently in the library section, working on individual or partner learning games/projects, and working with technology.

Independent learning zones and workstations should be well-organized. Classroom libraries should be arranged so students can easily access materials and allow for a partner or shared reading. The library can be organized by reading level, genres, or both; this is a personal preference. Individual or partner learning games or activities relevant to previously learned or current content make great workstations. No matter which activities the teacher chooses, workstations should consist of work that students can complete INDEPENDENTLY with little to no support from the teacher. Teachers should not try to implement independent learning in the first or second week of school. Instead, they should focus on whole-group activities and teaching their classroom procedures.

Content Support Zones

Content supports can be embedded throughout the classroom in objectives/learning targets, word walls, vocabulary charts, anchor charts that support previous and current instruction, and classroom technology. Teachers often want their walls "decorated" before the first day of school. Keep in mind that walls and bulletin boards should support the students in their everyday learning, and it is okay for these to be created throughout the year as the learning occurs. Examples can be found below.

- Class Vision and Mission Statements
  - » Vision statements are future-oriented statements that guide the class's aspirations.
  - » Mission statements include the steps needed to achieve the vision (Glossary of Education Reform, 2015).
- Objectives/Learning Targets
  - » Objectives are brief statements that describe what students are expected to learn over an extended period (GoER, 2014).
  - » Learning targets are goals written in student-friendly language that describe what a student should be able to do by the end of class.

- Vocabulary charts
  - » Displaying Tier III vocabulary words on charts throughout the classroom allows for multiple exposures to the new terms.
- Anchor charts
  - » Anchor charts are co-created with students to reinforce strategies, content, or processes. They are displayed so students can refer to them during independent or collaborative learning.
- Technology centers
  - » Technology centers can reinforce previously taught skills and provide differentiation and acceleration.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Whole-group Instruction Zones
   - Do all students have an unobstructed view of the Promethean board or other device used for direct instruction?
   - Does the desk arrangement allow for efficient traffic flow when entering and exiting the classroom or changing learning areas?

2. Small-Group Instruction Zones
   - Is the area conducive to providing direct instruction to 2-6 students?
   - Are all teacher and student materials required for small-group instruction accessible?
   - Is student seating arranged to minimize distractions?

3. Independent or Partner Learning Zones
   - Are materials and directions organized so students can begin work without interruption?
   - Are all activities based on current or previous instruction and can be completed independently?

4. Content Support Zones
   - Which walls and bulletin boards will be dedicated to objectives, learning targets, daily schedules, and general class information?
   - Which walls and bulletin boards will be dedicated to anchor charts displaying recently covered content?
   - Is there an area dedicated to domain-specific vocabulary?

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New Mexico Educator Highlight

Theresa Ambrogi
Albuquerque Public Schools

Theresa Ambrogi has dedicated most of her professional career to supporting the development of new teachers. Theresa has 25 years in education, with the last 15 years in various support roles focused on helping new teachers transition effectively into the classroom teacher role.

She brings a unique perspective to the needs of beginning teachers and finds that regardless of the model of the teacher preparation program, teachers seem to need support in two areas. The first focuses on routines and procedures, and the second on instructional planning. She also finds that helping teachers reflect on their practice to determine why a lesson did or did not work is key to success.

When asked about support for establishing classroom routines and procedures, Theresa had this to say, "Teachers don't establish them for a variety of reasons, sometimes they want to be the 'cool' teacher or not come across as mean...but it's also a lack of training. I think everyone in the system assumes someone else is teaching this, so it gets overlooked."

Based on her years of experience, Theresa offers this advice for new teachers:

- Take time to think about all the little things that help ensure the classroom runs smoothly and then establish a routine or procedure for each one in a way that makes your expectations clear.

- Allow students to make mistakes but follow through with the expectations. Take the time to practice it with them.

- Understand that students don't know what's expected unless it's clearly stated, practiced, consistently implemented, and followed through. She used the example of sharpening pencils and suggested saying something like, "*Remember, we don't get up and sharpen our pencils during the lesson, so before we start, does anyone need to sharpen their pencil?*" as an example of a non-punitive way of supporting and clarifying expectations.

When asked about how to make course corrections if a teacher neglected this strategy at the beginning of the year, she offered, "I encourage my teachers to be very transparent - saying something like 'It's not just your fault, it's mine too – this is something we're learning together.'" She believes teachers who humanize themselves build relationships with their students by modeling that we're all in this together.

Theresa likes to refer to lesson planning as student achievement planning to help reinforce the bigger picture of why teachers plan instruction. She believes that a quality lesson is anchored in a clear understanding of the learning objective. She explains it this way, "*The big thing I work with new teachers on is the 'WHY' are you teaching this? That needs to be the focus of the lesson. Not chapter 13, not section five, not a graphing line. What are kids supposed to know and be able to do when you finish?*"

Theresa invests a lot of time working with teachers to help them write specific learning goals. Then she guides them to access the various instructional resources while asking themselves, "*Does this resource align with and support my learning goal?* She also encourages teachers to be authentic to their personality style when teaching.

Her final bit of advice for new teachers is to take the time to slow down and reflect. This can be a challenge in the hustle and bustle of teaching and balancing the job demands. Theresa views reflection as a skill that can be somewhat hard to master but, if routinely applied, will make one a more effective teacher. She said, "Rather than saying something like: 't*his lesson went well,' a teacher should ask themselves: 'why was this lesson a success? What did I do that made it work that I can do again in the future?*" Theresa encourages teachers to get to the root cause of successful lessons and those that didn't go as expected. When she reflects on her first few years as a teacher, she believes she would have been a better teacher in a much shorter time if she had been more reflective.

ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES: A RECIPE FOR SUCCESS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

At the most basic level, routines are the things students repeatedly do throughout the day, and procedures are the steps students take to accomplish a routine. Taking attendance, sharpening pencils, or going to the restroom are just a few daily routines. Developing and teaching routines and procedures early in the school year is essential for creating a classroom with minimal disruptions and centered on meaningful instruction. Before class begins, between lessons, lunch, and at the end of the class and day are critical times for routines and procedures.

In *Teach Like a Champion 3.0*, Doug Lemov recommends creating predictable learning environments through routines that teach students executive functioning skills. These skills include:

- Paying attention
- Organizing, planning, and prioritizing
- Starting tasks and staying focused on them until completion
- Understanding different points of view
- Regulating emotions and
- Self-monitoring

Possible routines and procedures that support the development of executive functioning skills include posting classroom rules and expectations, creating predictable schedules, consistently using planners or agendas, and teaching students to repeat directions.

As teachers dive into preparing for the first days of school and beyond, there are intentional and essential habits that they will want to develop in their classrooms and within their students. This will take time, practice, and consistency, so they should not get discouraged if it doesn't happen quickly.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Be visible and prepared

- Intentionally plan how class begins and how students are welcomed into the learning environment.
- Greet students at the door as they enter the classroom. Call them by name and ask them something about their everyday lives.
- Establish classroom norms that develop a culture of learning, belonging, and respect.
- Ensure learning begins the moment students enter the classroom. Design a sequence of events that will set the tone for the class. Begin with a "Do Now," "Bell Ringer," or something similar.

Set clear expectations

Establishing a positive classroom climate and culture begins with setting and teaching clear expectations. Only when students know and understand what is expected of them can they take responsibility for their behavior and learning. Along with teaching content, teachers must also teach the skills and attributes to succeed in school and what they look like in the classroom. One example of this type of learning is helping students understand what it means to be an active listener. Never assume this is a previously learned behavior. Plan to set aside time to teach and model active listening throughout the year. Begin by defining active listening and modeling the behaviors of an active listener. Practice these expectations with students and determine the cue used to redirect those not engaged in active listening throughout the day.

Doug Lemov's *Teach Like a Champion* provides an example of an active listening guide titled STAR.

- **S**it up, look interested, and stay engaged.
- **T**rack the speaker to show other people their ideas matter.
- **A**ppreciate your classmates' ideas by nodding and smiling.
- **R**ephrase the words of the person who spoke before you.

Establish Essential Routines

The goal of routines and procedures is to make them become habits—something we do often and regularly, sometimes without even knowing we are doing it. Not surprisingly, routines are the foundation of many effective Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) structures. Explicitly teaching and practicing expected behaviors and routines lays the groundwork for students to be clear about rules and expectations, enabling them to succeed in the school environment and build self-confidence.

When establishing routines, the teacher should begin by identifying recurring and predictable classroom events throughout the day. They can begin this work by writing out their entire schedule for the day. Afterward, the teacher should look for times when students move from one task to another. Does this transition happen frequently? If yes, then this could be an excellent opportunity for a routine. As teachers think about possibilities for creating routines, consider the following -

- Administrative routines – taking attendance, using the restroom, sharpening pencils, going to the playground, and storing coats.
- Instructional routines – labeling and turning in work, completing Bell Ringers, Do Nows, or Exit Tickets, following classroom norms, writing assignments, and completing missing work.
- Interactive routines – asking questions, participating in discussions, getting the teacher's attention, and working with peers.

Rebooting Routines and Procedures

The best teachers are always looking for ways to improve, which means frequent reflection and shifts in practice. No matter how well we prepare or plan, there is a good chance we will need to stop, revaluate, and reset our routines and procedures. Teachers should not view a reboot as a failure. Instead, they should consider it an opportunity to improve their structures to support their students better. If a reset or reboot is needed, the tips below may help.

- Set a goal - Connect the reboot/reset to an inspiring goal ("Sixty days left, let's sharpen our actions and get ready to learn!")
- Reboot after a break - Take advantage of these periods as a natural time to reboot/reset and reintroduce procedures.
- Be transparent - Briefly explain why you are rebooting.
- Coordinate with your team - Coordinating with other teachers provides more consistent reinforcement and could make it easier and quicker to reboot.
- Follow up with precise praise - Always acknowledge progress and share the successes of individuals and groups. Remember, reboots are positive, not punitive!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have I identified the specific procedures and routines to be explicitly taught?
2. Have I invested time modeling expectations for new procedures and routines?
3. What are three routines I observed in master teachers' classrooms to ensure their classroom works efficiently? How did they establish these routines?
4. What will my classroom look and sound like when procedures and routines are in place?
5. Who will be my "go-to" support in establishing efficient classroom procedures, routines, and a positive culture?
6. How will I know if a reboot is needed? What will I do?

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Teacher Tip

Start firm, then relax
At the beginning of the year, teachers must be firm and consistent when implementing classroom rules and routines. Once the teacher has established expectations and effective classroom management, they can begin to relax a little, allowing students some flexibility. However, this generally does not happen in the first semester or before the mid-year break.

EFFECTIVE RECORD KEEPING

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

We have all had that moment of accountability. "Ms. Todd, your student's mother called wanting a meeting regarding his grades and progress." Or "Ms. Todd, can you provide some data for your student's IEP/SAT?" When these questions come, will you panic or enter the meetings with confidence, knowing you have all you need regarding records, assessment data, and up-to-date grades?

Record keeping sounds formal, like something reserved for medical offices or law and accounting firms. However, effective record-keeping is also essential in the education business. Teachers must accurately and efficiently manage lesson plans, maintain grades, and monitor student progress, behaviors, and general communication. "Effective, continuous record-keeping lies at the heart of our best teaching and learning. It enables us to plan, organize, and create the best learning environment for each child." (Maxim & Five, 1997). Accurate records equip an educator in times of parent-teacher-administrator discourse and allow for continuous monitoring of how students function and progress. This knowledge, in turn, allows for the best planning and instructional outcomes. You may be asking, of all the things I have to do in the day, how can I do this well? Veteran teachers who are good at this would tell you that planning, setting up automaticity, and maintaining practicality are key to an effective and efficient record-keeping system.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Start on the right foot: Beginning of Year Set-Up

The easiest way to be efficient is to begin with the end in mind, or better yet, with continuity. Educators are very busy, so they must find ways to build record-keeping into their day-to-day tasks. Using the beginning of the year as a starting point for student-led data-tracking, parent communications, acknowledgments, and your paper and digital organization strategies can be incredibly beneficial. Below are a few suggestions for starting on the right foot.

- Establish a specific place for documents signed by parents.
- Organize folders on your Google drive, jump drive, or desktop to keep lesson plans, resources, newsletters, and downloadable communications.
- Have students routinely take home graded work and require parent signatures on specific assignments.
- Utilize a student planner with a designated signature and note space for parent-teacher communication.
- Have parents and students sign the beginning of year documents (syllabus, agreements, contracts, policies, etc.).
- Create a teacher binder specifically for the quarterly, semester, or individual assessment data.
- Create student data folders or portfolios and regularly set expectations for utilizing them.
- Ensure your parents are aware of and able to access the school's grading system.

Make it Easy: Electronic records

With numerous apps and online learning platforms, teachers have many options for keeping records digitally. "Digital tools such as the Remind and Class Dojo applications seem to be the most used by classroom teachers to communicate with students and parents. Many secondary students have cell phones, tablets, and computers and can sign up for a teacher's "reminders" in apps and emails. Teachers can then use these systems to push out information about the course and remind students about assignments" (Konen, 2018).

Not only can communications and reminders occur automatically, but student progress and assessment data are accessible and fluid when online parent access is available for grading systems and learning platform participation. For example, one specific platform, Canvas, allows an observer approach to accessing content. "Parents can sign up as an observer in Canvas. Observers can link their Canvas account to their student's account so they can see assignment dues dates, announcements, and other course content." (Canvas Community). By setting up a classroom application and using it regularly, teachers can rest assured that messages are being sent, received, and recorded.

Email is also a helpful tool when collecting data regarding communication logs. Since most districts have email servers that archive years of sent and received messages, this can be handy for recalling specific incidents or reports. It is imperative to note - not all records are electronic. Phone calls, for instance, may have a record of outgoing or incoming calls but will require written logs for maintaining details. Ultimately, teachers should take full advantage of these electronic record-keeping methods with their school district's approval. Below are a few additional tips that may help teachers wanting support in this area.

- Determine which classroom apps are approved and choose one that meets your needs.
- Provide multiple reminders and opportunities for parents to join classroom applications and online learning platforms.
- If possible, set up automatic messaging through grade systems and platforms.
- Always double-check recipient/s before hitting "send."
- Keep a notepad near your classroom phone for logging and note-taking during calls.
- Download and save assessment data, grades, and other valuable records.
- Organize your online files for easy accessibility.
- Avoid over-relying on electronic messaging - supply paper reminders and information to students.
- Remember not to share confidential information on any public forum or general application site.

Prioritize your Assignments: And grades...

So. Many. Assignments. Since the dawn of education, teachers have humorously and cartoonishly been depicted behind large stacks of paperwork on their desks. In real life, these large amounts of student work must be checked graded, or even annotated and returned within a reasonable time. This can seem like a never-ending task, especially for teachers who pride themselves on giving meaningful feedback.

Teachers learn from experience that not all assignments and tasks must be submitted for a grade. They often want students to complete work for practice or provide a quick check of their content knowledge. In the grand scheme of learning, these sources of information are valuable despite the lack of an actual letter grade

or percentage. This is an excellent and valuable practice if the teacher can balance these practice checks with more formal assignments, ensuring the students' overall grades reflect their ability.

The validity of a student's proficiency in a class should always remain at the forefront of planning and grading priorities. Additionally, a quick turnaround of grades and feedback is essential when measuring student growth. Without meaningful feedback and grades, students will not have the information to assess their mastery of content and progress toward goals, and teachers will not know which students need more support. Below are a few suggestions for managing student grades.

- Set aside a specific time during your work hours for grading.
- Utilize prep periods and "specials" time to grade.
- Input grades consistently to your school's grading system. Do not wait until the last minute.
- When possible, have students participate in grading (multiple choice, fill in the blank, etc.).
- Have students keep a data folder or portfolio.
- Inform students of the expected turnaround time for specific assignments. This keeps the teacher accountable for meeting an informal deadline.
- Determine if the purpose of the assignment is to practice or measure skill and knowledge.
- Set up percentages for practice work and assessment work to avoid misrepresenting student ability.
- Communicate to students and parents what a graded assignment looks like versus a knowledge or skill check.
- Use rubrics and point values to expedite grading and provide specific indicators of strengths/weaknesses.
- Provide meaningful but short and direct comments when grading.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What is my system for record-keeping?
2. What is a graded assignment versus a practice assignment in my class?
3. How do I communicate grades and progress with parents and students?
4. What role do my students take when grading work and setting and monitoring their goals?
5. Can my students' parents easily access grades or work samples?
6. What is my system for tracking parental contacts and conversations?

7. How would I grade myself when scoring, providing feedback, and returning assignments to my students?

8. What is the correlation between my students' actual ability and their grades in my class? What can I do as a teacher to better align the two?

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TIME MANAGEMENT: AVOIDING BURNOUT

"You can do anything, but you can't do everything."
– David Allen

According to research, most full-time teachers work 48 hours per week, with many working as many as 60 hours per week and 1 in 10 working more than 65 hours a week. With the numerous responsibilities and tasks teachers must complete during this time, it is unsurprising if they feel exhausted at the end of the workweek and experiencing burnout by the middle of the school year."

Though many things contribute to teacher burnout, lack of time is a primary factor. Most teachers arrive at school early in the morning and leave late in the evening. They are constantly balancing school and family responsibilities. Sometimes, doing both at the same time. Teachers must develop time management skills early in their careers to avoid burnout or decrease the chance of it happening. In the Essential Teacher Moves below, you will find a few tips and ideas for improving time management skills throughout the school year.

··· **ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES**

Set Time Limits

Identify one or two days a week where you permit yourself to work at school a little later than usual. On other days, leave on time or soon after your contract time. This may not be easy during your first or second year of teaching but will get much easier as you develop your skills and build your classroom resources. There will always be one more thing to do, and if your try to do them all, you will wear yourself down and become less effective throughout the school year. One way to think about it is to ask yourself: "Have I done enough?" This is particularly helpful in professions such as teaching, where the work is never entirely "done."

Planning

Planning is essential to efficiently managing classroom instructional time. Teachers who plan thoughtful lessons are better prepared, have more confidence, demonstrate professionalism during observations and performance evaluations, and are better prepared to deliver effective instruction to their students. Whatever you do, never enter your classroom unprepared or try to deliver "off-the-cuff" lessons. Unprepared teachers have more classroom disruptions, leading to more off-task student behaviors and the need for reteaching. Additionally, school administrators can easily spot an unprepared teacher in the classroom. Dealing with all the repercussions from an unplanned or poorly planned day contributes to burnout.

When planning lessons -

- Create a lesson planning routine by identifying specific days and times for writing lesson plans, gathering materials, and making copies.
- Do your best to anticipate and address common student misconceptions before delivering content. If you can address these in a quick "warm-up" activity or "bell ringer," you can save yourself and your students a reteach lesson later.

- Map out time to teach all learning objectives and targets throughout the year. Even the most prepared teachers find it challenging to teach all the required content in the allotted time.

- Prepare thoughtful questions for your students by ensuring proper wait time, scaffolding, or differentiating question stems, and creating engaging "hooks" that capture their attention.

- Write in timestamps for all phases of instruction: direct instruction, guided practice, independent practice, and formative assessment. Assigning time for each allotted stage of instruction will allow the teacher to avoid over and under planning.

- Leverage your team. One of the most valuable resources for beginning teachers is a supportive team. Don't be afraid to ask team members for resources and ideas, and support in lesson planning.

Quality vs. Quantity

When measuring understanding, or assessing your students, be mindful that you are looking for quality over quantity. Bambrick-Santoyo (2010) provides the core idea that assessments are not the end of the teaching and learning process; they're the starting point. Formative assessment tasks should assess the learning target covered during direct instruction. These are often referred to as "exit tickets." These assessments provide a quick snapshot of student learning for the day or lesson and can guide your future planning and reteaching.

Routines and Transitions

Do not underestimate the power of routines and the importance of efficient transitions when managing time. Teachers should determine the routines and transition opportunities encountered during the school day and spend time teaching the routines to students at the beginning of the year and allow them opportunities to practice. Practicing routines and transitions allow for efficient management during the school day. Time lost during poorly planned routines and transitions can result in a significant loss of instruction time. Burgess (2012), in Teach Like A Pirate, warns that it's not just lost instruction time but the loss of student engagement.

To-Do Lists

Never underestimate the power of a great to-do list! The school day will come at you fast, be better prepared to take it on by jotting down ideas or tasks you need to remember. As you revisit your to-do list, prioritize items of higher importance. Like most teachers, you will also feel better as you check things off your list and see how much you have accomplished in a day, week, month, or year!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Set Time Limits

   • Have I set healthy time limits for work and personal life?

2. Planning

   • Do I have a lesson planning routine?

   • Do my lesson plans reflect the objectives and learning targets to be addressed?

   • Do I have a good command of the content?

   • Are my instructions clear and concise?

   • Have I considered possible student misconceptions?

- Are my questions scaffolded and engaging?
- Do I need to add timestamps for each phase of my lesson to keep me on track?

3. Quality vs. Quantity
    - Have I created the assessment before completing the lesson plan?
    - Do my "exit tickets" reflect the learning targets covered during instruction and the desired rigor level?
    - Do my "exit tickets" inform my planning and reteaching?

4. Routines and Transitions
    - What critical routines need to be taught and practiced?
    - Are my transitions timely and efficient?

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Teacher Tip

Don't try to do it all!
Teacher burnout is real; the fastest way to get there is by trying to do everything. Don't be afraid to let people know when your plate is full. Prioritize your to-do lists and set time limits on your workday – teachers naturally want to take care of others, but to do so over a long period, we must also take care of ourselves.

WORK-LIFE BALANCE & SELF-CARE

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The one thing everyone in education can agree on is that there is never enough time in the day to do all the things we need to do! Time management can be an issue for both beginning and veteran teachers as they juggle the demands of planning, teaching, collaborating, paperwork, meetings, and other job requirements with their day-to-day family and personal lives. There is nothing we can do to make more time. However, learning to use your time better or more efficiently may help you survive your beginning years of teaching and maintain a healthy personal life.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

In her book, "The Beginning Teacher's Field Guide, Embarking on your First Years," Dr. Tina Boogren shares six phases, initially identified by Ellen Moir, which most new teachers experience during their first year in the classroom. The phases are Anticipation, Survival, Disillusionment, Rejuvenation, Reflection, and Second Anticipation. These phases may manifest differently for each teacher. However, recognizing and understanding which phase they may be experiencing throughout the year can help a teacher identify strategies and practices that can be implemented to strengthen and improve outcomes.

Boogren's Six Phases and Suggestions for Self-Care

1. **Anticipation (August – September)** - The time of the year when the teacher has strong excitement and anticipation and feels they can save the world one student at a time.

   • Establish and practice classroom routines and procedures.

   • Attend to your basic needs – get plenty of sleep, eat healthy, and exercise.

   • Arrive early to prepare for the day and leave on time at least three days of the week.

   • Get to know your students and parents through positive interactions. Think of them as a bank and your praise as money. You will want to make a lot of deposits "positive praise and interactions" before you make a withdrawal "sharing problems."

2. **Survival (October – November)** – In this phase, the teacher often feels overwhelmed and may struggle to keep their head above water.

   • Make yourself a priority and take care of yourself.

   • Manage your stress levels and practice relaxation strategies.

   • Use your planning time wisely. Developing relationships with colleagues is essential but try not to allow socializing to dominate your time.

   • Use to-do lists.

   • Make the most of your PLC and collaboration meetings.

   • Ask for help.

   • Let go of teacher guilt. You are a great teacher!

3. **Disillusionment (December – January)** – The period when a teacher questions their commitment and competence because things might not be going as planned.

   • Recognize your current situation is not permanent.

   • Don't fall in with negative people.

   • Look for the good in your day and celebrate small successes.

   • Find opportunities to have small talk with your students outside of classroom requirements.

   • Focus on one day at a time—set goals. Celebrate accomplishments.

4. **Rejuvenation (February – March)** – The teacher has developed a better understanding of systems and practices during this phase and begins to accept the realities of teaching, producing a slow rise in their attitude towards teaching and a renewed hope.

   • Refocus on your purpose.

   • Nurture a growth mindset. Take time to celebrate your growth.

   • Practice daily gratitude journaling

   • Increase self-care. Get a full night's sleep, stick to established routines, exercise, and take time for yourself.

5. **Reflection (April – May)** – This is an exciting time when the teacher recognizes past successes and finds relief from making it through their first year.

   • Keep a journal. Write down successes and lessons learned.

   • Solicit feedback from your students on what is going well and opportunities for improvement.

   • Ask colleagues to observe your classroom and provide feedback.

   • Ask school leaders for feedback and possible areas of improvement.

   • Continue to prioritize self-care.

6. **Second Anticipation (June – July)** – The teacher begins to look to the future and transition from first-year teacher to teacher with experience!

   • Review previous suggestions

WestEd, a valued and long-term partner of the NM PED, offers additional tips for teachers in their publication, "To Create Safe and Healthy Schools During a Pandemic, Prioritize Educator Wellbeing." (WestEd.org, 2020).

Stress management:

- Schedule a planned break at a set time each day. Use that short break to take a brisk walk around the school or find a quiet place to practice slow, deep breathing to relieve stress.

- Try mindfulness practices to learn to cope with difficult emotions.

- Learn to recognize the signs of stress in your body. This short 4-minute video - https://selcenter.wested.org/resource/educator-self-care-series-intro-to-relaxation/ provides a brief introduction to the body's stress response and breaks down what it may feel like in your body.

- Practice stress management techniques such as guided relaxation.
- Download apps such as Headspace or Calm to have easy access to just-in-time exercises to promote mental, physical, and emotional wellness.

Cultivation of positive states of being:
- Focus on the building blocks of wellness, such as compassion. Check out practices for self-care and self-compassion on The Greater Good in Action site. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/.
- Try this 5-minute self-compassion break to practice mentally reframing. https://ggia.berkeley.edu/practice/self_compassion_break.
- Create a habit of considering daily gratitude by reflecting on three things that went well and why you think these things happened.
- Make an effort to cultivate authentic relationships with fellow educators and others within your community. (e.g., Ask colleagues for ideas and engage them in conversations, common planning, and sharing what went well during a lesson, etc.)

Peer-to-peer supports:
- Use Professional Learning Communities (PLC) to build community and designate time for attending to adults' social and emotional needs.
- Take time to prioritize your school and district's mentoring/coaching program. Leverage the expertise and support of your mentor/coach.
- Connect with a school/district staff support member who serves individuals or collective groups with social, emotional, and psychological needs.

School community norms and routines:
- Embed simple stress management wellness activities in school day activities (ex: begin department meetings with 5 minutes of movement or guided meditation/relaxation).
- Integrate stress management and wellness into morning announcements for students.
- Look into programs your school/district/community offers for wellness (gym membership discounts, free wellness checks, wellness coaching, staff assistance programs, etc.).
- Organize a buddy system to embed shared accountability for individual and collective well-being.

Setting boundaries:
- Turn off notifications during holiday breaks and designated times in the evenings/mornings.
- Think through the pros and cons of families/parents having your cell phone and email address.
- Determine a hard stop time for work.
- Embed practical strategies into your daily routine
- Stack and "ready" your morning paperwork and materials before leaving school.
- Have students turn in work in alphabetical order to make grade entry easier.

- Make a quick "to-do" list that you will tackle tomorrow so you don't feel like you are just "walking away from unfinished tasks."

- Know that it is okay to say, "No or Not this time" if you feel like an additional, voluntary task is being asked of you that will unnecessarily stress you out.

- Set mindful limits for yourself (grading, planning, activities, community events, etc.)

- Work with your team, neighbor teacher, or other staff to develop a plan for bathroom breaks

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Boogren, T. (2018). *Beginning teacher's field guide.* Solution Tree Press

Browning, A. & Romer, N. (2020). *To Create Safe and Healthy Schools During a Pandemic, Prioritize Educator Wellness.* WestEd.Org.

Lemov, D. (2016). *Teach like a champion 2.0 field guide.* Wiley.

Lemov, D. (2021). *Teach like a champion 3.0 field guide.* Josey-Bass.

Teacher Tip

Take care of yourself!
You spend your entire day making sure your students are safe, happy, healthy, and learning. You must take care of yourself as well! Schedule self-care time during your first year. Otherwise, you might be so overwhelmed with all you have to do that you miss it, which is a recipe for burnout. Self-care isn't the same for everyone. Find out what makes you happy and allows you to reenergize and do what you need to do to take care of yourself!

PLANNING FOR INSTRUCTION

New Mexico Educator Highlight

Kristin Winfrey
Farmington Municipal Schools

There comes a moment when you realize you are not as prepared as you thought you were, and you aren't sure what to do. Your palms are sweaty, the speed at which you speak is alarmingly fast, and there's no exiting the room…you are the teacher; you must teach. The teaching profession brings rewards, challenges, and heartbreaks. However, compared to other occupations, the beauty of teaching is that you are never alone - you are a member of a team!

Your most valuable team is your Professional Learning Communities (PLC) or collaboration team, a team of dedicated individuals working towards the common goal of improving student performance and outcomes. Kristin Winfrey, a veteran special education teacher from Farmington High School, explains the power of collective accountability and increasing teacher competence through strong PLC practices.

Ms. Winfrey, like many beginning teachers, spent a lot of time planning what she wanted the students to learn. When that didn't happen, she would find herself getting frustrated and would take a step back and reflect on the needs of her students. Over the years, Kristin understood that her vision wasn't always the same as her students. She states, "*I can't power through and force. I can adapt and change my plans for their needs. That's more important. I just needed to take a breath, survey the room, and ask my students what they needed to be successful.*"

Ms. Winfrey's PLC meets daily to engage in instructional conversations about students on an Individual Education Plans (IEP). One goal of the PLC is to collaborate on how best to differentiate and integrate accommodations for students with a disability. Kristin celebrates her PLC by stating, "*We talk about chunking content into manageable learning timeframes and work with our inclusion and content partners on what this looks like in practice. The PLC team looks at the upcoming content and plans how to adapt the lesson for students with disabilities and what accommodations would help them be most successful. Most importantly, we celebrate the success of students and provide positive reinforcement.*"

Like many teachers, Ms. Winfrey believes in the power of effective PLCs, "*PLCs are incredibly important. New teachers get to meet with veteran teachers and leverage common formative assessments already created. It saves the new teachers time, and as a team, they can discuss mastery of content. Your airbag is your PLC.*"

Ms. Winfrey reminds all educators to continue their journey of facilitating learning and working with their PLCs to improve students' lives, "*You made the right decision to become a teacher! Sometimes you may be confused, and that's ok. Sometimes I am too! Remember, it's about the students, and you can do it. You can make it happen! Keep at it! You are needed. You are important!*"

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITIES

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are defined as "*An ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improving learning for students is continuous, job-embedded learning for educators*" (Dufour, 2021).

Knowing the positive impact PLCs can have when improving their teachers' ability to design and deliver high-quality instruction, many schools and districts have already defined expectations and outcomes for their PLC meetings and the cycle of work within the PLC. Beginning teachers should become familiar with their school's PLC structures and be active participants in every meeting.

Many PLC models have been created, and numerous books have been written on this topic, each with its unique description of what constitutes a PLC and how it should function. Depending on the school or district-adapted model, expectations for these meetings may vary. The following guidelines will help teachers familiarize themselves with the general functions of a PLC.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

No matter the model adopted, PLCs are critical for teacher development, improving instructional delivery, and achieving school-wide, grade-level, and individual teacher goals. The following list describes some of the most common practices within the PLC structure.

- Teachers learn from one another and share what is and is not working in classrooms as they support students in achieving their goals.
- Teachers identify, share, and leverage high-quality educational resources that engage students in relevant and authentic learning experiences.
- Teachers share and practice instructional strategies that help students master the essential skills and concepts of the course or content area.

Developing Goals

When beginning the PLC process, teams and individuals should start by working together to set student achievement goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**ttainable, **R**esults-oriented, and **T**ime-bound (**SMART**).

Goals provide the benchmarks necessary to know if the team's work is making the expected impact. Effective goals can catalyze, drive, and support change. Student goals drive teacher goals, teacher goals drive team and subject area goals, and team and subject area goals drive school goals. Without goals, teams are much less likely to know if they are making progress and improving student outcomes.

Develop Action Steps

Once goals have been identified, PLC teams should work together to design the action steps they will take to achieve their goals. Rick Dufour popularized four questions many districts and schools use when structuring and leading PLC meetings to achieve their goals. Below, you will find the questions and a brief description of each. You can find a more detailed description of these questions in the section *Designing Effective Learning Experiences* included in this guide.

The Four Essential Questions to Guide a PLC

1. **What do we want all students to know and be able to do?**

   • Identify the lesson or unit goal, objective, or desired outcome.

2. **How will we know if they learn it?**

   • Create or identify the assessment, learning intentions, success criteria, or evidence of learning the team will administer or collect.

3. **How will we respond when some students do not learn?**

   • Create acceleration or re-teaching opportunities.

4. **How will we extend the learning for already proficient students?**

   • Create enrichment opportunities.

Five Principles of Collaboration

The University of Virginia's Partnership for Leaders in Education (UVA-PLE) brought together a group of principals known for creating and leading effective PLCs. The principals were interviewed, and their PLC models were examined by PLE staff. To no surprise, each principal utilized a different model that focused on unique instructional priorities based on their schools' individual needs and goals. Though their PLC meetings differed in many ways, the PLE team identified five common principles in each of their PLC models.

The five principles, listed below and in a more detailed guide on the following page, provide collaboration teams with a framework for designing effective PLC meetings and avoiding the trap of PLCs becoming "just another meeting."

PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

CLEAR PURPOSE AND OUTCOMES

STRUCTURES OF SUPPORT

PROGRESS MONITORING OF EVIDENCE

CYCLE WITHIN A CYCLE

ALIGNED TO INSTRUCTIONAL DELIVERY
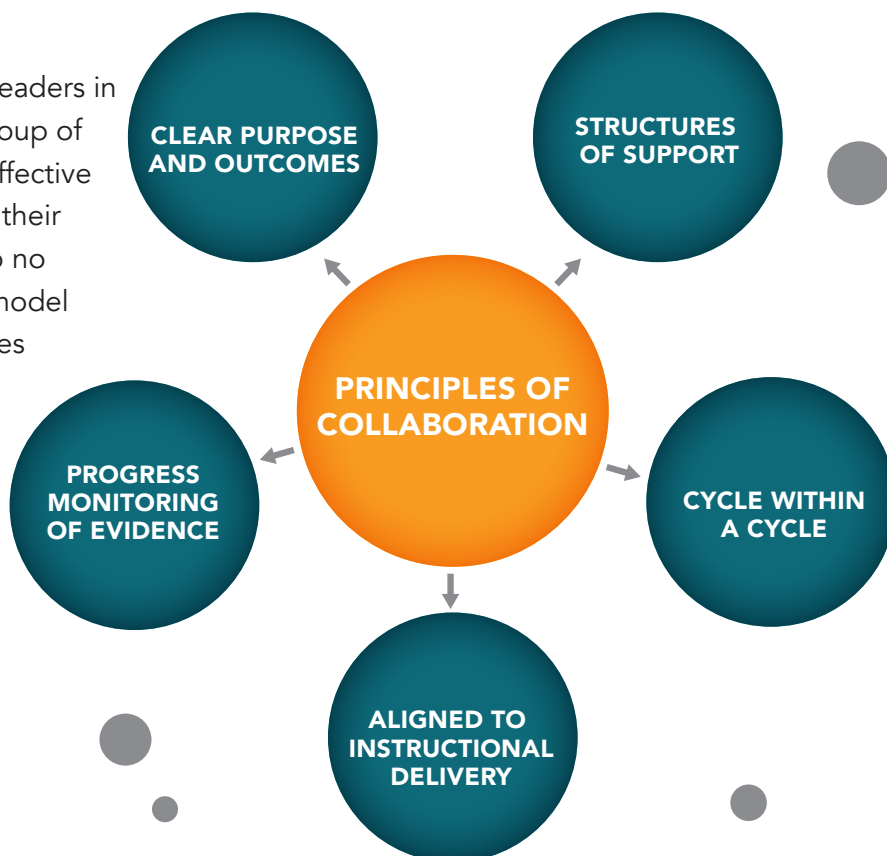
Five Principles of Collaboration

1. Meetings have a clear purpose and measurable outcomes for improving student achievement.
2. Structures are in place to support collaboration to improve student achievement.
3. Collaborative data discussions follow a cyclical progress monitoring process through quantitative and qualitative analysis.
4. Collaboration meeting discussions are evident in instructional planning, delivery, and assessment.
5. The collaboration cycle includes a system for progress monitoring the effectiveness of outcomes.

It is important to note that these five principles are a design framework for a complete PLC cycle of work rather than one meeting.

FIVE PRINCIPLES OF COLLABORATION

Principle #1

Meetings have a clear purpose and measurable outcomes for improving student achievement.

- Purpose and outcomes are aligned to school-level priorities and shared before meeting.
- Purpose is identified using evidenced-based metrics.
- Purpose supports increased student achievement.
- Purpose requires or is improved through collaboration.
- Outcomes can be measured and monitored.

Principle #2

Structures are in place to support collaboration to improve student achievement.

- Master schedule includes 60-90 minutes of uninterrupted time.
- Meaningful teaming with clearly defined roles and responsibilities
- Norms were developed by the team and consistently observed.
- Agendas are created and shared before meetings.
- Meeting protocols are created and utilized consistently.
- Appropriate materials available (work samples, data, curriculum guides, assessment banks, etc.)
- A knowledgeable facilitator or administrator is present.

Principle #3

Collaborative data discussions follow a cyclical progress monitoring process through quantitative and qualitative analysis.

- The cycle is aligned to a comprehensive assessment strategy.
- The cycle begins and ends with a deep data review and the creation of instructional action plans.
- Purpose and outcomes of previous and subsequent meetings aligned to present meeting.
- Evidence of previous outcomes was shared and discussed.
- Meetings include actionable next steps and commitments that can be monitored.

Principle #4

Collaboration meeting discussions are evident in instructional planning, delivery, and assessment.

- Instructional action plans are developed after each interim to accelerate and enrich instruction, and evidence of implementation is available during walkthroughs and observations.

- Evidence of the effectiveness of implementation is maintained by collecting and reviewing authentic student work and other relevant data.

- Instructional strategies are discussed and embedded in lesson plans.

- Instructional delivery and student achievement challenges are discussed and addressed.

- Outcomes have the opportunity to improve instructional delivery.

Principle #5

The collaboration cycle includes a system for progress monitoring the effectiveness of outcomes.

- Walk-throughs, teacher observations, professional development, and interventions are directly aligned to the purpose and outcomes of collaborative discussions.

- The administration monitors implementation and evaluates the collaborative team for effectiveness, and acceleration/enrichment is redesigned when necessary.

- There is clear evidence of the implementation and effectiveness of actions available during meetings.

- Short-term actions aligned to long-term goals are identified, implemented, and monitored.

- Next steps are documented and shared with the administration or meeting facilitator.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

6. Does my school have a PLC structure or process?

7. Are our PLC meetings effective?

8. Am I an active participant in my PLC?

9. Has our PLC set meaningful SMART goals for students, teachers, grade levels, and content areas?

10. Does our PLC have a consistent schedule?

11. Do our PLC meetings have a clear purpose and outcome?

12. Do we have the necessary structures to achieve our purpose and outcomes?

13. Are our meetings cyclical? Is the cycle aligned to our district or school assessment cycle? Marking or grading periods? Pacing guides?

14. Do I come to my PLC prepared to share my data, celebrations, and struggles?

15. Are there supports, resources, or training I could access to help me better understand PLCs?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

All Things PLC by Solution Tree. Free Resources. https://www.allthingsplc.info/ Ed Week.

Fisher, D., Frey, N., Almarode, J., Flories, K., Nagel, D., (2019). *PLC+ Better Decisions and Greater Impact by Design.* Corwin.

Professional Learning Communities Can 'Unleash the Learning!' 4-part series
https://www.edweek.org/leadership/opinion-plcs-can-unleash-the-learning/2021/04

University of Virginia Partnership for Leaders in Education.
https://www.darden.virginia.edu/uva-ple

NEW MEXICO'S CONTENT STANDARDS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) provides a roadmap that guides and supports teachers in planning and delivering standards-based content for their subject area and grade level. A content standard is a statement describing what students should know and be able to do in each content or subject area at each grade level. Content Standards are provided on the NM PED website for the following content areas: English Language Development and Spanish Language Development, English Language Arts and Spanish Language Arts, Mathematics, Career and Technical Education, World-Readiness Standards for Learning Language, Physical Education, Health Education, Science, Computer Science, Social Studies, and Visual and Performing Arts. In addition, New Mexico has adopted an additional set of standards in ELA for K-12 that focus on cultural responsiveness.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

First, teachers should identify the standards for each core subject they are responsible for teaching. McLaughlin and Overturf (2013) recommend reading the standards vertically; that means reading the standard for their grade level and then reading it for the grade level below and above. Studying the standards provides the teacher with knowledge of what students should know coming into their class and what they will need to know when they leave. This information is helpful when planning and differentiating instruction for their students. Below is the Reading for Literature Standard 1 for grades five through seven. Notice the slight differences highlighted in italics from one grade level to the next.

- **ELA.RL.5.1**: *Quote accurately from a text when explaining* what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.
- **ELA.RL.6.1**: *Cite textual evidence to support analysis* of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences are drawn from the text.
- **ELA.RL.7.1**: *Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of* what the text says explicitly as well as inferences are drawn from the text.

Because of these minor differences, understanding the standards and the language of the standards is vital for beginning teachers. NMPED, with the help of New Mexico educators, created the New Mexico Instructional

Scope 2.0 (NMIS 2.0). The purpose of the NMIS is to guide teacher and administrative teams in planning and reflecting on current practice.

Unpacking the New Mexico Content Standards

New Mexico provides schools with unpacked standards broken down to clarify what the standard means and define student performance outcomes. There are also embedded formative assessments that align with clusters of literature and informational text standards. On the following pages, you will find an at-a-glance sample of the information included in each NMIS standard document and the embedded formative assessment tasks provided.

NEW MEXICO Public Education Department

New Mexico Instructional Scope
3rd Grade Literature Guide

RL.3.1

Anchor Standard: Key Ideas and Details
R.1: Read closely to determine what the test says explicitly and to make logical inferences ... specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.

Strand and Anchor Standard

Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
3	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details

Standard	Vertical Alignment	

Full language of standard

Vertical Alignment

	Previous Grades:	Future Grades:
Ask and answer questions to demonstrate understanding of a text, referring explicitly to the text as the basis for answers.	RL.2.1, RL.1.1, RL.K.1	RL.4.1, RL.5.1

Clarification Statement	Vocabulary for Teacher Development
Students ask and answer questions to ... how they understand the text. They use spec... support their answer.	• **explicit/explici**... y: stated clearly and directly, leaving ... on or interpretation.

Break down of standard

Students Who Demonstrate Understanding Can...

Essential Understandings

• ask and answer questions referring explicitly to the text as the basis for answers.

ASSESSMENT GUIDE
The resources provided in this Assessment Guides are meant to provide examples of formative assessments within instruction They are not compiled for a quiz, test, or summative assessment outside of instruction.

• Constructed Response Assessment Task aligned to 3.1 & 3.3
  ○ Evidence of Text Complexity and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness
  ○ VABB Analysis with Example Questions and Exemplar Student Responses
  ○ Example MLSS Universal Supports
• Constructed Response Assessment Task aligned to 3.9
• Multiple Choice Assessment Items

Grade	CCSS Domain	CCSS Strand
3	Reading: Literature (RL)	Key Ideas and Details

Sample Task #1 (Constructed Response)

Example of High-Quality Task

Read *The Sign Painter* by Allen Say
Wh... o we learn about the boy every time the author makes a point of saying, "The boy did not answer"?

Exemplar Student Responses

• We learn that the boy is still growing into the person he wants to become. He stays si... sure of his answer or if he hasn't made up his mind. He does speak when he is sure ... when he shares that he loves painting.

Exemplar Student Responses

RL.3.1 RL.3.3	DOK	Blooms
	Level 2	Understand

Possible Aligned Language Objectives	Possible Misconceptions
• Students will state a claim about why the author says, "the boy did not answer" and support their claim with evidence from the text (Argue-Writing- Expanding)	• Students may respond literally to ...plain why the boy does not answer (e.g., "h... to say") without analyzing the ... meaning (e.g., "he is still growing ... o the person

Possible Misconceptions

Evidence of Text Complexity and Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness

Text Summary and evidence of Complexity:
- A boy comes into town hungry and looking for work and meets a sign painter who offers him a job painting billboards. The man and the boy travel the desert painting a woman and one word, Arrowstar, on each billboard. The reader learns of the temptation of safe choices and the uncertainties of following a personal dream.
- The Sign Painter by Allen Say is worthy of students' time to read and also meets the expectations for text complexity at Grade 3. The Lexile level is 570 and it is a Caldecott winner.

Evidence of Cultural and Linguistic Responsiveness:
- **Who is represented in the text used to assess this cluster of standards?**
  The man appears to be white and the boy appears to be of Asian descent, but their race/ethnicity is never explicitly mentioned in the text.

CLR Analysis

VABB Analysis

Validate	Affirm
The intentional and purposeful legitimization of the home culture and language of the student.	*The intentional and purposeful effort to reverse the negative stereotypes, images, and representations of marginalized cultures and languages promoted by corporate mainstream.*
does the author choose to refer to "the boy" and "the man"? How does this connect a reader to the story? ESR: *The author wants the reader to see themselves in the characters. This allows the message of the text to connect to any reader.*	**Question:** The boy chooses to pursue his dreams and love of painting rather than stay with the man and have a steady job. Why is this a bold choice for the boy to make? ESR: *It could be considered a bold choice because the boy is leaving a safe choice behind. But the boy could also find a job painting what he loves and still make money. He is taking a risk but it's still possible to find a job as a painter.*

RL.3.1

VABB Analysis

Layer 1: Universal Supports
High-quality core instruction for all students

In New Mexico we believe that all students deserve access to high-quality grade-level texts to w proficiency with reading and comprehension as outlined in the New Mexico standards. These universal supports pr students to comprehend complex texts by providing access points and opportunities for dee

1.) Preteach Tier 2 Vocabulary Words
- *Tier 2 Vocabulary are words that are more likely to appear in text than speech. Preteaching these words before diving into a text allows students to better understand the text because their cognitive load can be focused more on comprehension. <Link to Resource Guide on Vocabulary.>*
- Choose words that are not implicitly or explicitly defined within the text.

2.) Annotate/Create Text-Dependent questions to push student thinking to think about themes and central ideas, knowledge of vocabulary, or syntax and structure following the steps outlined in this resource guide. <Link to Resource Guide on TDQs.>
- *Crafting and using text dependent questions throughout a complex text allows the reader to chunk the text to better focus on meaning. They also teach the reader how to think deeply about a text and use evidence from the text to support that thinking.*

MLSS Universal Supports

The NMIS provides teachers with additional support in understanding and teaching the English Language Arts, mathematics, and science standards. The standards highlighted in red throughout the NMIS guides are considered priority standards. NMPED defines these standards as "*the most critical prerequisite skills and knowledge a student needs.*" Below is a brief description of a few of the tenets in each guide.

While the NMIS provides teachers with a wealth of information, they do not define how the standards should be taught or which materials should be used to support students. This is decided by the teacher, school, and district.

As a beginning teacher, the support of colleagues and administrators is essential when discussing standards. Collaborative conversations to interpret what we want our students to know and be able to do are a catalyst for creating learning experiences for all students. Discussing the priority standards, identifying the depth of knowledge, and aligning assessments to the standards keep the focus on ALL students learning at high levels.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I understand the standard?
2. Do I understand the supporting standards?
3. What do my students need to
    d. Know - Facts, names, places, dates, vocabulary, information.
    e. Understand - Big ideas, generalizations, principles, connections, relationships, patterns, and ideas that transfer across situations.
    f. Do - Skill demonstrations and applications.
4. What assessments will I give to check for understanding?
5. What do my students already know?
6. What possible student misconceptions should be aware of and be prepared to address?
7. How will I differentiate my instruction to meet the needs of all learners?
8. What thought-provoking and scaffolded questions will I ask my students throughout the lesson?
9. How can the tools provided in NMIS, such as MLSS and culturally and linguistically responsive guides, inform instruction planning, delivery, and assessment?

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

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New Mexico Educator Highlight

Lisa Michaud
Clovis Municipal Schools

After pursuing an opportunity in restaurant management, Lisa Michaud made her way back to her first love, teaching. Lisa Michaud is a first-year teacher in the Clovis Municipal School District, where she teaches second grade. During her interview, she summarized her path to becoming a teacher by saying, "*I now have my dream job.*" Some of our most passionate and effective educators pursued "alternative" careers before becoming teachers. When you hear their stories and the life experiences that led them to the classroom, you better understand the profession's importance and how it "calls out" to some of our most influential and hard-working teachers.

Like many great teachers, Lisa demonstrates the grit and resilience necessary to teach while also being a student. She notes that for her, school is a full-time undertaking. After teaching all day, she heads home to complete her schoolwork in her certification program. She notes that it takes a lot of devotion, but she is focused and plans to complete her master's degree after meeting the certification program's requirements.

Like many teachers in New Mexico, Lisa was thrown a curveball during her first week of teaching. After developing a detailed plan to connect with her students, engage in relationship-building activities, and teach the routines and procedures that would help her classroom run smoothly, out of nowhere, she had to quarantine due to coming in close contact with Covid. Now she had to complete her first week working remotely - with her students in the classroom with a teaching assistant. So, while Lisa made the best of it, she felt like she started at least a week behind. She described her feelings about that first week, "*Those first-week things are beyond important. Trying to teach a fire drill virtually doesn't work. Losing that first week was hard for both the kids and me. I needed to take the time to build relationships - You wouldn't think losing five days would be that much, but five days when you're seven years old is like a lifetime.*"

While Lisa shared many of the challenges she faced as a new teacher, one of her earliest was administering the district's beginning of the year assessments. Fortunately, with the assistance of colleagues and her principal, she completed the task successfully. Reflecting on her experience, Lisa would encourage all beginning teachers to take the time to seek out information regarding their district's expectations for assessments, particularly those administered at the beginning of the year. Lisa also highlighted how important it is to understand the purpose of the test and the expectations for using the data gained from the assessments.

Lisa is dedicated to her students and wants to be the best teacher she can be for them. As a result, she vigorously seeks feedback from her colleagues, administrators, and specialists, such as her school's reading specialist. Staff members observed her classroom repeatedly. She said, "*I had my administrator come in, my teacher on special assignment, my reading specialist...I had different people coming in all the time. I was obsessed with it!*" She shared that for her, it was essential to understand that they were there to help her and that she had to be an active participant in asking for feedback. She discussed the need to overcome her tendency towards "*I've got this*" and reach out for help to address the various issues she was facing in the classroom.

Lastly, her final advice to new teachers is to take care of themselves. She said, "*Take care of yourself, recognize that the first month is the hardest...there really is next year, and next year is when you will say 'guess what, I got this first week! And I know that assessment! Hey, I got this!*"

NEW MEXICO'S BALANCED ASSESSMENT STRATEGY

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) requires states to measure the achievement of all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners. In 2021, the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED) implemented a balanced assessment strategy composed of summative, interim, formative, and screener/progress monitoring assessments. These assessments aim to provide students, teachers, and parents with information specific to student learning progress. It is essential to understand that these assessments are a vital element of teaching and learning. They provide districts, schools, and teachers with data and information needed to determine student proficiency levels, inform, and guide instruction, and monitor progress towards goals. Effectively utilizing a balanced assessment strategy is a critical component of classroom and school improvement and serves as a guide for student learning.

Assessment Types

- **Summative Assessments**
  The New Mexico Public Education Department requires the administration of annual summative assessments during the spring of each school year. These assessments measure individual student performance using a standardized benchmark and focus on grade level outcomes for identified content areas. NM PED uses standardized summative assessments aligned to adopted grade-level content standards. The outcomes of summative tests measure a student's grade level proficiency and progress toward college and career readiness. Results are reported as proficiency levels and can be used to measure a student's performance against a standard or rubric. Summative assessments are often called "Assessments of Learning" because they provide information at the end of the teaching and learning process to rank student achievement levels against a standard.

  The NM PED Balanced Assessment Strategy includes the following summative assessments:
  - **New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA)** - Measures grade-level proficiency in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) in grades 3-8. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

- **New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR)** - Measures science proficiency aligned to the New Mexico STEM Ready! Science Standards in grades 5, 8, and 11. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

- **Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT)** - Provides 11th-grade students a no-cost opportunity to take the SAT on a weekday, instead of a weekend, in the comfort of their school. It consists of three (3) timed assessments that measure knowledge and skills in three areas: Reading, Writing and Language, and Mathematics.

- **Preliminary Scholastic Aptitude Test (PSAT)** – A practice assessment for the SAT administered once per school year to students in grades 10 and 11. It consists of three (3) timed assessments that measure knowledge and skills in three areas: Reading, Writing and Language, and Mathematics.

- **Spanish Reading Standards-Based Assessment (SBA)** - Measures the knowledge and skills in Spanish reading standards of grade 11 students in their first three years in U.S. schools or their 4th or 5th-grade years with an approved ELL waiver.

- **Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)** - Assesses what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can do in English Language Arts, mathematics, and science in grades 3-8 and high school.

- **National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)** - Provides a standard measure of student achievement in Mathematics and Reading. This assessment is administered every other year to a sample of students in all 50 states in grades 4 and 8.

- **Interim Assessments**
Interim assessments assess previously taught content, are administered throughout the school year, and are designed to evaluate learning and knowledge progression. Interim assessment cycles are determined at the district or school level. Ideally, interims should be administered every six, eight, or nine weeks depending on the assessment's grade level and the district calendar. These assessments provide instructional data that can be analyzed and used to monitor student progress towards goals, identify learning gaps, create teacher action plans, make instructional decisions during the next instructional cycle, and predict success on summative assessments. Interim assessments are often referred to as "Assessments for Learning" because they provide data that allow teachers to adjust in instruction throughout the year.

The NM PED Balanced Assessment Strategy includes the following interim assessments: *Note: These assessments measure all standards, not just those taught before administration.*

- **Interim Measure of Students Success and Achievement (iMSSA)** - Measures performance and growth toward grade-level proficiency in Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Language Usage. Indicates students' strengths and identifies areas for improvement in grades 3-8.

- **Formative Assessment**
Formative assessment is an integrated classroom instructional practice that provides "real-time" data and information to teachers and students. They are most effective when aligned to specific learning targets or objectives. When this alignment is present, formative assessments provide valuable insight into the effectiveness of instruction, student understanding, and the comprehension of concepts.

The timely feedback from formative assessments allows for reflection on progress towards goals and opportunities for teachers and students to make instructional and learning decisions as they move through the curriculum. Since teachers create these assessments, they take on many forms, and the frequency of delivery can vary.

The NM PED Balanced Assessment Strategy includes the following formative assessments:

- **Formative Item Sets from the Interim Measure of Students Success and Achievement (iMSSA)** – iMSSA offers questions aligned to standards for educators to create formative assessments for Reading, Mathematics, Writing, and Language Usage for students in grades 3-8.

- **Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM)** – NMPED encourages teachers to utilize the DLM Instructional Embedded Model during the school year to help prepare the students for the end-of-year window that assesses English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science in grades 3-8 and high school.

- **Universal Screener and Diagnostic Assessments**
Universal screener assessments consist of brief tests focused on targeted skills highly predictive of the likelihood of success in meeting or exceeding curricular benchmarks. Screener assessments can identify students who may be struggling, determine eligibility for specific programs or services, or progress monitor student learning.

Diagnostic assessments provide information regarding targeted subskills a student does or does not possess. These assessments can help identify the underlying causes of student performance, determine readiness for learning, and provide information for modifying instruction.

The NM PED Balanced Assessment Strategy includes a few assessments for screening students and diagnosing learning needs. The following are a few of the most commonly used.

- **Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS)** - Measures a student's overall proficiency and progress towards English proficiency developed from WIDA's English Language Development Standards for K-12 in four domains: Listening, Reading, Speaking, and Writing. A version of this test, Alt-ACCESS, is specifically designed for English Language Learners with severe disabilities.

- **AVANT STAMP** – Evaluates the Spanish language proficiency of students enrolled in a state-funded bilingual multicultural education program who have not yet reached proficiency in the Spanish language.

- **World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA)** - An English language proficiency assessment given to new students in grades K–12 to help educators identify whether they are English language learners (ELLs).

- **New Mexico Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT)** - Measures what 3- and 4-year-olds know and can do during their preschool years and includes typical development indicators for children with more than one language.

- **Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP)** - Assesses student development in early reading, math, and English language acquisition through BOY, MOY, and EOY benchmark assessments and provides

continuous progress monitoring throughout the year. Enables teachers to plan individualized instruction tailored to meet the specific needs of each student. These assessments are available from Pre-K through 8th grade but are required in grades K-2. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

The number of assessments administered in their schools may seem overwhelming for beginning teachers. This is a familiar feeling and frustration for both new and veteran teachers. However, it is important to understand that a balanced assessment strategy must provide data for stakeholders at all levels, student, parent, teacher, school, district, state, and national. To achieve this outcome, numerous types of assessments are required. As it relates to the teacher's perspective on the assessments required by the State of New Mexico, here are a few essential teacher moves when preparing for and administering these assessments:

- Request a copy of the district and school assessment calendars at the beginning of the year and add the dates to your calendar.

- Be sure to educate yourself on any assessments your students will take throughout the year. Be prepared to share information about the assessment with your students and their parents.

- If available, review assessment blueprints. These documents generally provide you with a list of standards assessed, the number of items on the test, and the percentage of the test items measuring each content strand.

- Learn how to use the data provided by the assessment. An assessment is only a waste of instructional time if we do not use it to inform future practices. Every assessment provides information teachers can use to create better outcomes for students. Find this information and use it.

- Before administering or proctoring any state or national assessment, be sure to receive training on testing procedures, irregularities, and confidentiality. It is good practice to review the Test Administrator Manual before the test day for these assessments to understand the guidelines and requirements better.

- Develop a classroom procedure that includes strategies for communicating assessment results and progress towards goals to students and parents.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Does my school or district have an assessment calendar?

2. Which assessments are available for my grade level and content area? Which ones are required by the state of New Mexico? Which ones are mandated by the school district or school? Which ones are by teacher choice?

3. Do I need training or support to administer the assessment or analyze the results?

4. What is the rationale or purpose of each assessment? Do my students understand these? My students' parents?

5. How can I prepare my students for each assessment?

6. Do I have the necessary materials and resources aligned to the assessments and state standards?

7. What reports or data does the assessment generate for the teacher?

8. How can I use the results of each assessment to improve my teaching?

9. Do I understand the guidelines and requirements of the assessment I will proctor?

10. Where can I find a copy of the Test Administrator Manual?

11. How do I report a testing irregularity?

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Bambrick-Santoyo, P. (2010) *Driven by Data: A Practical Guide to Improve Instruction.* John Wiley & Sons.

New Mexico Public Education Department of Assessment and Accountability – https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us

DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Data-Driven Instruction (DDI) is a foundational framework for lesson planning that begins with the end in mind. DDI starts with quality **assessments**. Many new teachers think of "test" when they hear the word assessment, but an assessment can be any form of student work that measures an intended learning target. Assessments can be an in-class assignment, one or two questions students answer on a post-it note at the end of a lesson (often called an exit ticket), a weekly quiz, a unit test, a benchmark, interim, or a progress monitoring tool such as Istation.

After the assessment, the next step in DDI is **analysis**. During analysis, teachers analyze student answers and responses to the assessment to identify content students mastered and where they may need additional support. Teachers skilled at data analysis will know *who* did not learn the content and *why* they did not learn it. Ultimately, identifying the misconceptions and misunderstandings that impeded learning.

Once the analysis is complete, teachers must take action to address learning gaps through re-teaching that addresses the misconceptions and misunderstandings identified in the analysis. Teacher actions can be directed to the whole class, during small-group instruction, or one-on-one to individual students.

THE FRAMEWORK

The majority of DDI work should take place in PLC meetings. Effective PLC cycles are generally aligned to the school's assessment and data cycle. For example, if a school assesses students with a common assessment every six weeks, the PLC cycle and data cycle should mirror the six-week assessment cycle. At the end of every six weeks, the teachers' PLC meetings would focus on analyzing data from the six-week assessment and creating action plans for the next six weeks. Aligning the PLC cycle, assessment cycle, and data cycle will enhance each process and improve the team's ability to identify and address their students' needs.

Data-Driven Instruction begins in PLC meetings. Teachers can see how the Four PLC Questions and the DDI Principles align in the table below. If the school does not have PLC meetings, this work can still be implemented independently, with a coach, mentor, or school administrator.

PLC QUESTIONS	DATA-DRIVEN INSTRUCTION PRINCIPLE
1. What do we want students to learn?	• Create an assessment to measure the learning of a unit of study. • Before beginning instruction, review the assessment questions to measure your student's mastery of the standard(s). This review will deepen your understanding of the complexity and rigor required of your students. Ask yourself, what is the cognitive demand of the assessment? How are questions asked? How will students respond? What vocabulary is used? • Using the knowledge gained from reviewing the assessment, plan instruction that mirrors its complexity. If done well, instructional planning and delivery will create opportunities for students to prepare for the assessment. • Assess students at the end of the unit or designated time in your pacing guide. This is your time to measure their independent learning levels, so try not to help them answer any questions!
2. How will we know they have learned it?	• Analyze the student data from the assessment. If your school has implemented a robust DDI process, you likely have an analysis protocol to help you find information in the data. Some basic questions may be: » What aspect of the data do you want to celebrate? » Which question(s) had the most wrong answers? » Which standard(s) had the most wrong answers? » Which students need to be re-taught specific standards? » When students answered incorrectly, was there a common wrong answer? Did common wrong answers have distractors or common pitfalls? What is the fundamental misconception or misunderstanding that students need to fix?
3. What will we do if students don't learn it?	• Create a re-teach action plan to help students master areas of need. Focus on the critical standards first. • Generally, if 70-80% of your students miss a question or set of questions related to a specific standard, that question or standard should be re-taught to the whole group. • As you become proficient at designing and managing re-teaching, you can include small-group re-teaching and, eventually, one-to-one re-teaching in your action plans.

4. What will we do if students already know it?	• Create an enrichment/extension plan for those students who do not need a re-teach action plan.
	• Extension activities are generally more independent, require students to transfer knowledge and skills to a novel setting, take the learning deeper by relating it to the real world, etc.

Data-Driven Classroom Best Practices Suggested by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo

Paul Bambrick-Santoyo is a well-known educator and author. Below are suggestions and tips for teachers who want to increase classroom rigor using data-driven instructional strategies. Paul has written many books and delivered numerous presentations to educators. If teachers want to learn how to be data-driven, we highly suggest starting with one of Paul's many books or articles on this topic. His book Driven by Data is included in the reference section of this article.

1. Objectives: Rewrite and tighten with assessments in mind:
   - Align objectives to how the students will be assessed.
   - Write "know/do" objectives: Students will know _____ by doing _____.
   - Look at test questions beforehand to ensure the skills assessed on the test are taught in the daily lessons.
   - Use verbs from Bloom's taxonomy to ensure that the objective is rigorous.

2. Do Now (five- to ten-minute individual exercise to start class, sometimes called a Bell Ringer)
   - Use Do Now as a re-teach tool: Use questions students struggled to master on the last assessment.
   - Use mixed-format questions: multiple-choice, short answer, open-ended, etc.
   - Organize questions sequentially according to difficulty.
   - Spiral in previously learned objectives, skills, and questions as a review.
   - Develop a Do Now tracking sheet that shows student performance on the skills in each Do Now.
   - Make Do Nows that look like test questions and make sure they are reviewed in class.
   - Observe students' answers during Do Now, note students with wrong answers, and follow up with them later in class.
   - Add why and how questions (for example, why did you choose this answer? How do you know your answer is correct?) for different levels of learners and to extend thinking.

3. Questioning to check for understanding and increase engagement:
   - Develop whole class responses to student answers (for example, snap if you agree, stomp if you don't) to engage 100 percent participation.
   - Use cold call: Avoid just calling on students with hands raised.

- Move from ping-pong to volleyball: Instead of responding to every student, get other students to respond to each other: "Do you agree with Sam?" "Why is that answer correct (or incorrect)?" "What would you add?"
- Script questions before the lesson to ensure they scaffold appropriately and address rigor at varied levels.

a. Student error (techniques for helping students encounter the correct answer):
  - Use whiteboards to have every student write down a response to the question: the whole class shows answers simultaneously so the teacher can immediately check how many students answered correctly.
  - Write questions in your lesson plan for specific students struggling with a standard,
  - Note in your lesson plan what questions students answer incorrectly; call on them again when you revisit similar questions later in the week.
  - Choose "No opt-out": do not let students off the hook when struggling with an answer.

b. Think ratio (techniques to reduce teacher talk and push student thinking):
  - Require students to support answers with evidence from the text.
  - Fake ignorance (for example, write the wrong answer that a student gives on the board, let students find the error rather than correcting it yourself; pretend you don't even know that the answer is wrong).
  - Ask students: "put it in your own words" when introducing a classroom definition, concept, etc.
  - Use Wait Time to give students the chance to think through the answer.

4. Differentiated instruction (teaching students at different levels):
  - Create leveled questions for assessments.
  - Include a bonus section of challenging questions.
  - Prepare different Do Nows, worksheets, and so on for students at different levels.
  - Use data (tracking sheets, interim assessment results, exit tickets) to determine the degree of scaffolding and extra support each student needs.
  - Group students according to the skills they need to develop during stations or group work.
  - Collaborate with special education teachers to develop appropriate scaffolding for special needs students.
  - Use Do Now, exit tickets, and interim assessment data to drive small group re-teach sessions.
  - Create assignments with menu options by level (easy, medium, hard)—students can choose, or the teacher can assign.
  - Have observers sit by struggling students during an observation to provide extra support.

5. Peer-to-peer support strategies:
   - Have students teach parts of the lesson to small groups of their peers.
   - Have students lead learning stations.
   - Train peer tutors—teach student tutors how to ask questions instead of giving answers.
   - Think, pair, share: students think of the answer, talk with a partner, and then share as a large group.
   - Turn and talk: students turn toward a partner and explain answers to a question.
   - Implement peer editing and revision opportunities.
   - Create mentoring relationships: twelfth to tenth grade, eleventh to ninth grade, and so on.

6. Student self-evaluation:
   - Create weekly skills check with a tracking chart: students track their progress on each skill.
   - Go over tests after grading them, discussing "Why is choice A wrong?" and similar questions.
   - Have students grade their own papers using a rubric.
   - Give students independent practice worksheets with answers on the back so that students can check their own work once completed.
   - Create a cumulative rubric (adding skills as taught): have students do periodic self-evaluations with the rubric.

7. Exit tickets (brief class-ending activity to check for understanding of that day's lesson):
   - Create a tracking sheet to match the exit ticket.
   - Assess the same skills through varied methods.
   - Align format to assessment.
   - Grade immediately.
   - Immediately follow up (breakfast, lunch, homeroom).
   - Use essential questions aligned to standards on exit tickets.
   - Follow up data from the exit ticket with the next day's Do Now.
   - Use exit ticket to determine small group re-teach.

It takes significant time to develop the understanding and skills required for Data-Driven Instruction. The most important thing for beginning teachers to remember when beginning their DDI journey is to be kind to themselves when examining and owning their data. When participating in DDI meetings, the analysis is much like a diagnosis, and the re-teach action plan is like a treatment plan for their students. Teachers who are truly data-driven know that their actions after analyzing an assessment are far more important than any possible instructional mistakes or missteps they took before the assessment. Never forget that experience comes from making mistakes and learning from them.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Does my school have a DDI process? If so, what is the timeline, protocols, prework, expectations, etc.?

2. What colleague or mentor could help me prepare and practice DDI ahead of regularly scheduled meetings?

3. When will I schedule re-teach and enrichment lessons in my daily schedule?

4. Out of the many data-driven classroom best practices suggested by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo, how many have I tried? Which ones have worked? Which ones have not? Where could I use more support?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Bailey, K. & Jakicic, C. (2017) *Simplifying Common Assessment: A Guide for Professional Learning Communities at Work.* Solution Tree.

Bambrick, P. (2010). *Driven by Data.* Jossey-Bass.

Teacher Tip

Learn to use your data!
Become a data expert within your classroom. Create your own data collection and analysis systems and consistently review data such as student attendance, grades, assessments (formative, interim, summative), and discipline referrals. Look for trends and information that may help you help your students.

New Mexico Educator Highlight

Meredith Scott

Albuquerque Public Schools

"I walk onto a new campus, head to my new classroom, greet the teachers in the grassy circle, and exhibit a strong, confident smile – even though I am trembling inside. This is my first experience in public education in the US, returning to my hometown from a Montessori school in Mexico, where I taught and led the English as a Second Language program. I am enveloped with the excitement and nervousness of new adventures."

Meredith Scott is a second-grade teacher at Mountain Mahogany Community School, located in the Albuquerque Public School District. During her interview, Meredith shared her secret for preparing herself for a long and productive career in education. She is working through the challenges and stresses of the job by maximizing her planning time and finding a balance between effective instructional planning and perfection. She states, "Perfection is not possible. I must be gentle to myself and don't need to strive for perfection. It's critical that I work as much as possible within the time given and be okay with letting it go."

Meredith understands the magnitude of the planning that comes with teaching little scholars how to read, write, and engage in mathematics, all while being mindful of themselves. Her approach to teaching is based on a philosophy of empowering her students. She leverages her experiences teaching in a Montessori school and implementing core practices from Responsive Classroom and Morning Meetings. Meredith says, "Intentionally planning the start of the school day provides a natural flow for the day and results in students' success; this includes the physical layout of the classroom. It creates a learning community where we are all equally responsible and partners in our success. When I know my long-range plan, I know where I am going, and it helps create equity in my classroom for all students."

When preparing and delivering instruction, Meredith utilizes a backward planning model. She begins by determining the end result, creates her learning measures, and then identifies the instructional strategies and activities she will use to guide her students to the goal. Meredith states, "Backward planning allows me to understand mastery first, assessment second, and know how to take that information and determine key points in the lesson."

Meredith constantly recognizes and celebrates her students' growth and successes. For example, she celebrates how students write morning messages, decide on classroom jobs, and help prepare the environment for meaningful tasks. She knows that by creating an environment where students are engaged, where they build their understanding through inquiry and collaboration with one another, they will develop positive relationships and create a strong sense of community. Meredith said, "*It takes time, but it's powerful in building student culture and supports building a community.*"

As a result of her approach to planning instruction, she has seen many positive changes in her students: autonomy in decision making, growth in handwriting, spelling, mathematical concepts, scientific reasoning, and, equally important, the development of their social-emotional skills and self-regulation.

DESIGNING EFFECTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCES

> ## "A good plan is like a roadmap. It shows the final destination and the best way to get there."
>
> – H. Stanley Judd

As a beginning teacher with limited time, resources, and sometimes support from a good mentor, coach, or collaboration team, you may be tempted to take shortcuts when planning differentiated learning experiences for your students. For example, many teachers who do not fully understand the importance and impact of good planning will depend on a textbook or generic lesson plans created by an education company or other teachers in the district or state. Some teachers use websites like Pinterest, Teachers Pay Teachers, LearnZillion, and hundreds of others that provide "exemplar" lesson plans at no cost or for a minimal fee. These "resources" can be a good starting point for teachers who fully understand their students' learning needs and the content in their state standards. However, every classroom consists of students with diverse backgrounds, learning styles, and levels of skill development, and every teacher has a distinct teaching style. Consider all these variables, and you will quickly understand why it is essential for a beginning teacher to understand and know how to unpack state standards, diagnose their students' individual learning needs, and design and deliver engaging learning experiences to meet those diverse and unique needs.

There have been hundreds of books written that provide teachers with guidance and support for writing effective lesson plans, and universities, districts, and schools have adopted and adapted many of these over the years. We encourage new teachers to begin their lesson planning learning journey by exploring current systems and structures in their school or district. If there is no set process, the information included in Essential Teacher Moves in the following section would be the second-best place to start.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Effective lesson planning begins in the teacher's professional learning community (PLC) or collaboration team. In these meetings, teachers collaboratively plan to deliver and assess high-quality instruction. When planning with a team, these four essential questions, popularized by Rick Dufour, are usually used to guide lesson development.

1. What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
2. How will we know if they learn it?
3. How will we respond when some students do not learn?
4. How will we extend the learning for students already proficient students?

What do we want all students to know and be able to do?
This part of the lesson plan is referred to as the desired result or learning objective. The learning objective is the goal the teacher wants students to reach related to the state content standards they use to design

their lesson. For example, the New Mexico State Content Standard for math content 1.OA.A.1 reads:
Use addition and subtraction within 20 to solve word problems involving situations of adding to, taking from, putting together, taking apart, and comparing with unknowns in all positions, e.g., by using objects, drawings, and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem.

This standard's desired outcome or learning objective may be: "Students will be able to use addition and subtraction to solve word problems using manipulatives." This objective identifies the specific activity students will do and what the teacher expects them to know by the end of the lesson. This information can be found in the Do section of the Know, Understand, and Do components identified in the unpacked standard. A brief explanation of each element is included below.

- **Know** - Facts, names, places, dates, vocabulary, and information.

- **Understand** - Big ideas, generalizations, principles, connections, relationships, patterns, and ideas that transfer across situations.

- **Do** - Skill demonstrations and applications.

The teacher should also consider the essential questions identified in the unpacked standard when determining the learning objective. These questions help reinforce the big ideas and the "why" and "how" of what students are learning.

How will we know if they learn it?

Once the teacher has identified what they want their students to learn and have drilled down to the specific desired outcomes and learning objectives, they should create their evidence of learning. When determining the acceptable evidence that will be used to demonstrate learning, the teacher will need to be able to answer the following questions.

1. **Criteria** - What will it look like when students demonstrate that they understand the big ideas and have mastered the essential skills? Do I need a rubric or performance task list to measure the various levels of success?

2. **Evidence** - What evidence would demonstrate student learning? Do I have exemplars and anchors I can provide? Are there opportunities for scaffolding to assess the various skill levels of my students?

3. **Accommodations** - What support systems and strategies will I use to ensure that ALL students have an opportunity to demonstrate mastery no matter their current level? What modifications will be needed for students with special needs?

When using an unpacked standard to create aligned assessments that measure learning, the teacher should pay particular attention to the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) and Bloom's Taxonomy. Both provide essential information for measuring learning towards the specific standard being assessed. A brief explanation of each is included below.

- **Depth of Knowledge (DOK)** - Designates the cognitive depth to which students know, understand, and are aware of what they are learning to attain and explain answers, outcomes, results, and solutions. It also designates how students are expected to transfer and use what they have learned in different academic and real-world contexts.
- **Bloom's Taxonomy** - A hierarchical ordering of cognitive skills used to classify educational learning objectives into levels of complexity and specificity.

How will we respond when some students do not learn?

No matter how hard we work or how well we plan, we will always have students who do not master the content in Layer 1 Instruction. Knowing this ahead of time, teachers should always be prepared with strategies for reteaching. This doesn't mean repeating the same lesson at a slower pace. Reteaching should be designed with the targeted students in mind. The teacher should design scaffolded learning opportunities using the Know, Understand, and Do and the student's assessment results to address the student's skill gaps. These interventions are usually delivered in small groups or one-on-one. For students who perform far below expectations, the teacher may need to involve reading or math specialists, school, or peer tutors, or assign the student to intensive interventions determined by the school. No matter the course of action, the teacher is still responsible for the student's success and should make every effort to support the student throughout the year.

How will we extend the learning for students who are already proficient?

Surprisingly, many teachers struggle with this question more than the previous one. Over the years, schools have built robust systems and processes for supporting students who have fallen behind in their learning. Students excelling and ready for more challenging lessons are often overlooked by their overwhelmed teachers, who must spend a lot of time meeting administrative expectations, managing their classroom, and attending to students who may be two and sometimes three grade levels behind.

Once a student demonstrates mastery, the teacher should have a plan to inspire and motivate them to continue achieving at higher levels. Students who have mastered grade-level material deserve to be inspired and challenged in the same way their struggling classmates deserve an opportunity to try again if they are struggling. A few simple suggestions suggested by Douglas Fisher and Nancey Frey from Solution Tree (2017) are included below.

- Spiral review tasks - Create tasks that allow students to re-engage with previous content so that it remains fresh in their minds.
- Extension tasks - Create tasks that allow students to explore the current unit of study but with different tasks rather than those assigned to the class.
- Peer tutoring - Create tasks that provide students an opportunity to support their peers' learning.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Are my lessons aligned to the New Mexico Content Standards and my school and district pacing guides?
2. Have I identified and stated clear learning objective(s) or desired with higher-level behavioral verbs, conditions for performance, and evaluation criteria for which students are responsible?

3. Did I use one or more essential questions to help students understand and explore the big ideas, themes, and generalizations underlying the content we are studying?

4. Did I consider Depth of Knowledge and Bloom's Taxonomy when creating evidence of learning?

5. Does my lesson begin with engaging "activators" that help students review prior knowledge and understand what they are learning and why they are learning it?

6. Does my lesson help students move from the concrete to the representational and abstract?

7. Have I included formal and informal formative assessment tasks that give my students real-time feedback on progress toward learning goals?

8. Does my lesson have a meaningful closure that ensures my students synthesize what they have learned and give me feedback on their strengths and improvement opportunities?

9. Have a planned reteach and enrichment opportunities?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Bransford et al. (2000). *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School.* National Research Council

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Teacher Tip

If you fail to plan, you plan to fail!
It is essential to develop the habit of carefully planning and preparing classes. Planning will not only make you look like a better teacher; it will MAKE you a better teacher! Do not fall into the trap of "winging it." Students and administrators can quickly tell when teachers have not planned thoughtfully and will let you know by acting out in class or, worse, through your evaluation.

IDENTIFYING ALIGNED EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

By themselves, state academic standards do not lead to significant shifts in what teachers do in their classrooms. (Coburn, 2004; Cohen, 1995; Edgerton and Desimone, 2018; Opfer et al., 2018). One critical reason for this disconnect between state standards and instructional practice is that teachers' curriculum materials—the textbooks and other materials that drive lesson content—are frequently not aligned with state standards (Kaufman et al., 2020; Polikoff et al., 2020).

Between spring 2019 and spring 2020, there was a big jump in the percentage of teachers who reported using at least one curriculum material fully aligned to the common core: 24 percent said they did in the 2018-19 school year, compared to 35 percent the following year. (The 2019-20 data didn't include the spring months of school shutdowns.)

But these numbers went down slightly after the 2020-21 school year, the first full school year disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic: Only 33 percent reported using at least one fully aligned curriculum material, a 2 percent drop from 2019-20.

Percentage of teachers using at least one standards-aligned curriculum material in math or English/language arts.
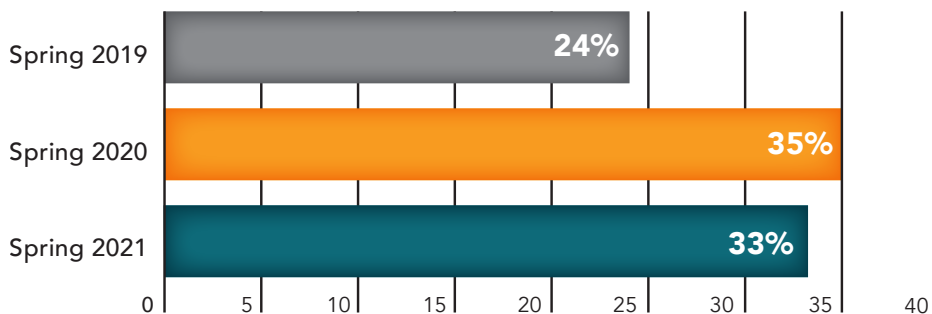
SOURCE: RAND Corporation

NMPED defines high-quality instructional materials (HQIM) as materials that are "*content-rich, fully accessible, culturally and linguistically relevant, free from bias, research-based, and aligned to New Mexico state standards. They are written with a clear purpose, effective lesson structure, and pacing to provide flexibility for teachers to best support learning for all students, encouraging inquiry and curiosity.*"

Educational resources generally take two forms.

1. **Instructional resources** - videos, lesson plans, online interactives, and other activities designed to support the teaching of specific skills required to master state standards and be college and career ready.

2. **Assessment resources** - Multiple-choice, constructed response, and open-ended Depth of Knowledge questions and performance tasks designed to assess students' understanding of these skills.

Finding educational resources aligned to the hundreds of New Mexico state content standards can be overwhelming. Factor in the additional criteria of content-rich, fully accessible, culturally, and linguistically relevant, free from bias, and research-based, and you can easily see how identifying appropriate resources could be extremely challenging and time-consuming for a beginning teacher. Thankfully, the NMPED and, in some instances, districts have taken the lead in this endeavor. NMPED has brought together teams of teachers to create the New Mexico Instructional Scope (NMIS), and districts continue to work with their state partners and schools to identify, vet, and provide resources for their teachers. As a beginning teacher, these resources are the most accessible and an excellent place to start when looking for activities and ideas you can use when designing and delivering high-quality instruction to students with diverse learning needs.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

When selecting resources, be sure to utilize the state's unpacked standards documents. The Know, Understand, and Do provides information teachers can use to ensure the resource addresses the correct facts, ideas, and skills. See below.

- **Know** - Facts, names, places, dates, vocabulary, and information.
- **Understand** - Big ideas, generalizations, principles, connections, relationships, patterns, and ideas that transfer across situations.
- **Do** - Skill demonstrations and applications.

Additionally, the unpacked standard will include the vocabulary, appropriate depth of knowledge, Bloom's Taxonomy, and even essential questions and assessment questions students should be able to answer.

A few key strategies that may help beginning teachers identify resources aligned to state standards, adapted from *How Teachers Judge the Quality of Instructional Materials* by Dan Bugler, are included below.

- **Alignment to Standards**
  - » Meets complexity of standards (depth of knowledge, cognitive complexity)
  - » Allows for differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students at all levels
  - » Effectively addresses the goals of standards
  - » Tasks and activities aligned to standards
- **Accuracy and Appeal**
  - » Provides correct content and support
  - » Relevant and appeals to the student population
  - » Visually appealing

- **Use and Support**
  - » Complete set of instructions, materials, and activities
  - » Easy for parents, students, and teachers to use
  - » Additional support for struggling students
  - » Additional support to extend learning
- **Engagement**
  - » Relevant to students, sparks interest, and is authentic
  - » Provides differentiation to include language, skill, and learning style
  - » Culturally relevant and provides opportunities to build on prior knowledge

As teachers become more familiar with their content areas, their ability to select high-quality instructional materials will progress, and their resource libraries will grow. In the meantime, new teachers can work with their colleagues and collaboration teams, utilize the school media center and computer lab, and ask a mentor, coach, or administrator for support.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Have I identified areas of instruction needing supplemental resources during my planning and preparation process?
2. Have I reviewed the unpacked standard to ensure alignment to Know, Understand, Do, DOK, Bloom's, vocabulary, essential questions, and assessments?
3. Do my resources allow for scaffolding to meet the needs of all students?
4. Do my resources have varying reading levels for the content?
5. What is my school and district's process for vetting and providing teacher resources?
6. Who can help me find aligned resources? My collaboration team? Mentor? Coach? Administrator? Colleague?
7. Did the resource I use meet the needs of my students? If so, how will I file and save it? If not, can I adjust it to make it better?
8. Are there other staff members in my school that can help me? Media Specialist? Technology Teacher? Specials Teachers? Special Education Teacher? EL Teacher? Other?

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UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING: OPTIMIZING LEARNING FOR ALL

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Universal design for learning (UDL) is an instructional approach that accommodates all learners' needs and abilities and eliminates unnecessary obstacles to learning. This means:

- developing a flexible learning environment in which information is presented in numerous ways,

- engaging students in learning using various instructional strategies,

- and providing multiple options for students to demonstrate their learning.

There are three UDL categories,

1. Multiple Means of Engagement - The "why" of learning

2. Multiple Means of Expression - The "what" of learning

3. Multiple Means of Expression - The "how" of learning

UDL is a proactive way to remove the barriers to learning for all students, increasing the chances of success for everyone.

The UDL guidelines presented here are a framework to improve and optimize teaching and learning created by CAST, a nonprofit education research and development organization. These guidelines offer concrete suggestions that can be applied to any discipline or domain to ensure that all learners can access and participate in meaningful, challenging learning opportunities. The suggestions are simply a starting point. We strongly suggest that teachers visit the CAST website at https://udlguidelines.cast.org/ to view the complete framework and access the comprehensive suggestions and support provided.

Multiple Means of Engagement: The "Why" of learning

How students are engaged and motivated differ significantly. Some learners are highly engaged by spontaneity and novelty, while others are disengaged, even frightened, by those aspects, preferring a strict routine. Some learners might like to work alone, while others prefer to work with their peers. There is no one method of engagement that is ideal for all learners in all contexts. Therefore, teachers must provide multiple options for engagement.

- Optimize individual choice and autonomy
  - » Provide learners with as much discretion and autonomy as possible by providing choices such as the level of perceived challenge, types of rewards or recognition available, the context or content used for practicing and assessing skills, etc.
  - » Allow learners to participate in the design of classroom activities and academic tasks.
  - » Where and whenever possible, involve learners in setting their own personal academic and behavioral goals.

- Optimize relevance, value, and authenticity
  - » Vary activities and sources of information.
  - » Design activities so that learning outcomes are authentic, communicate to real audiences and reflect a clear purpose to the participants.
  - » Provide tasks that allow for active participation, exploration, and experimentation.
  - » Invite personal response, evaluation, and self-reflection to content and activities.
  - » Include activities that foster imagination to solve novel and relevant problems or make sense of complex ideas in creative ways.

- Minimize threats and distractions.
  - » Create an accepting and supportive classroom climate.
  - » Vary the level of sensory stimulation.
  - » Vary the social demands required for learning or performance, the perceived level of support and protection, and the requirements for public display and evaluation.
  - » Involve all participants in whole-class discussions.

Multiple Means of Representation: The "what" of learning

How students perceive and comprehend information varies greatly. For example, those with sensory disabilities (e.g., blindness or deafness); learning disabilities (e.g., dyslexia); language or cultural differences all require different ways of approaching content. Some students gain information quicker or more efficiently through visual or auditory means rather than printed text. In short, not one means of representation is best for all learners; therefore, providing options for representation is essential.

- Offer ways of customizing the display of information.
  - » Display information in a flexible format.

- Offer alternatives for auditory information.
  - » Use text equivalents in the form of captions or automated speech-to-text (voice recognition) for spoken language.
  - » Provide visual diagrams, charts, and notations of music or sound.
  - » Provide written transcripts for videos or auditory clips.
  - » Provide American Sign Language (ASL) for spoken English.
  - » Use visual analogs to represent emphasis and prosody (e.g., emoticons, symbols, or images).
  - » Provide visual or tactile (e.g., vibrations) equivalents for sound effects or alerts.
  - » Provide visual and emotional descriptions for musical interpretation.

- Offer alternatives for visual information.
  - » Provide descriptions (text or spoken) for all images, graphics, videos, or animations.
  - » Use touch equivalents (tactile graphics or objects of reference) for key visuals representing concepts.
  - » Provide physical objects and spatial models to convey perspective or interaction.
  - » Provide auditory cues for essential concepts and transitions in visual information.

- Text is a particular case of visual information.
  - » When creating digital text, follow accessibility standards (NIMAS, DAISY, etc.).
  - » Allow for a competent aide, partner, or "intervener" to read text aloud.
  - » Provide access to text-to-speech software.

Multiple Means of Action and Expression: The "how" of learning

Learners differ in navigating their learning environment and expressing what they know. For example, individuals with significant movement impairments (e.g., cerebral palsy), those who struggle with strategic and organizational abilities (executive function disorders), those with language barriers, and so forth approach learning tasks very differently.

- Vary the methods for response and navigation.
  - » Provide alternatives for rate, timing, speed, and range of motor action required to interact with instructional materials, physical manipulatives, and technologies.
  - » Provide alternatives for physically responding or indicating selections (e.g., alternatives to marking with pen and pencil, alternatives to mouse control).
  - » Provide alternatives for physically interacting with materials by hand, voice, single switch, joystick, keyboard, or adapted keyboard.

- Optimize access to tools and assistive technologies.
  - » Provide alternate keyboard commands for mouse action.
  - » Build switch and scanning options for increased independent access and keyboard alternatives.
  - » Provide access to alternative keyboards.
  - » Customize overlays for touch screens and keyboards.
  - » Select software that works seamlessly with keyboard alternatives and alt keys.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. When planning, how do I plan and prepare for multiple means of engagement to build student understanding?
2. What do autonomy and student choice look like in my classroom?
3. Does my classroom environment provide all students with multiple and varied ways to become engaged, motivated, excited, and challenged in their learning?
4. Are my lessons and the activities I use relevant, valued, and interesting to my students?
5. Do my students feel physically, emotionally, and cognitively safe in my classroom?   Have I created a classroom environment that is safe and nurturing, where students are not afraid to take risks?
6. Do I present learning content in multiple formats (verbal, visual, print, video, tangible objects, technology) that meet my students' diverse cultural and linguistic needs?
7. Do my lessons include visual and non-visual materials that allow all students to access information?
8. Have I provided alternatives for physically responding or indicating selections?
9. Have I provided alternatives for physically interacting with materials?
10. Does my classroom environment allow easy, safe, and independent access to activities, spaces, equipment, and materials?
11. Are materials available that reflect diverse family, linguistic, and cultural experiences?

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SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN: GENERAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Special education is complex and deserves the same instructional attention and dedication as general education. The New Mexico Public Education Department has shared the following vision. *All students with disabilities (SWDs) are engaged in high-quality curriculum and instruction within inclusive classrooms that lead to deep learning and result in college, career, and community readines*s.

General education teachers in public schools must provide differentiated instruction to students at all levels, including students receiving special education services. Most classrooms consist of students without disabilities, students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP), and students with 504 Plans. In these classrooms, teachers must meet the needs of all students. To do this, teachers must have a basic understanding of special education laws, the Special Education process, an understanding of disabilities, and strategies for supporting students in Special Education. At a minimum, teachers should know which students in their classrooms have an IEP or 504 and what services and accommodations they must receive.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Know which students have an Individualized Education Plan or 504 Plan
Ideally, every school has a process for providing this information to teachers before starting the school year. By law, teachers must implement student IEPs or 504s on the first day of school. Teachers may have to check their students' records or files if a school does not share this information, When reviewing the IEP or 504, consider the following -

- What is the student's disability?
- Who is the case manager or special education teacher assigned to the student?
- What are the accommodations or modifications required?
- What services is the student receiving?

Understand the basics of Special Education disabilities
Special Education is for students who have a disability. The federal government has identified fourteen disability categories for Special Education.

1. Autism
2. Deaf-Blindness
3. Developmental Delay (DD)
4. Emotional Disturbance (ED)
5. Hearing Impairment/Deafness
6. Intellectual Disability (ID)
7. Multiple Disabilities (MD)

8. Orthopedic Impairment (OI)

9. Other Health Impaired (OHI)

10. Additional Tourette's syndrome information and links (Under OHI)

11. Specific Learning Disability (SLD)

12. Speech-Language Impairment (SLI)

13. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

14. Visual Impairment (VI)

General education teachers or parents are usually the first to suspect a student has a disability. The teacher or the parent will usually notice discrepancies in performance compared to peers. To identify or support students who may have a disability, teachers need to know the basics of common disabilities. The NM PED has provided a detailed description of each disability and resource with additional information on their website to support teachers https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/special-education/disability-categories/.

Know your school support staff

The school psychologist and special education administrator are generally good sources of information and support for teachers. Be sure to collaborate with the Special Education teacher, who should take the leadership role on the IEP and likely provide support. For 504 students, the teacher may be the primary service provider. Other service professionals may include speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, assistive technology, physical therapy, etc.

The role of the general education teacher

The general education teacher's primary responsibilities is to plan, deliver, and evaluate the state and district curriculum while providing a safe, secure, and positive classroom environment for all students, including those with disabilities.

The general education teacher should:

- Develop and implement lesson plans that facilitate the participation and learning of all students.

- Monitor and evaluate the progress of all students.

- Maintain communication with students and their parents.

- Meet with special education teachers and provide the information necessary to develop and implement modifications for students with disabilities.

- Collaborate with special education teachers in developing support plans that meet the needs of students with disabilities.

- Implement accommodations and modifications and share student performance and progress with special education teachers.

Special Education in New Mexico – Questions from the field

Below are answers to some of the most common questions asked by beginning and veteran teachers throughout New Mexico.

Q: What is special education, and how do students qualify?

A: Special Education encompasses the program and resources a student with an IEP needs to access and be successful in the general education curriculum. A student qualifies for special education by the following criteria:

1. The student is determined to have one of the 14 disabilities identified in the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)

2. The student requires specially designed instruction to be successful. Eligibility for special education in New Mexico is a process outlined in the NM Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual (NMTEAM).

Q: What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?

A: The IEP is the written program for a student who qualifies for special education services. The purpose of the IEP is to ensure that the student will be successful in the educational environment and program. The IEP is required by law (IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Act and NMAC-NM Administrative Code) and must be updated yearly.

Q: How do I know which of my students have an IEP?

A: Every student with an IEP is assigned a case manager. The case manager is responsible for sharing the IEP with each teacher who works with that student. It then becomes the obligation of the teacher to provide any accommodations and modifications to the student and document them according to district/school policy (i.e., lesson plans, student folder).

Q: Where do I find the accommodations for my students on an IEP?

A: Each IEP has an accommodations section. The case manager or special education teacher should consult with the general education teacher to ensure that everyone who works with the child knows and implements the accommodations listed in the IEP document.

Q: How do I make accommodations for students on an IEP in my instructional planning?

A: General Education teachers should consult with the special education teacher to determine how best to meet the student's needs. Other resources include Speech and Language Therapists, Occupational Therapists, School Psychologists, or Counselors. Frequently, the IEP requires an Education Assistant to be part of a student's IEP program. This person may also be integral to providing the appropriate accommodations for students.

Q: Who is obligated to follow accommodations in an IEP?

A: Any teacher servicing a student with an IEP must provide the accommodations written in the plan. If the accommodation is included in the IEP, the accommodation is NECESSARY for the student to succeed and access the general education curriculum.

Q: What is my role as a general education teacher in an IEP meeting?

A: According to IDEA, every IEP meeting must include a general education teacher who works directly with the student. You are a vital team member because your input helps determine the accommodations, teaching strategies, materials, environment, etc., that are crucial to helping the student with disabilities be successful in the classroom.

Q: What support can I access when serving students with an IEP?

A: If you are a general education teacher working with a student who has an IEP, your best resource is the special education teacher assigned to your student. This teacher can help you determine how to implement the accommodations or modifications written in the IEP and determine the best instructional practices. Additionally, service providers such as the speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, special education administrator, or special education director in your district can assist.

Q: How do I address the behavior concerns of students with an IEP?

A: If there are behavior concerns with a student who has an IEP, and the behaviors are directly related to the student's disability, the IEP plan should include a Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP). A BIP includes steps the teacher or school will take when working with the student on changing unacceptable behaviors. The goal is to teach the student new, acceptable behaviors and, ultimately, to ensure the student can be successful with peer and adult interactions in the school environment.

Q: Can my students, who are on an IEP, engage in grade-level content?

A: IDEA states the student's IEP must enable the child to be involved in and progress in the general education curriculum. Ultimately, the IEP team decides on programming for each student's individualized plan based on information collected from various sources, including assessments, eligibility determination, progress notes, etc.

Q: What do all these acronyms mean?

A: Explanation

- IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

- IEP: Individual Education Program

- LRE: Least Restrictive Environment

- FAPE: Free and Appropriate Public Education

- NM TEAM: New Mexico Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual

- AT: Assistive Technology

- OHI: Other Health Impaired

- SLP: Speech and Language Pathologist

- SLD: Specific Learning Disability

- FBA: Functional Behavior Assessment

- BIP: Behavior Intervention Plan

- LEA: Local Education Agency

Q: Is an IEP the same as a 504 plan?
A: Although there is overlap in the language of the laws that govern both 504 (Americans with Disabilities Act Section 504) and Special Education (IDEA), the 504 plan and the IEP are two different documents. Both require that a student have or be regarded as having a disability. Section 504 states that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities and may require accommodations or services to mitigate the effects of the disability. To qualify for an IEP, a student with a disability must require specially designed instruction. Section 504 and IEP plans may include related services (speech and language, behavioral health counseling, etc.) as support.

Q: What are related services, and how do students qualify for them?
A: Related services are additional support the student requires to succeed in the general education curriculum and environment. These services may include speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school social work supports, audiology, and mental health and behavioral supports that a specialist may provide. Students eligible for special education services may qualify for related services when the triangulation of multiple data sources reveals the student requires one or more of the services to engage in school successfully.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I know which students in my classes have an IEP and 504 plan?

2. Do I know the disabilities of my students? Required modifications and accommodations? Best instructional strategies to use?

3. Do I understand how to teach students with specific disabilities? What generally works? What doesn't?

4. Are my lesson plans designed to allow all students to succeed?

5. Does my classroom setup accommodate all students?

6. How confident am I in utilizing and knowing where to locate resources that best help me serve my students with an IEP?

7. Am I collaborating with special education teachers when supporting students with an IEP?

8. Am I monitoring the progress of my special education students as outlined in their IEP?

9. Do I know where to go and who to ask for help when planning for instruction, assessing, and monitoring student progress on an IEP?

10. How did I prepare for my role in an IEP meeting?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

NM PED Special Education: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/special-education/

MN PED Special Education Technical Manual: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NM-TEAM-Technical-Evaluation-and-Assessment-Manual.pdf

Suggested Intervention Strategies: https://tiescenter.org

Teacher Tip

Co-teachers should be co-teaching!
Take advantage of the opportunity if you are lucky enough to find yourself in a co-teaching classroom! Co-teachers can plan, deliver instruction, and support students much better than an individual teacher. In most co-teaching models, the co-teacher supports every student in the classroom, not just those with disabilities or receiving special services. Get to know your co-teacher early in the year and find ways to support one another.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH AN INDIVIDUAL EDUCATION PLAN: SPECIAL EDUCATION TEACHERS

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The first few years in any teaching position are always the most difficult. This is especially true for special education teachers. They need to learn and master the same responsibilities and skills as general education teachers and those unique to their profession and position. For example, both general and special education teachers will likely need assistance with

- understanding and unpacking the New Mexico Content Standard,

- identifying and implementing effective instructional strategies,

- selecting and modifying aligned curriculum materials,

- learning to manage classrooms effectively,

- promoting positive student behavior,

- collaborating and co-teaching with others, and

- working with parents.

Special education teachers have the added job responsibilities of

- developing individual education programs (IEP) using CCSS,

- addressing the needs of students who need intensive Tier 3 interventions,

- developing behavior intervention and transition plans,

- utilizing specialized materials and assistive technology, and

- selecting, delivering, interpreting, analyzing, and using alternative assessments.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Similar to the previous topic in this guide, *Students on an Individual Education Plan - General Education Teachers*, below are answers to some of the most common questions asked by beginning and veteran teachers throughout New Mexico.

Q: What is an Individual Education Plan (IEP)?
A: The IEP is the written program for a student who qualifies for special education services. The purpose of the IEP is to ensure that the student will be successful in the educational environment and program. The IEP is required by law (IDEA - Individuals with Disabilities Act and NMAC-NM Administrative Code) and must be updated yearly. *The table on the following page lists the components of an IEP and a brief description of each.*

COMPONENTS OF AN IEP

Component	Description
Student Demographics	Name, dates, addresses, and exceptionality
Student Profile-vision	Describes the student's plans, teacher and parent narratives, comparative data, and student strengths and weaknesses.
Meeting Participants	Signatures of all in attendance at the meeting.
Special Factors	Make sure all boxes are reviewed.
Discipline	Indicates discipline considerations. Note, if discipline boxes are checked, a BIP should be attached to the IEP.
ESY (Extended School Year)	Considerations for an extended school year.
Assessment	Accommodations for testing aligned with the student profile and those listed for classroom lessons and activities.
Post-Secondary Goals	Goals for after graduation.
Graduation Options	Graduation considerations for students over the age of 14.
Course of Study	Description of activities and classes the student will complete to achieve their desired post-secondary goals.
Accommodations/ Modifications	An accommodation changes how a student learns the material. A modification changes what a student is taught or expected to learn
Goals	Goals for the current year, based on growth and data indicators.
Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance	Data indicating student progress is used to create yearly goals.
Transition Planning	Actions for each area aligned to information in the Student Profile-Vision.
Medical/Health	Indicates if a health plan is in place or needed.
Transportation	Indicates the need for support or accommodations for transportation.
Schedule of Services	All services required by IEP.
Progress Notes	Inform parents and students of progress.
Age of Majority	Indicates when students turn 18, they become custodians of their records.
Medicaid Consent	Permits schools to access Medicaid benefits to pay for services.
Parent Rights and Safeguards	Given to and explained to parents once per year. Document in the PWN.
Prior Written Notice (PWN)	A record of all proposals and the acceptance or rejection of these proposals discussed in the IEP meeting.

Q: Who is allowed to request an IEP meeting, and how are they scheduled?
A: IEP meetings can be requested by a teacher or parent if the program or plan needs to be amended. The case manager schedules IEPs and sends invitations to required IEP team members. All IEPs must be reviewed and rewritten annually, based on the date of the most current IEP. At the beginning of the school year, special education teachers should create a calendar indicating when IEPs are due to be rewritten and when re-evaluations must occur.

Q: Who should be on an IEP team?
A: IDEA law specifically states the following are required participants in an IEP meeting: parent/guardian, general education teacher of record, administrator or LEA representative, related service provider if appropriate, student if appropriate, special education teacher/case manager, a person qualified to interpret results if appropriate, and an interpreter if requested by family or school. IEP team members should be present for the entire meeting.

*Q: What happens if I cannot contact parents/guardians or parents/*guardians aren't responding to a meeting request?
A: When scheduling an IEP meeting, you should give parents reasonable notice of the meeting date; at least ten days before the meeting is recommended. It is important to make multiple attempts to contact the parent/guardian and document attempts in the manner your district requires. As the parent/guardian knows their student best, they must actively participate in the IEP team. Parents can be included in meetings via video, phone, or other ways if they cannot attend in person.

Q: How do I determine accommodations for students with an IEP?
A: The IEP and 504 teams should gather and review information about the student's present level of academic achievement, their functional performance in relation to the curriculum, and the supports the student requires during instruction and classroom assessment. Team meetings could include discussions about providing equal learning opportunities and identifying practices and approaches to help students overcome learning obstacles during instruction and assessment.

Q: How do I communicate student IEP accommodations to appropriate staff?
A: Site administrators will determine how students' IEP accommodations should be communicated. Contact the site specialist, district staff, or building administration for these procedures.

Q: Who should I contact if I need additional support?
A: Your best contacts for support are the related service providers in your building (speech and language therapist, occupational therapist, etc.), the Special Education Administrator, and the Special Education Director in your district.

Q: How do I develop a behavior intervention plan (BIP)?
A: Behavior intervention plans are developed in the IEP meeting with the IEP team. Before the BIP is created, a Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) should be completed by a qualified team of people, and the data brought to the team writing the BIP. Adult behaviors should also be addressed to include possible training, modeling, and co-teaching to implement the BIP successfully.

Q: What do all these acronyms mean?
A: Explanation

- IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- IEP: Individual Education Program
- LRE: Least Restrictive Environment
- FAPE: Free and Appropriate Public Education
- NM TEAM: New Mexico Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual
- AT: Assistive Technology
- SLP: Speech and Language Pathologist
- FBA: Functional Behavior Assessment
- BIP: Behavior Intervention Plan
- LEA: Local Education Agency
- NMAC: New Mexico Administrative Code
- PT: Physical Therapy
- OT: Occupational Therapy
- PLAFP: Present Levels of Academic and Functional Performance
- PWN: Prior Written Notice

Q: What are the 14 eligibility categories under which students can receive services in Special Education?
A: Categories

1. Autism
2. Deaf-Blindness
3. Developmental Delay (DD)
4. Emotional Disturbance (ED)
5. Hearing Impairment/Deafness
6. Intellectual Disability (ID)
7. Multiple Disabilities (MD)
8. Orthopedic Impairment (OI)
9. Other Health Impaired (OHI)
10. Additional Tourette's syndrome information and links (Under OHI)
11. Specific Learning Disability (SLD)
12. Speech-Language Impairment (SLI)
13. Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)
14. Visual Impairment (VI)

Q: Is an IEP the same as a 504 plan?
A: Although there is overlap in the language of the laws that govern both 504 (Americans with Disabilities Act Section 504) and Special Education (IDEA), the 504 plan and the IEP are two different documents. Both require that a student have or be regarded as having a disability. Section 504 states that the disability substantially limits one or more major life activities and may require accommodations or services to mitigate the effects of the disability. To qualify for an IEP, a student with a disability must require specially designed instruction. Both 504 and IEP plans may include related services (speech and language, behavioral health counseling, etc.) as support.

Q: What are related services, and how do students qualify for them?
A: Related services are additional support the student requires to succeed in the general education curriculum and environment. These services may include speech and language, occupational therapy, physical therapy, school social work supports, audiology, and mental health and behavioral supports that a specialist may provide. Students eligible for special education services may qualify for related services when the triangulation of multiple data sources reveals the student requires one or more of the services to engage in school successfully.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I have a system for calendaring IEP, 504, and re-evaluation meetings?

2. Do I feel confident in my ability to write an effective IEP?

3. Am I working collaboratively with the general education teachers or functioning in isolation? Do I need to make efforts to improve collaboration?

4. Is my communication to staff on student IEPs, accommodations, and monitoring progress effective? Are there areas that I can strengthen?

5. Have I worked with my students and the general education to set appropriate goals for the year?

6. Are the students I support making appropriate progress based on the goals in their IEPs?

7. Are my instructional strategies effective? How do I know?

8. What new strategies can I try with my struggling students?

9. Are my relationships with my students and their parents positive and conducive to learning?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Individuals with Disabilities Act - https://sites.ed.gov/idea/

NM PED Special Education Webpage: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/special-education/

Suggested Intervention Strategies: https://tiescenter.org

Suggested Strategies for Differentiation and Proactive Planning/UdL: https://www.cast.org

Technical Manual: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/NM-TEAM-Technical-Evaluation-and-Assessment-Manual.pdf

DELIVERING INSTRUCTION

New Mexico Educator Highlight

Josh Acuna
Santa Fe Public Schools

Exceptional teachers are both born (i.e., gifted) and made (i.e., trained in pedagogy). There is a belief that past relationships, powerful experiences, and the motivation to be a change agent led many individuals to become teachers. This belief manifests in the story of Josh Acuna, who realized the impact he could have on students like him.

Josh is an educational assistant at Atalaya Elementary School in Santa Fe. He is currently completing his licensing requirements to be a teacher in New Mexico through the Residence to Educators Pathway. Josh comes from a family of educators; his mom is a special education teacher of 30 years.

When asked why he decided to start his journey to becoming a teacher, he said that he stopped going to school at 15 because he believed that it "wasn't his thing" and often felt misunderstood, labeled as a problem, and frequently suspended. These experiences fed his desire to become a teacher who could connect with students in a way that made them feel valued and wanted.

Josh is fortunate enough to engage with many students as he works in multiple classrooms as a support to the core teacher. He is currently working with elementary students. His goal is to work with high school students, finding those who may be struggling and providing them with the inspiration and support they need to finish school and create a pathway for a more prosperous future.

When asked what he attributes his success in developing positive relationships with students, Josh stated, "I need to know their interests, keep them engaged, and *understand and value that respect isn't given, it's earned.*" He demonstrates he cares by learning about his students' interests inside and outside of class. Josh makes efforts to talk to all his students. He frequently asks, "*How was your weekend? Did your team win this weekend?*" His students appreciate that he remembers and asks about their lives outside of school. In addition, Josh considers what he learns about his students' interests when mapping his lessons, improving engagement.

Teachers who understand their students' backgrounds and interests leverage this knowledge to create a sense of community in their classroom.

Josh shared a story about a student who struggled to pay attention in class. He said that he saw himself in this student. Rather than calling the student out for his poor behavior like many teachers before him, Josh made special efforts to speak with the student, was mindful to praise him during class, and encouraged him to be a role model for his peers. Over time, the student began to make improvements. Josh was pleased that he may have contributed to changing the trajectory of this student's future by setting him on a path to success.

Josh shared this powerful statement that guides his teaching practice and personal philosophy:
"You can't change the world, but you can change the world around you, and you can change the way you act. Change the environment, start the day with a smile and encouraging words to your students, and you might make a difference to one. Everyone needs one adult they can trust."

THE POWER OF A POSITIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Students are complex individuals. They have a gender, race, class, nationality, individual personality traits, and many other identity components they are working to understand and embrace as they grow and develop. These overlapping identities may create multiple barriers as students strive to feel welcome in the classroom. Public school teachers responsible for educating and nurturing a diverse group of students must have the understanding and ability to create a positive learning environment that makes every student feel physically and emotionally welcome and safe.

When teachers create a positive learning environment where students feel accepted, seen, and valued, students are more likely to experience success, behave appropriately, and reach their full potential. To create this type of environment for students, the teacher must take time to model positive behaviors and allow their students to practice their own behaviors. There are many great resources for teachers who want to improve in this area. On the following pages, you will find a few high-leverage practices that can be utilized as preventative and responsive teaching strategies that promote positive learning environments.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Classroom Design

The classroom's physical design sets the stage for a positive learning environment. The classroom should be free of clutter, organized, and visually pleasing. Students should be able to move about easily without disrupting others. Materials, learning centers, and resources should be organized and accessible. Learning targets, daily schedules, and classroom information should be available on bulletin boards or online platforms. In a positive learning environment, students can take ownership of their learning and build/create strong relationships with their peers. Below are a few suggestions adapted from the *PBIS Technical Brief on PBIS Strategies: Supporting and Responding to Behavior, Evidence-Based Classroom Strategies, January 2022*. This is an excellent resource with many examples, ideas, and links to online resources and modules that support teachers in creating a positive learning environment.

Sample Checklist:

- Classroom design supports typical instructional activities such as whole-group learning zone, small-group learning zone, independent learning zone, and content learning zone.
- Furniture arrangement allows for smooth teacher and student movement.
- Instructional materials are neat, orderly, and ready to use.
- Consider unique student needs and ensure accessibility
- Materials that support critical content and learning strategies are posted in clear view.

Once a classroom is designed and the environment ready for learning, high-impact instructional strategies can be used to maintain positive relationships and set high expectations for all students.

Promote Academic Risk-Taking

A common characteristic of high-performing classrooms with positive cultures is the normalization and acceptance of errors. Creating this environment takes effort from both the teacher and the students. For example, imagine a teacher who responds to a student's wrong answer by stating, "Thank you for sharing. Though your answer was not correct, it provides all of us an opportunity to understand the solution better. Who can help the class solve this problem?" This response is not disparaging and frames the incorrect answer as a learning opportunity for everyone. Now imagine a teacher who responds by saying, "No, that is incorrect. I can't believe you still don't understand this concept. You were supposed to learn this two years ago. I can't believe I have to teach this again." If you were a student, which response would make you feel safe and allow you to be vulnerable and grow as a learner? Which one would show the class that it is okay to be wrong and that we should respect one another as a community of learners?

Now let's look at a few strategies teachers can use to create an environment where students feel safe making and learning from errors. Below are a few starting points for teachers wanting to improve in this area.

Thoughtful Planning and Instruction

- During the lesson planning process, determine possible preconceptions and misconceptions. Use Bloom's Taxonomy and Depth of Knowledge (DOK) to design scaffolded questions that build upon background knowledge and allow the teacher to differentiate in real-time.

- Allow students to do the talking and resist the urge to build on students' answers when they provide a partially correct answer. Instead, ask other students to elaborate on the response until the correct answer is revealed.

- Give timely feedback to students during the learning process. Provide opportunities for students to clarify and solidify their thinking orally and through written responses.

Engaging All Students

Maximize instructional time, so lessons are upbeat, rigorous, and dynamic.

- **Cold Call** - Students are randomly called on for answers.

  » Keep it positive. Express sincere interest in the answers you get.

  » Keep it predictable. This strategy should not be used to surprise students.

  » Make it systematic. Intentionally include all students and keep it universal. (Lemov, D. 2021. pg.349)

- **Stop and Jot** - After 10 minutes of instruction, have all students jot down the key takeaways from the lesson thus far. This activity gives the brain a chance to process information. It is also an excellent strategy for English Learners and students who may have processing deficits.

- **Talk to your Partner/Table** - After a "stop and jot" OR after another round of direct instruction (approximately 10 minutes), ask a pre-planned question that will allow students to engage in deep discussion.

  » Tell the students that you want them to think about their response to the question and then ask their partner the question.

  » Give the students think time. The teacher should also model quiet thinking time by not talking during this time.

» After think-time has passed, ask students to turn and talk to their partner/table about their responses to the question.

» Teachers may also give students sentence stems for appropriate responses such as, "The character demonstrated bravery when…" or "I predict _____ will happen because _____." Sentence stems are a great strategy for students to respond in complete sentences using academic vocabulary. They are also great support for English Learners and some students with disabilities.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do my students feel welcome and safe in my classroom?

2. Have I created an environment where it is okay to fail or be wrong?

3. Are my responses to students positive?

4. Do I know all my students' names and one to two personal facts about each?

5. Have I maximized structure and predictability in my classroom (e.g., explicit classroom routines, specific directions, etc.)?

6. Have I posted, taught, reviewed, and reinforced 3 to 5 positively stated expectations or rules?

7. Have I purposefully planned my questioning to engage all learners in the discussion?

8. Do I frequently reflect on the classroom environment and its impact on student learning?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

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Classroom Management Self Assessment. https://www.pbis.org/resource/positive-behavior-support-classroom-management-self-assessment

Classroom Environment Template. https://www.pbis.org/resource/creating-effective-classroom-environments-plan-template

Lemov, D. (2014). *Teach like a champion 2.0*. John Wiley & Sons.

ENGAGING YOUR STUDENTS IN LEARNING

"There are so many things schools can do to help kids think learning is fun. I think kids are naturally inclined to want to learn, but it kind of gets killed off slowly through school."

– Anonymous Student

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Over the past several decades, the expectations for student engagement have changed dramatically. School administrators no longer walk into classrooms with a desire to see students in neat rows, quietly working by themselves. Today's administrators want to see students "actively" involved in their learning. They want to see students working with partners and in groups, asking questions and contemplating responses, productively struggling with new learning, and enthusiastically participating with their teachers and classmates. Does this mean students cannot sit silently and work independently throughout the day? Of course not! Sometimes it is acceptable and appropriate for students to sit quietly and complete independent assignments, projects, or assessments. However, this type of learning should not consume most of the teacher's instructional time.

The Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (CESE, 2017) found that students actively engaged in learning can be up to seven months ahead of their peers. Alternatively, the consequences of disengagement

are severe, especially for low-income African American, Hispanic, and Native American students, who make up a large percentage of the student population in New Mexico. Once disengaged in their learning, they are less likely to graduate from high school and face more limited employment prospects, which increases their risk for poverty, poor health, and involvement in the criminal justice system (National Research Council & Institute of Medicine, 2004). The question, then, is what does student engagement look like, and how do we get our students engaged and keep them engaged?

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

In her book, *Eight Myths of Student Disengagement*, Jennifer Fredericks confronts the myths of student disengagement and provides a framework and practical steps for how teachers can create a classroom environment that addresses and improves student engagement. Fredericks writes about how engagement needs to be conceptualized as a multidimensional idea that includes behavior, emotion, and cognition. We like her approach because she suggests that teachers move beyond classroom management and on-task behavior and consider how instructional tasks, teacher-student relations, and peer dynamics help create a culture of engagement in their classrooms.

According to the experts, student engagement involves three dimensions, behavior, emotion, and cognition.

1. **Behavioral Engagement** - participation in academic, social, and co-curricular activities and the extent to which students are making active responses to the learning tasks presented.

2. **Emotional Engagement** - the students' investment in and their emotional reactions to learning tasks

3. **Cognitive Engagement** - the students' level of investment in learning and the extent to which students are attending to and applying mental effort to learning tasks.

Understanding the dimensions, how they are embodied, and how they manifest in the classroom is a great starting point for teachers who want to improve student engagement. Fredericks outlines the different aspects of behavioral, emotional, and cognitive engagement in the table on the following page (Fredericks et al., 2004).

BEHAVIORAL ENGAGEMENT	
Positive conduct	Follows classroom rules Completes homework Comes to class with books and materials
Absence of disruptive behaviors	Does not skip school Does not get into trouble Does not get into fights
Involvement in classroom learning	Efforts directed at completing tasks Participates Concentrates Pays attention
Participation in after school-based extra-curricular activities	Involvement in sports Involvement in school clubs Involvement in student government
EMOTIONAL ENGAGEMENT	
Emotional reactions to the classroom, school, or teacher	Enjoyment Interest Boredom Anxiety Happiness Sadness
Belonging	Liked by others Feels included Feels respected in school
Value	Perceives that task/school is important Perceives that task/school is useful for future Perceives that task is interesting
COGNITIVE ENGAGEMENT	
Psychological investment in learning	Goes beyond requirements Prefers challenge Efforts directed at understanding and mastering content
Cognitive strategy use	Metacognitive self-regulation (i.e., planning, monitoring, and evaluating thinking) Deep strategy use (elaborates, relates materials to previous knowledge, integrates ideas, makes use of evidence)

It is essential to understand that engagement may look different for different students or groups of students. If students are raised in a culture where it is disrespectful to interrupt an elder or person in authority, they may feel uncomfortable engaging in a whole-class discussion. However, they may still be engaged in listening and thinking about the content and do better in a small-group discussion or writing activity.

Once the teacher understands the three dimensions and how they work together to influence an individual student's engagement, they will be better equipped to design and deliver learning experiences and create a classroom environment that fosters a high level of engagement. Let's look at a few strategies that promote student engagement.

- **Build and nurture relationships with and among students**
  When students form close and caring relationships with their teachers and peers, they fulfill their need for a connection with others and a sense of belonging in school and society. These relationships are just as meaningful whether a class meets in person or virtually. Connections between students and teachers motivate students and create a positive learning environment where students are motivated to participate and learn.

- **Utilize active learning strategies**
  Active learning requires students to participate in class instead of sitting and listening silently. A few active learning strategies include think-pair-share, brainstorming, drawing, and diagramming, concept mapping, impromptu writing assignments, hands-on activities, and experiential learning events. As teachers plan to integrate active learning strategies into their courses, they should consider how they will set clear expectations, design effective evaluation strategies, and provide helpful feedback.

- **Provide students with academic choices**
  Academic choices allow students to take control of their learning and make decisions that increase personal interest in their learning. Teachers can provide multiple task options on an assessment and ask students to respond to the one that interests them most. Similarly, a teacher can allow students to choose their own reporting formats, such as written or oral reports, debates, video reports, demonstrations, or dramatic presentations. When students are empowered to make choices in the classroom, it fosters a sense of ownership, shifting some of the learning responsibility to the student.

- **Increase Self-Efficacy and Competency**
  As teachers, we want to challenge our students in positive and productive ways to help them learn and grow. We can do this by ensuring learning tasks and activities are just beyond our students' current level of understanding and knowledge. Make lessons and activities too complicated, and students will give up. Make them too easy, and students will become bored. The idea is to find the perfect balance when designing learning experiences—identifying the various levels of rigor that are just enough to challenge all learners in the classroom. Once the teacher has determined how to scaffold the lesson and begins delivery, they will need to check for understanding frequently, give clear feedback, and take the necessary time to accept and answer questions.

Students and teachers alike should take ownership of engagement in the learning process in a classroom. Building relationships where there is reciprocal respect and trust, carefully designing instruction to include a variety of learning opportunities and topics related to students' interests, and managing behaviors are all part of cultivating an environment that gives students the best opportunities for success. When students are engaged, they are motivated and inspired, and learning happens more readily. Therefore, educators must do everything they can to foster student engagement.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. How do you define student engagement in your classroom?
2. What do you think of when you think of engaged and disengaged students in your classroom?
3. If all students in your classroom were engaged, what would that look like?
4. Have you found activities or strategies better than others when engaging your students?
5. How would you describe your relationship with your students? Are there any students who may have conflicted relationships?
6. Do you have students who have not been able to develop positive relationships with their peers? Is there anything you can do to improve this?
7. Do students have opportunities to participate in extra-curricular activities? If so, do most participate? What about those who do not? How do they find opportunities to socialize?
8. Do students have multiple opportunities to engage in meaningful conversations about the new content?
9. Are various learning activities embedded in the lesson that meet different learning styles?
10. Do students have opportunities for academic choice? If so, what does that look like in your class? If not, what can you do to make you feel comfortable and allow them some choice?
11. Do the learning activities reflect appropriate challenges for the students?

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

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STUDENTS WITH PERSONAL ISSUES, TRAUMA, AND ABUSE

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Unfortunately, there is nothing new about the presence of traumatized or abused children in our schools. Compared to ten or twenty years ago, the only difference is that society has developed a greater awareness of this problem. We can now explain the reasons behind some of the previously hidden challenges that have negatively impacted our students' learning.

Trauma is generally caused by a dangerous, violent, or life-threatening event that happens to a student or someone the student knows. When these experiences happen, a child may become overwhelmed, upset, or feel helpless. Traumatizing events can affect the student's mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being and adversely impact learning and behavior (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014). Some students may be living in a traumatic situation while enrolled in the teacher's class. In contrast, others may exhibit negative behaviors because of the trauma they have experienced in the past.

Common examples of childhood trauma include the Covid pandemic, natural disasters, sexual and physical abuse, poverty, severe neglect, and exposure to violence. Trauma can also be caused by things closer to home, such as psychological abuse, excessive pressure, and unrealistic expectations from a parent that make the child feel their best isn't good enough. This can lead to desperation to please and cause the child undue internal pressures and guilt for not achieving "perceived" perfection. Unfortunately, the possibility of exposure to such incidents in childhood and adolescence is very high. Every classroom teacher will most certainly encounter students, parents, and coworkers experiencing the effects of trauma. Teachers should familiarize themselves with how trauma affects brain development, learning, and behavior early in their careers. This will improve their ability to provide support when needed.

Students and adults who have experienced traumatic events frequently react to stressful situations as they did during a past traumatic event. When this happens, the brain shifts to safety measures commonly known as fight, flight, or freeze responses. There are physiological responses in the body when a person feels threatened. There is also something that happens within the cortex of the brain. The brain's cortex narrows when a stress response occurs, making information difficult to process.When this occurs, physiological responses can include crying, high levels of anxiety, withdrawing, refusing to participate or speak, inability to be flexible, throwing things, loud outbursts, physical aggression, and bothering other students. Children don't always have the words to describe how they are feeling, but their teacher will better be able to support them if they recognize these signs.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Effective teaching means more than delivering grade-level content using appropriate instructional strategies. The ultimate key to success is building safe and nurturing relationships with students. In today's world, many of our students come from homes where there is neglect. This means many of our student's basic needs are not being met, including access to food, clothes, and shelter. Identifying and supporting these students early on is essential to getting them on track for learning.

Understanding what happens in the brain when an event occurs will help the teacher identify if the behavior is brought on by a past or current traumatic event or a behavior issue. Something as simple as asking a student to stand up and read a passage from a book or coming up to the board and answering a question could create a response in which a student may fight, flee, or freeze. By building nurturing relationships and knowing students personally, teachers will be better equipped to recognize these responses when they occur.

Fight, Flight, and Freeze

- **Fight**: When a student is faced with a stressful or frightening event, the student's response may look like a physical outburst. They may throw their books or papers on the ground or react physically by hitting or kicking objects or people around them.

- **Flight**: When faced with a threat, the student may run. Yes, a runner! Their automatic response is to run from what they feel threatened by, whether real or imaginary.

- **Freeze**: When faced with a threat, the student becomes immobile. They freeze, unable to act or react to the threat they encounter. They are frequently unable to speak or respond.

Self-Regulation

As adults, we know what it feels like to be in threatening situations; our hearts race, our breathing becomes faster, we feel disoriented, and our stomachs turn. We may want to run away, freeze, or even fight, but our learned behaviors take over, and we generally take a different, less drastic course of action. As adults, we learn self-regulation strategies. These strategies help us overcome and handle feelings appropriately. Now put those same feelings in the body of a child who may have experienced significant trauma early in life and has not had the time or opportunity to learn and develop coping strategies. If the teacher can genuinely comprehend this, they may start to understand why some of their students behave the way they do.

Self-Regulation is the ability to manage your behavior and how you react to things around you by utilizing various activities or strategies. Breathing techniques, playing with fidgets, or chewing gum are effective self-regulating strategies. Other strategies may be habitual movements. We have all experienced or may even be one of those people who tap a pencil or shake their foot so much it moves the entire table. This is self-regulation. These types of activities are the body's way of regulating itself to be able to focus on the task at hand.

When providing students with self-regulation activities, it is essential to remember that they should not be allowed to distract other students. If tapping a foot or playing with a fidget disrupts other students, the teacher may want to consider creating a quiet space in the classroom where students can regulate themselves. Regardless of the teacher's strategy, finding a balance between supporting a few while not disrupting others is key.

The following frequently asked questions should serve as a starting point for beginning teachers who may need to offer support to students who are victims of trauma and abuse.

Q: What can I do to set myself up for success with my students?
A: The number one thing you can do is get to know your students. Yes, there are many things teachers need to do regarding academics but building trusting relationships and creating a learning environment in which children feel safe to take risks will create a strong foundation for successful academics.

Q: What are the signs of a student experiencing trauma?
A: Poor hygiene and food insecurity can be indicators of students living in poverty. Other signs might include not wanting to miss school, frequent complaints of feeling sick, not wanting to go home, social anxiety, extreme attachment to the teacher, not socializing with other students, unexplained bruising, fearfulness, and insecurity about talking when around an adult. Some behavioral indicators might include aggressiveness towards peers, defiant attitude toward teachers, manipulative behaviors, stealing, dishonesty, extreme shyness, isolation, and inability to work in a team with others. Remember, trauma isn't always "in the present." Something in the classroom may activate negative behavior stemming from a traumatic event that occurred in the past.

Q: If I believe trauma is present with a student in the classroom, what do I do?
A: From the very beginning of your school year, it is important to connect with all your students and build safe and secure relationships. If you feel a child is experiencing trauma in the home,
you can refer the child to the guidance counselor at school, who may then refer the student for internal or external resources and support. You may also talk to the parent if you feel it is appropriate and you are comfortable doing so. However, we highly recommend that you always share your concerns with a counselor or school administrator before taking any significant action.

Q: What if I believe there is abuse?
A: Every school and district should have a policy and procedure for reporting suspected abuse. Teachers in New Mexico are legally mandated to report suspected abuse. A report is required when a person knows or has a "reasonable" suspicion that a child is abused or neglected. Once reported, the reporter's identity will be verified, and an investigation can then be initiated. Once the investigation proceeds, any release of information to a parent, guardian, or legal custodian shall not include identifying information about the reporter. Informing your school administrator is generally not required by law. Still, as a professional courtesy and to ensure you follow your school or district policies, we suggest you do so.

Q: What services are available to children who have experienced trauma?
A: There is a myriad of professionals who can do this work. Examples include Licensed Professional Counselors, Licensed Marriage and Family Therapists, Licensed Clinical Social Workers, and Counseling Psychologists. School counselors are often networked with these professionals and are generally the best place to start.

Q: Does every child showing classroom misbehavior need a mental health referral?
A: No. Misbehavior in the classroom can happen for a variety of reasons. Factors could include genetic and environmental causes or a combination of both. It is important to know your students and differentiate which

behaviors are due to genetic and environmental causes and which are from brain trauma. Once you know this, you will know the best direction to take to support your students.

Q: Who can I talk to if I need help determining what to do?
A: Always talk to your administrators and make them aware of your concerns with a student. School counselors, mental health agency professionals, social workers, psychologists, psychiatrists, psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners, family practice physicians in rural areas, marriage and family therapists, and occupational therapists can provide support and information.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Does my school or district have a policy for reporting abuse or trauma? If so, do I have access or a copy?

2. Have any students displayed signs of abuse or trauma? Fight, Flight, Freeze, others?

3. Are there strategies I can implement to improve relationship-building and create a safe learning environment for my students?

4. Are there professionals in my school or community that can support me if I suspect a student is traumatized or has been abused?

5. Would any of my students benefit from self-regulation strategies? If so, who? Which strategies can I try now?

RESOURCES AND REFERENCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

A great resource is your school's Occupational Therapist. They can provide ideas on self-regulation activities to promote a calm environment where your students feel safe and supported to promote successful learning.

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Kids Want to Know. *Why Do We Lose Control of Our Emotions*: https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc

NAMI New Mexico. https://naminewmexico.org/   (Resource for parents to get plugged in)

New Mexico Department of Health. https://www.nmhealth.org/about/erd/ibeb/mhp/
(General mental health)

National Center on Substance Abuse and Child Welfare. https://ncsacw.samhsa.gov/resources/trauma/trauma-resource-center-websites.aspx (website links specifically about trauma)

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The National Child Traumatic Stress Network. https://www.nctsn.org/what-is-child-trauma/about-child-trauma
(Trauma education)

Stress Trauma and the Brain Series by Dr. Bruce Perry

- Episode 1
  Stress Trauma and the Brain: Insights for Educators-The Neurosequential Model
  https://youtu.be/_3is_3XHKKs

- Episode 2
  Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators-How Stress Impacts the Brain Function
  https://youtu.be/COMwI2akgqM

- Episode 3
  Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Insights for Educators- The Power of Connection
  https://youtu.be/oElS6AGwuxU

- Episode 4
  Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Regulating Yourself and Your Classroom
  https://youtu.be/nqW2Xv16bWw

- Episode 5
  Stress, Trauma, and the Brain: Educator Strategies for the Classroom
  https://youtu.be/cNzkyFPA7Lc

Teacher Tip

Be prepared to be emotional!
There are days when nothing will go as planned and all you want to do is cry. It's okay. Go ahead. Just don't do it in front of your students! We have all been there. Teaching is a calling, a passion, and a roller coaster of emotions during your first year. Like other great teachers before you, you will learn from your mistakes and become better because of them!

DIFFERENTIATION: MEETING THE NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Rick Wormeli describes differentiated instruction or responsive teaching as doing what's fair for students. Differentiation means strategically employing effective instructional practices to maximize students' learning at every turn, including giving them the tools to handle anything that may be undifferentiated (Wormelli, 2006). Differentiated instruction requires teachers to do different things for different students--equity, not equality.

Carol Ann Tomlinson further defines differentiated instruction as tailoring instruction to meet students' individual needs. Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, having a process for ongoing assessment and flexible grouping helps the teacher tailor instruction to meet individual student learning needs.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

When thinking about differentiation for learning, it is best to think about it through the filters of content, process, product, and learning environment. The following is a brief discussion of each.

Differentiating Content

Content means the knowledge, understanding, and skills (Know, Understand, Do) that students need to learn (Tomlinson & Imbeau, 2010). Though these learning goals should remain the same for all students, teachers can differentiate the methods students use to access the content. For example, using videos, reading independently or with a partner, reading a novel or listening to it on audio, and participating in small-group instruction. Content may also be chunked, shared through graphic organizers, or addressed through jigsaw groups.

- Use hands-on activities.
- Teach information through whole-to-part, meaning the teacher teaches the overarching concept before giving the details, or part-to-whole, meaning the teacher teaches the details first and then the larger concept.
- Use a variety of reading-buddy arrangements to support and challenge students when working with different texts.
- Re-teach students who need additional support or exempt students who have already demonstrated mastery.
- Use texts, computer programs, tape recordings, and videos to convey critical concepts to diverse learners.

Differentiating Process

Differentiating process refers to how students make sense of the information, ideas, and skills being studied. It reflects student learning styles and preferences. The differentiating process can mean that a teacher is providing various options at different levels of difficulty, offering different amounts of support for a task, giving choices about how students express their understanding and varying the learning process based on how students learn. The differentiating process allows students to access the learning material in various ways.

- Give choices about how students express their understanding
- Use tiered activities. All learners work on the same understandings and skills but proceed with different support, challenge, or complexity levels.
- Provide centers that encourage students to explore subsets of class topics of particular interest.
- Vary the time a student may take to complete a task.
- Provide access to a variety of materials that target different learning preferences and readiness.
- Develop personal agendas that include task lists written by the teacher containing work for the whole class and work for the individual student.
- Use flexible grouping based on content, ability, and interests.

Differentiating Product

Students demonstrate understanding in multiple ways, including reports, tests, brochures, speeches, or performances. These various demonstrations can provide challenge, variety, and choice, giving students options about how to express required learning (for example, create a puppet show, write a letter, or develop an annotated diagram).

- Allow students to help design products around learning intentions/goals.
- Encourage students to express what they have learned in varied ways.
- Allow for varied working arrangements – alone, with a group.
- Provide or encourage the use of varied resources in preparing products.
- Provide product assignments at varying degrees of difficulty to match student readiness.
- Use a wide variety of assessments.
- Work with students to develop rubrics that match and extend students' varied skill levels.
- Use a continuum - simple to complex - less independent to more independent.

Differentiating Learning Environment
The learning environment is the "climate" and includes the operation and tone of the classroom - class rules, furniture arrangement, lighting, procedures, and processes.

- Create places in the room for students to work quietly and without distraction and areas that invite student collaboration.
- Provide materials that reflect a variety of cultures and home settings.
- Help students understand that some learners need to move around to learn while others do better when sitting quietly.
- Vary the places where learning occurs, for example, the lab or outside.
- Use alternative seating.
- Identify classroom management procedures that make the learning environment safe or supportive.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I use Know, Understand, and Do when identifying and scaffolding skills and understandings in my lesson plans to address the various needs of students?

2. How do I differentiate the delivery of content to meet the needs of all learners?

3. How do I differentiate student Content, Process, Product, or Learning Environment?

4. Do I provide options for my students to demonstrate learning?

5. Does my classroom arrangement allow for differentiation?

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Becki Hammond teaches a 4th/5th combination classroom in Lake Arthur Municipal Schools in Southeast New Mexico. Reflecting on her approach to teaching a combination class with 18 students in two different grade levels, it quickly became apparent that after 20 years of teaching, the fundamentals of good instruction still guide Becki as she successfully instructs her students.

At the heart of Becki's instructional approach is a deep and thorough understanding of the New Mexico grade-level content standards and how they are vertically aligned. While sharing her methodology, Becki said, "*Understanding the standards and how they scaffold from one grade level to the next means planning and teaching two different grade levels can sometimes be the same as teaching one.*" She focuses on "power or priority" standards and uses the supporting standards as reinforcement for her lesson.

Becki recognizes that many beginning and veteran teachers may find it challenging to invest the time required to plan for a multi-grade classroom day in and day out. However, she believes having a solid lesson plan with aligned curriculum materials is one of the most important keys to her success. "*You have to know what your plan is...you have to carefully think out your lesson and have your supplies, manipulatives, handouts, etc., ready. If not, it just throws you off completely*," she said.

Becki also utilizes instructional data to monitor her student's progress toward mastery of grade-level standards and goals. With this information, she differentiates instruction for her students like any other teacher instructing a classroom of students with multiple learning needs and skill levels. For example, during Reading/Language Arts, Becki uses reading passages with different reading levels to allow her students to work on the same vertically aligned standards and similar objectives. She works hard to ensure every student feels included regardless of their reading level. She said, "*You don't want the kids doing something different and feeling like they're not part of their class.*" First, she teaches the lesson to the whole group. She circulates among the students to see who understands and may need extra support as she delivers the lesson. After whole-group instruction, she shifts to small-group instruction based on her observations.

Becki also stresses the importance of having a schedule with routines and procedures that support bell-to-bell teaching. "*Having a schedule that lets students know what they should be doing and when they should be doing it is very important. I'm able to prompt them with statements like, remember when it's reading plus time, this is what you should be doing.*" Along with her schedule, she posts a "to do" list for the students. This provides an additional visual reminder of what they are expected to do. Becki also stressed the need to review routines and procedures regularly.

A final key to Becki's success as a teacher is her ongoing efforts to create a safe and nurturing classroom environment and a sense of community for her students. She does this through well-planned and executed instruction and classroom management systems that promote a positive learning environment for all her students.

MULTI-GRADE LEVEL AND COMBINATION CLASSES

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

A single-grade classroom consists of one teacher and students in the same grade level. A multi-grade classroom, commonly referred to as a combination class, consists of one teacher and students from two or more consecutive grades.

There are a variety of reasons a combination class is created. Most often, combination classes are formed because of unbalanced student-teacher classroom ratios. For example, two grade levels may have too many students to be assigned to one teacher but not enough to hire two more teachers, one for each grade level, so a combination class is created and assigned to one teacher. This happens most frequently in rural areas where low student counts in grade levels are more common. Other reasons multi-grade or combination classes are formed can be philosophical or pedagogical, combining multi-age students for instructional advantages. Whatever the reason, quality teachers, thoughtful planning, and differentiated instruction are critical to success. Mulryan-Kyne (2007) states that the professional knowledge and skills relevant to teaching effectively in single-grade contexts are also relevant and necessary for effective multi-grade teaching… However, many of these skills need heightened emphasis in the context of the preparation of teachers for multi-grade teaching.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Content Standards

Extensive knowledge of the content standards is critical to success in a combination classroom. To learn more about the content standards and how to use them effectively, review the following topic in this guide.

- *New Mexico Content Standards*

Planning and Preparation

Authors Hyry-Beihammer and Hascher (2015) state that differentiation must be data-driven. Differentiation generally refers to planning and delivering instruction to meet the diverse learning needs of all students. A careful review of student data is required to determine the path for differentiated instruction. Thoughtful instructional planning for whole-group, small-group, and independent work will allow teachers to provide instruction at different difficulty levels while keeping the unit of instruction cohesive. To learn more about planning and preparation for differentiation, review the following topics in this guide.

- *Equity or Equality: Understanding the Difference*
- *Professional Learning Communities*
- *New Mexico's Content Standards*
- *New Mexico's Balanced Assessment Strategy*
- *Data-Driven Instruction*
- *Designing Effective Learning Experiences*
- *Identifying Aligned Educational Resources*
- *Universal Design for Learning: Optimizing Learning for All*

- *Engaging Your Students in Learning*
- *Differentiation: Meeting the Needs of All Students*
- *Effective Instructional Strategies*
- *Using Checks for Understanding to Guide Instruction*
- *Multi-Layered Systems of Support*

Routines and Procedures

Organization is a critical success factor for teachers assigned to a multi-grade combination classroom (B. Hammonds, personal communication, December 27th, 2021). To learn more about classroom routines and procedures, review the following topics in this guide.

- *Professional Relationships with Students*
- *Preparing Your Classroom for Instructional Groups*
- *Routines and Procedures: A Recipe for Success*
- *The Power of a Positive Learning Environment*
- *Supporting Students with Personal Issues, Trauma, and Abuse*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Content Standards

1. Have I unpacked the New Mexico Content Standard, or do I have access to a copy of the unpacked standards?
2. Do I understand the Know, Understand, and Do within the standards? Depth of Knowledge, Bloom's Taxonomy, vocabulary, essential questions, etc.?

Planning and Preparation

3. How does my PLC help me plan and differentiate instruction?
4. How does my PLC team use data to identify student needs and plan instruction?
5. Do my lessons support the differentiation required in a multi-grade classroom?
6. Do my plans, activities, and assessments reflect the grade-level standards for each group of students in my class?
7. Are my instructional resources aligned to the NM content standards and scaffolded so all students can succeed?
8. How do I use formative assessments or checks for understanding to monitor learning and adjust instruction in real-time, short-term, and long-term?

Routines and Procedures

9. What does equity look like in my classroom?
10. Have I posted my schedules in the classroom, and do I refer to them throughout the instructional day?

11. What are the established routines and procedures in my classroom? Have I given students a voice in creating the routines and procedures?

12. Have my students internalized the expectations of the routines and procedures through repeated practice?

13. How do I support students with personal issues, trauma, and abuse?

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Teacher Tip

Teach to abilities, not ages!
Multi-grade teachers should master the use of flexible groupings and differentiation. Begin by reviewing your state standards for each grade level to determine what your students need to know. Afterward, pre-assess your students' knowledge of the content you identified, review assessment data t o determine individual needs, create flexible groups, and design and deliver learning experiences aligned to those needs.

EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The power and effectiveness of a teacher are threefold–a successful teacher skillfully:

1. Manages the behavior of their students,

2. Delivers the content they are responsible for teaching, anchored in the state standards and guided by district and school resources such as curriculum maps and programs, and

3. Uses a wide range of instructional strategies to deliver content that allows students full access to deep learning.

The following few pages of this guide will focus on the third aspect of teacher effectiveness: Identifying and implementing effective instructional strategies. Instructional strategies are the techniques teachers use to help students become independent learners. These strategies describe different tools, processes, and ways of presenting content to students so they can understand, practice, and internalize new information. A teacher's intentional use of effective instructional strategies often determines students' mastery of the lesson's learning targets.

While there are many instructional strategies, we recommend *Teach Like a Champion 3.0* (Lemov, 2021) as a quick reference tool for all new teachers. The descriptions of the 63 instructional strategies included in the book are comprehensive, user-friendly, and include many examples and videos to support understanding and implementation.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Below are a few high-leverage instructional strategies aligned to the most critical aspects of learning: engaging students through discussion, facilitating rigorous learning, and informally checking student understanding. Multiple strategies are listed for each priority; with a quick web search, you will find additional explanations, examples, and resources for each.

Rigor/Cognitive Engagement Strategies

Support students in deep thinking so content is internalized, and students can transfer their understanding to different contexts.

- **Learning Intentions & Success Criteria** - Learning intentions are statements created by the teacher to describe what the students will know, understand, and be able to do as a result of the lesson. The teacher or the student develops success criteria to describe what success looks like for the lesson or skill.

- **Gradual Release of Responsibility** - Also known as "I do, we do, you do," is a strategy that includes demonstration, prompt, and practice. When new material is introduced, the teacher has the lead role in delivering the content. This is the "I do" phase. In the "We do" phase of learning, the teacher continues to model, question, prompt, and cue students; but as students move into the "You do" phases, they rely more on themselves and less on the teacher to complete the learning task (Levy, 2007).

- **Higher-Order Questioning** - Higher-order questions require students to apply, analyze, synthesize, and evaluate information instead of simply recalling facts.

- **Wait Time** - Mary Budd Rowe coined the concept of "wait-time" as an instructional strategy in 1972. After extensive classroom observations, Mary discovered that student learning and inferencing dramatically improved when teachers shifted wait time from 1.5 seconds to at least 3 seconds after a questioning. (Rowe 1972)

- **Sharing Exemplars** - Exemplars help students understand the quality of work expected, increasing the chances they will meet the teacher's expectations.

Scaffolding Strategies

Help students see the smaller parts of the content's major ideas. When we scaffold, we break down vocabulary and ideas for students.

- **Visuals, Models, Realia** – Allow teachers to connect abstract concepts to concrete examples in the student's real life. Particularly for EL students.

- **Sentence Stems and Sentence Frame**s - A sentence stem is the beginning of an incomplete and open-ended sentence. Sentence stems help students focus their responses and structure meaningful conversation. Sentence frames essentially frame a sentence, and students add in missing verbiage. Sentence frames help students by providing vocabulary and structure that they generally would not be able to produce independently.

- **Graphic Organizers** - Help students organize, clarify, or simplify complex information.

- Anchor Charts – Poster-size visuals with information from your lesson that you want your students to learn and retain.

- **Visualization** - The creation or recreation of imaginary or authentic scenes within one's mind, generally used to help students better understand what they are reading at a deeper level.

- **Explicit Vocabulary Instruction** – A deep dive into the meaning of a word. Explicit vocabulary instruction provides students with definitional and contextual information about a word, offers multiple exposures to the word, and engages students in active practice that fosters deep processing of a word's meaning and use.

Student to Student Interaction Strategies

As learning is a social process, teachers need to create opportunities for students to interact with each other to deepen understanding.

- **Turn and Talk** – Students are given an opportunity to turn to a neighbor and share a response or reflect on a question.

- **Write First, Talk Second** – Students collet their thoughts to a question or prompt by writing them down and then sharing them with a partner, small group, or whole class.

- **Socratic Seminars** - A formal discussion based on a text where the leader asks open-ended questions. During the discussion, students listen closely to the comments of others, think critically, articulate thoughts and responses, and learn to work cooperatively, intelligently, and civilly (Isreal, 2002)

- **Group Work** – Students work in small groups to complete a project or task.

- **Four Corners** - Involves students moving to one of the four classroom corners of the room to convey their feelings about a topic or an answer choice.

Metacognitive Strategies

Metacognition is "thinking about thinking." Creating habits to self-question and pay attention to their progress helps students optimally pace their learning, ask for help, and celebrate growth.

- **Student Goal Setting** – Student goal setting can be quick and informal for a lesson or quick check, or longer-term and more meaningful, like a SMART goal—Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound. No matter the type of goal, goal setting empowers and motivates students to take control of their progress and work toward something they are invested in.

- **Reflection Journal** – In a journal or on paper that students can turn in to the teacher, have students reflect on and consider what they've learned, how well they've learned it, and why the learning is essential.

- **Tracking Progress** – Students and teachers use visuals, forms, templates, or other means to track progress towards goals.

- **Self-Assessment** - Provides students with an opportunity to self-evaluate their evidence of learning based on criteria provided, or agreed on, by their teacher.

- **Self-Correction** - When learners correct themselves instead of the teacher. Teachers can involve learners in self-correction at different levels by giving them guidance when they make errors.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. What instructional strategies could I use to improve my instructional delivery or classroom practices?

2. How can I incorporate instructional strategies into my lesson plans?

3. What are my greatest concerns related to instruction and classroom management? Are there instructional or classroom strategies that may help me address these concerns?

4. Are there strategies I am interested in and would like to learn more about?

5. Considering the diverse needs of my students – EL, SPED, Struggling, Excelling – what instructional strategies can help me meet the needs of all students?

6. Are there strategies that can be used across all disciplines? Would teachers on my grade level or team be interested in partnering with me on cross-curricular implementation?

7. Which strategies best engage students as active participants in their learning?

8. Have I taught students to use strategies independently, encouraging self-learning, assessment, and monitoring?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Supplemental videos highlighting specific instructional strategies, grades, and content areas: https://www.teachingchannel.com

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EFFECTIVE INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Have you ever spent three or four days teaching a concept, administered an assessment, and become disheartened as you graded your students' papers, realizing most did not learn or retain the information you taught that week? It is even more frustrating when you do not clearly understand the specific skills your students did not learn, causing them to miss the greater concept, and now you have to re-teach the entire lesson! Again! Learning is an invisible process. To make learning visible, teachers must include processes and structures for measuring it when planning instruction. These frequent and real-time measurements are called Checks for Understanding (CFU).

CFUs are short formative assessments. They are informal monitoring strategies that help teachers determine if their students are learning the content. CFUs are part of lesson delivery. They should be real-time, provide immediate feedback, and have low stakes. CFUs provide instructors with evidence of what students know and can do. The difference between CFUs and other formative assessments is that they are:

- **Real-time** – Delivered immediately following the skill or concept taught. Measuring the essential skills and concepts the teacher will reassess later. CFUs should be brief and informal.

- **Provide immediate feedback** - Responses are evaluated immediately and used to determine course corrections and re-teaching.

- **Low stakes** – No impact on student grades or final reports. "The results of these checks should not be graded since formative assessment techniques aim to obtain feedback to improve teaching and learning, not to evaluate learning." (McTighe, 2021).

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

When planning for CFUs, consider this four-step process:

1. Identify times in your lesson when you will check for student understanding.

2. Determine how you will check for understanding (signals, writing, talking).

3. Determine success criteria.

4. Plan adjustments you will make to the lesson based on student responses.

If you read the *Data-Driven Instruction* section in this guide, you may recall the quick check questioning strategies suggested by Paul Bambrick-Santoyo. Below are a few additional CFUs you can try immediately. As you master these, you may want to search for others or even create your own. Good luck and have fun!

1. **Thumbs Up/Thumbs Down** - Students self-assess using hand signals: thumbs up if they understand, thumbs down if not.

2. **Whiteboards** – Each student has a small whiteboard to write down their ideas/thinking/answers. When prompted by the teacher, the students hold up their boards for teacher and peer scanning.

3. **Picture It** - Students create a visual representation of a learned concept by drawing a picture, cartoon, concept map, etc. Once complete, you can ask students to complete a gallery and respond.

4. **Red Light, Green Light, Yellow Light** - Students use red, green, and yellow objects such as post-its, popsicle sticks, notecards, etc., and when prompted, they place the color on their desk that describes their understanding or readiness (red: not ready; yellow: need a little more support; green: ready to start).

5. **Think, Write, Pair, Share** - Students take a minute to think about the concept or question, write their response, turn to the student next to them and share their written reflection. Afterward, pairs share responses.

6. **Troubleshoot It** - Present students with a common misconception or a frequent procedural error. Ask them to identify the error and correct it.

7. **Give Me Five** – Students show fingers representing their level of understanding on a scale of one to five. One, "I do not understand," and five, "I can teach this to others." Two, three, and four would be the progressive levels in between.

8. **Quiz the Teacher** – Students write questions related to the topic for the teacher to answer. This provides the teacher with insight into the students learning and provides the students an opportunity to ask a question that clarifies their understanding.

9. **Two-Minute Summary** – Students summarize the lesson in two minutes. This can be done with paper-pencil, orally, using technology or mobile devices, or visually.

10. **3 – 2 – 1** – Ask students to write down three things they learned, two they found interesting, and one they do not fully understand or would like to know more about.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Are CFUs or informal/formative assessments embedded in my school or district curriculum?

2. Have I included the appropriate CFUs in my lesson plans? If so, are they giving me the information I need to adjust instruction in real-time?

3. When I assess students at the end of a lesson, unit, or marking period, am I surprised by the results? Does this mean I need to reflect on and improve my CFU process?

4. What percentage of my students are successful on their first CFU attempt? Does this indicate my instructional strategies are effective or do I need to revise them?

5. How do I respond to students who respond incorrectly to a CFU? Do my responses promote academic risk-taking and create an environment where students feel safe making mistakes and failing?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

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New Mexico Educator Highlight

Joe Allred
Los Lunas Public Schools

Creating an engaging classroom where students feel safe to discuss current events is the energy that defines Joe Allred's approach to teaching. Joe recently retired from a 27-year legal practice in the Los Lunas community. He is earning his teaching licensure in social studies through an alternative certification program and is currently teaching Criminal Justice at Los Lunas High School. With 25 years of experience as a defense attorney, Joe brings his passion for social justice to his work with his students.

Like most teachers, the most significant adjustment for Joe was finding time to plan and deliver quality instruction. Joe said, "*I spend a lot more time working at this job than I did as a very busy lawyer...I don't have much free time, and when I do, I use it to prepare for my classes.*" He went on to say, "*This content is my life's work, but trying to put it into impactful lessons that go really well takes a lot of time.*" While Joe understands it will get easier with time, he is currently living in the shoes of a beginning teacher. Like many beginning teachers, finding time for planning is one of his most significant challenges.

One of the contributing factors to Joe's challenge with planning is his desire to make his class accessible to all his students, including his English Language Learners (ELLs). To do this, he uses a variety of instructional resources. He prefers to use a mix of topic-related short readings paired with video clips from sources such as the PBS Nightly NewsHour as the precursor to lively discussions. He notes that the video clips help his ELL students better participate in the class discussion. When he plans the discussion phase of his lesson, he must put a lot of thought into the questions he will ask. For example, he knows he needs to use the right number of open-ended questions to stimulate discussion while keeping the content accessible enough to allow all his students an opportunity to speak.

Teachers like Joe have high expectations for their students. They constantly look for ways to help their students believe in themselves and think about possibilities of a future they may not have believed possible. Joe explained, "*I worry our students are thinking very small, and I want to help them think bigger...I want them to think about all the possibilities about what they can do.*" To demonstrate his commitment, Joe goes out of his way to help his students understand just how intelligent they are. He always finds time to write letters of recommendation when asked. He is especially mindful of his EL students and those who may recognize their full potential or believe in themselves. He always speaks with his students one-on-one and encourages them to believe in greater possibilities for themselves. New Mexico and Los Lunas are fortunate to have Joe Allred join the teaching profession.

TEACHING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

⋯ ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

English Learner (EL) student populations are growing in the United States. In 2018, the NCES reported that New Mexico had an EL population of 15.8%, third in the nation after California and Texas (National Center for Education Statistics, 2018). Teacher preparation programs often fail to adequately prepare new teachers for the unique challenges of meeting the instructional needs of EL students. The following recommendations guide teachers in determining the current placement of their EL students, understanding the principles for exemplary teaching of English learners, and implementing research-based instructional strategies to support them.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Determine Current Placement

Review available student records, WIDA screeners, and yearly ACCESS testing results. The ACCESS test is given annually to students, regardless of whether they are receiving services, to monitor progress in learning academic English. It meets the federal requirements of ESSA and is anchored in the WIDA English Language Development Standards (WIDA, 2022).

If the school has an ELL/Bilingual teacher, the teacher can request assistance interpreting scores and data. If the school doesn't have an ELL/Bilingual teacher, the teacher can reach out to an instructional coach or an administrator. Teachers can also learn more about the scores on the assessment website.
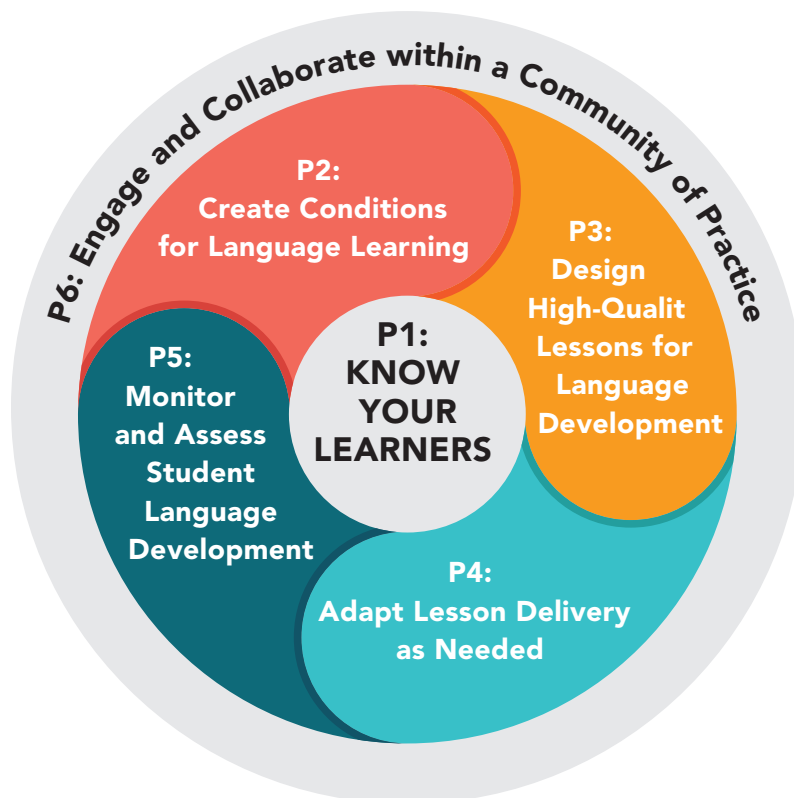
The ACCESS test assesses four (4) language domains - reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Scores from ACCESS for ELs 2.0 reflect proficiency levels ranging from Level 1 (Entering) to Level 6 (Reaching). When a student scores a level 5 or 6 on the Composite Score, they are considered Proficient; meaning that the student no longer qualifies for EL services. However, schools and districts are still required to monitor the academic progress of their "Exit" students for two (2) years.

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners

The TESOL International Association has developed the following principles to assist teachers in developing rigorous standards-aligned instruction and high-quality lessons for language development for EL students. Incorporating all six principles in the planning and delivering daily learning experiences is highly recommended.

- **Principle #1: Know Your Learners** – Teachers should leverage their students' cultural, linguistic, and educational backgrounds to connect with previous knowledge and build meaningful lessons.

- **Principle #2: Create Conditions for Language Learning** - A safe classroom environment where teachers communicate high expectations, engage students, and celebrate language learning is the foundation of principle 2.

- **Principle #3: Design High-Quality Lessons for Language Development** - Create multiple opportunities and scaffolds to ensure EL students' comprehension to master learning and language targets.

- **Principle #4: Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed** - Check students' comprehension frequently and adjust instruction, materials, and tasks accordingly.

- **Principle #5: Monitor and Assess Student Language Development** - Frequently assess, monitor progress, and provide timely feedback to students on their language development and academic vocabulary growth.

- **Principle #6: Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice** - Continue strengthening practice by engaging with colleagues or attending professional development opportunities. Learn to problem-solve together to ensure all EL students achieve success. This graphic represents the Six Principles, with Principle 1: Know Your Learners, at the heart of the graphic.

P6: Engage and Collaborate within a Community of Practice

P2: Create Conditions for Language Learning

P3: Design High-Qualit Lessons for Language Development

P1: KNOW YOUR LEARNERS

P5: Monitor and Assess Student Language Development

P4: Adapt Lesson Delivery as Needed

https://www.tesol.org/the-6-principles/the-6-principles

Instructional Strategies

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP), Guided Language Acquisition Design (GLAD), Quality Teaching for English Learners (QTEL) or the Center for Research on Education, Diversity and Excellence Standards (CREDE) are research-based instructional models that offer teachers guidelines and tools for effective language and content learning for EL students. It is important to emphasize these approaches, and the instructional strategies they promote, impact ALL students' learning, not only EL students, and are considered high yield instructional practices. Below is a list of ten instructional strategies that will allow EL students to participate more fully in classroom activities and lessons.

1. Establish content and language targets/objectives for each lesson.

2. Assess and accelerate students' background knowledge.

3. Ensure comprehensible input; use various techniques to clear directions and concepts.

4. Teach vocabulary explicitly.

5. Use sentence starters, story maps, and visual supports to promote oral language development and written expression.

6. Provide appropriate student grouping for language development.

7. Provide opportunities for guided oral practice.

8. Pre-plan questions that differentiate for various levels of language acquisition.

9. Monitor your pace and the pace of your lessons so students keep interested and engaged, and make sure you are not talking too fast for your students to understand you.

10. Pre-plan activities to bridge students' native language and English.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

Determine Current Placement

1. Have I collaborated with the ELL teacher/coach/administrator to review student data and discuss current academic placement?

2. Have I met with the family to discuss their students' strengths and weaknesses, family values, learning style preferences, and schooling history?

The 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching of English Learners

3. Do my lessons incorporate the 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching?

4. How do the 6 Principles for Exemplary Teaching ensure ELs students participate in high-quality lessons for language development?

Instructional Strategies

5. Is the content comprehensible for the English Language Learner?

6. Are my instructions clear?

7. Am I promoting academic language in all lessons?

8. Are my cooperative learning situations supporting English Learners?

9. Am I adjusting my pace to the needs of my students?

10. Am I providing opportunities to develop my students' oral language skills?

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Teacher Tip

Nurture relationships and be culturally responsive!!
A successful classroom is one where students feel understood, appreciated, and comfortable taking emotional and intellectual risks. Students should always be taught to embrace their culture and language and understand their importance and value. Cultivating an appreciation of diversity is critical, and teachers must make every effort to support their students' diverse backgrounds and identities.

MULTI-LAYERED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

The Multi-Layered System of Supports (MLSS) is New Mexico's comprehensive overhaul of the Response to Intervention (RtI) that improves support systems by removing administrative barriers to providing timely evidence-based support and focuses on holistic student success through robust family partnerships.

Driven by student progress data for grade-level standards, the MLSS works to empower educators with a comprehensive system to make evidence-based decisions that are fluid, timely, and meaningful. MLSS works to champion accelerated learning practices and school systems/policies that support the implementation of high dosage tutoring opportunities that meet students' individual needs while also ensuring students continue to have access to robust core instruction and universal support.

The MLSS provides a holistic intervention framework that guides educators, those closest to the student, to quickly intervene when students need additional support. The MLSS framework reflects the support the classroom teacher, school, family, and health and wellness staff offer toward readying students to experience academic and behavioral success in school, resulting in students being ready for success.

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

The New Mexico MLSS Implementation Guide provides district, school leadership, and teachers with a wealth of guidance, resources, and tools for ensuring the effective implementation of MLSS. The guide can be found on the NM PED website at the following address:
https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/multi-layered-system-of-supports-mlss/

7 Key Components of MLSS

1. Data-driven decision-making
2. High-Quality Core Instruction and Interventions
3. Informed and Effective School Leadership and Systems
4. Collaboration and Processes for Providing a Layered Continuum of Supports
5. Positive School Culture and Climate
6. Student Wellness
7. Family and Community Engagement

In MLSS, the teacher provides classroom support in a responsive, data-driven, and efficient manner. In the table below are sample academic and behavioral supports teachers can deliver in the classroom. This information was presented by Kenneth Stowe from NM PED and can be found on the NM PED website using the following URL: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/multi-layered-system-of-supports-mlss/

Layer 1: Universal Supports - *All Students*
Receive high-quality instruction, academic and behavioral supports (or acceleration, when appropriate), universal screening, core instruction, whole class reinforcements and supports, reteaching, and differentiation)

Intervention Type	Intervention
Academic	High quality differentiated core instruction.
	High quality differentiated materials
	Differentiating work products to meet student needs
	Small-group instruction
Behavior	5:1 positive reinforcement to corrective feedback
	Effective anti-bullying policies and messaging
	Positive social interaction with each student each day
	Processes and procedures for common classroom functions
	Social contracts
	Character development curriculum
	Explicit behavior expectations for common areas

Layer 2: Targeted Supplemental Interventions & Supports - *Some Students*
Receive high-quality Layer 1 core instruction with supports and Layer 2 intervention supports.

Intervention Type	Intervention
Academic	High-quality supplemental instructional programs or curricula
	Push in staff supports to provide smaller group instruction, more time in small-group, or more frequent small-group instruction
Behavior	Self-monitoring
	Token economies
	Counseling
	Small groups focused on social issues that may precipitate changes in behavior (e.g., divorce, grief, body image, anger management, etc.)
	Daily behavior logs
	Behavior contracts
	Sensory tools
	Organizational tools

Layer 3: Intensive Interventions & Supports - *Few Students*
Receive high-quality Layer 1 core instruction plus Layer 2 targeted supports and receive Layer 3 intervention based on identified needs.

Intervention Type	Intervention
Academic	Pull out services to meet individualized needs
	Extended, more frequent, smaller group, or otherwise more intensive interventions
Behavior	Continuous adult supervision
	Social stories
	Individual schedule
	Structured breaks
	Communication log with family
	Proximity controls
	Behavioral contract

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I fully understand the New Mexico Multi-Layered Systems of Support?

2. What does MLSS look like in my classroom?

3. Does my PLC or collaboration team use data to help determine student needs? What can we do better?

4. How do I use ongoing assessment data to make instructional decisions?

5. How do I include MLSS in my daily lesson plans?

6. Am I seeing movement and growth, through progress monitoring, with students receiving Layer I Differentiation, Layer II, and Layer III interventions?

7. How do I leverage the experts in my building to support MLSS and interventions (academic, behavior, attendance, health, and wellness)?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

New Mexico Public Education Department. (2021). MLSS Framework.
https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/multi-layered-system-of-supports-mlss/

IMPROVING INSTRUCTION

"When we strive to become better teachers than we are, everyone in our classroom becomes better too."

-Robert John Meehan

OBSERVATION & FEEDBACK

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Teaching is a complex art that takes time and support to master. Teachers are working on multiple fronts: planning rigorous, standards-aligned instruction that is engaging and relevant for students, attending to classroom routines and procedures, and managing student behavior. Add the need to demonstrate professionalism by working collaboratively with peers, committing to continued professional growth, and making positive contributions to the climate and culture of the school and it's no wonder that observation and feedback help teachers grow professionally.

Like all other states, New Mexico has a formal teacher evaluation system. The ELEVATE NM model is designed to promote the growth and development of teachers and is organized around four domains:

1. Planning and preparation
2. Creating an environment for learning
3. Teaching for learning
4. Professionalism

The system includes formal expectations for teachers and administrators with associated timelines and role responsibilities.

Observation and feedback, as presented here, is different from ELEVATE NM in that it is not a part of the formal evaluation process. It is informal and is designed to be an ongoing cyclical process of observation of teaching episodes supported by coaching-oriented feedback. In the NM Principal's Guide, the purpose of the observation, feedback, and coaching cycle (OFCC) is described as follows: "*Effective OFCC is a professional development process that encourages teachers to analyze, critique, practice, reflect, and revise their instructional practices.*"

The NM Public Education Department (NMPED) has invested significantly, through multiple initiatives, in developing administrator observation and coaching skills because they recognize the importance of this role in the support, growth, and development of teachers. School leaders who are effective coaches of teacher

practice are more able to positively impact the professional development of their teachers and the student achievement in their schools.

Several coaching protocols guide administrators through the process of observation and feedback. One example, *The Reflection Protocol,* included here, provides examples of questions an administrator may ask after an observation. Keep in mind that this is just one protocol NM School Leaders use.

THE REFLECTION PROTOCOL	
Component	Intervention
Initial Impressions	What were your initial thoughts/feelings about...? (About an identified "look-for")
Supporting Data	What evidence led you to that conclusion?
Contributing Factors	What might be contributing to that outcome?
Self-Learning	What insights are starting to emerge for you? What are you teaching yourself about the situation/others? What are you teaching yourself about you?
Next Action	So, what do you want now? What's the next step? What would it specifically look like?
Timeline/ Support/*Practice	When would you like to try this? What support do you need? *Practice the strategy if needed.
Commitment	Is there anything standing in the way? Is this something you can commit to?

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

From the perspective of a teacher, it is helpful to think of the essential teacher moves related to the Observation, Feedback, and Coaching Cycle in four categories:

1. **Adopt the right attitude**
   First and foremost, approach the OFCC process with a positive attitude. Effective observation, feedback, and coaching are critical to a teacher's growth and development. The goal is not to find a "gotcha moment" but rather to observe, critically analyze, and share feedback that leads to progressive improvement in practice over time. Remember, the purpose is to help the teacher become more reflective and intentional. This can only be accomplished if the teacher enters the process with an open mind and willingness to improve and grow.

2. **Prepare for the observation**
   One of the best ways to prepare for an observation with specific look-fors, or targets, is to prepare a lesson that will address the focus areas and meet the expectations of the observation. Below are a few examples:

   • Follow-up Observation – Follow-up observations may be based on recommendations from previous observations. For example, the teacher may have tried a teaching strategy that didn't quite work the way they wanted. As part of the feedback and coaching cycle, the teacher and their administrator would plan refinements or action steps the teacher will take the next time they use the strategy. The

administrator will provide feedback on improvements. These can be some of the most powerful observations in that they reflect the teacher's application of new learning and insights from previous feedback sessions.

- Teacher-Focused Observation – A teacher may have requested help in a particular area, such as improving classroom routines and procedures or wanting input on a new teaching strategy they would like to try or take to the next level. Having a specific objective, the skilled observer can provide insights that the teacher may not be able to see on their own when they are during the lesson.

- Administrator-Focused Observation – Administrators may have a specific focus based on campus-level initiatives or school-wide goals. For example, the school leadership team may support small-group instruction during the Reading/ELA block and observe teacher moves related to effective small-group instruction.

3. **Participate actively in the feedback process**
Think of feedback as a collaborative and cumulative conversation. Feedback meetings will typically follow a process that helps teachers reflect on the strengths and challenges that may have occurred during the observed teaching episode. A skillful administrator will adjust their coaching and feedback depending on the teacher's development process. For example, some teachers may not know what direction to take to improve. In this situation, the administrator may take a "directive stance" and give the teacher their next improvement steps. In other instances, the teacher may have the experience and knowledge required to understand how to improve but needs a thought partner or coach to help them process and identify the next steps. In these conversations, the administrator may stay in a "coaching stance," asking thought-provoking questions that draw the information and next steps out of the teacher.

Regardless of the approach, listening with an open mind, asking questions, and engaging as a partner will ensure that the teacher gets the support they need to continue improving their teaching practice. When interviewed for this guide, Sharla Rusk, a teacher in San Jon Municipal Schools, stated, "*I liked the feedback because there were some things that I would have never known I was doing or would have never been brought to my attention if someone wasn't observing my classroom.*"

4. **Apply new learning**
One of the gifts of OFCC is how it supports the teacher's ability to make incremental improvements in their teaching practice. The administrator will typically make "bite-sized" recommendations the teacher can often apply immediately. This is where the teacher's commitment to their professional growth comes into play. The teacher can demonstrate a commitment to their professional growth by taking the time to apply new learning, asking for follow-up observations to receive feedback on implementation, or engaging with their colleagues around improving new teaching practices.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. As you continue your growth as a teacher, asking for feedback in the right way can make a real difference. For example, "Do you have any feedback for me?" versus "What's one thing I could have

done better?" Or, "What do you think I could have done differently?" will help you get the type of feedback that contributes to your professional growth.

2. Does my school have specific priorities or areas of improvement my administrators are targeting in their observation and feedback process?

3. Does my school have a model for providing observation, feedback, and coaching? If so, what do I need to know to be prepared to participate in the process?

4. Are there specific areas where I want to grow and develop? Have I shared these with my administrator?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

Bambrick-Santoyo P. *Get Better Faster: A 90-Day Plan for Coaching New Teachers* (2016). John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Patzer, Rico. *How Observation and Feedback Support Great Teaching (2020).*
https://blog.irisconnect.com/uk/blog/how-to-make-lesson-observations-most-effective IRIS Connect.

NEW MEXICO TEACHER EVALUATION SYSTEM

··· ESSENTIAL TEACHER UNDERSTANDINGS

Elevate NM is the most recent New Mexico teacher evaluation system accessed through the Canvas platform. It is based on the model developed by Charlotte Danielson and has been adapted to meet New Mexico students' unique cultural and linguistic needs. The NMPED describes the goals of the new evaluation system as follows:

Elevate NM intends to support and uplift both the morale of New Mexico educators and their teaching skills through a system that provides feedback in three different ways:

5. *Teachers' reflections through their Professional Development Plans (PDPs).*

6. *Feedback from administrators on the PDPs and classroom observations; and*

7. *Feedback from families and student surveys.*

The model is designed to support the growth and development of the teacher and is organized into four domains, with multiple elements identified in each domain.

1. **Planning and preparation**

    A.   Demonstrating Knowledge of Content

    B.   Demonstrating Knowledge of Students

    C.   Setting Instructional Outcomes and Designing Student Assessment

    D.   Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

    E.   Designing Coherent Instruction

2. **Creating an environment for learning**

    A.   Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

    B.   Creating a Safe Learning Environment with Routines and Procedures

    C.   Establishing a Culture for Learning

    D.   Managing Student Behavior

3. **Teaching for learning**

    A.   Communicating with Students in a Manner Appropriate to their Culture, Language, and Level of Development

    B.   Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques to Support Classroom Discourse

    C.   Engaging Students in Learning

    D.   Assessment in Instruction (Refers to both Formative and Summative Assessment)

    E.   Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

4. **Professionalism**

    A.   Communicating with Families

    B.   Participating in a Professional Learning Community

    C.   Reflecting on Teaching

    D.   Demonstrating Professionalism

    E.   Growing and Developing Professionally

Each element is supported with explicit descriptors for the criteria that must be met. These four areas characterize a teacher's development:

- Not Demonstrating,
- Developing,
- Applying, and
- Innovating.

⋯ ESSENTIAL TEACHER MOVES

Elevate NM entered formal implementation during the 2020-2021 school year, and educators, district leaders, and school administrators continue to engage in ongoing professional development related to the successful implementation. There are specific timelines that teachers will be expected to know and meet. The following is a high-level description of the significant activities arranged by the school-year calendar based on the requirements of the SY 2021-2022.

August - October

- Teacher Self-Reflection – Research shows that teachers who engage in self-reflective and metacognitive activities are more effective. For this reason, the NM ELEVATE year begins with self-reflection. Using the domains, elements, and descriptors rubric in NM ELEVATE, teachers are asked to score themselves on each element and provide evidence to support their score. This self-reflection process helps teachers identify their strengths and opportunities for improvement and determine focus area(s) for the year. If this is the teacher's first year, their principal may want to complete a walkthrough before the self-reflection to give them data to draw upon in their reflection.

- First Walkthrough – Following the self-reflection, the principal or a school administrator will complete a classroom walkthrough. Walkthroughs help school leaders get a pulse of what is happening in the teacher's classroom and better understand how to best support them. For Elevate NM, a walkthrough is a 10–15-minute focused look at 1-2 elements of the Elevate NM criteria followed by a feedback meeting with the teacher.

  The most crucial step in the observation process comes after the observation itself. Feedback conversations with administrators help teachers reflect critically on their teaching practices and their impact on student learning.

- Professional Development Plan (PDP) – Every teacher should complete a PDP within the first 45 days of school. The process of writing a PDP entails the following steps:
  » From the self-reflection, identify one goal for improving an element of teaching.
  » Write a goal that is Student-centered, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Time-bound (SMART).
  » Explain why the teacher selected that goal and provide evidence/data to support the need.
  » Identify new skill(s) or knowledge the teacher will need and how it will help them meet their goal.
  » Determine action steps and define the timeline to complete the goal within the current school year.
  » After completing a high-quality PDP, an administrator will revise it and provide feedback if necessary.

November - January

- First Observation (Scoring Domains 2 and 3 – Classroom Environment and Instruction) – Generally, the principal or administrator observes an entire class period or lesson so that they can score all the elements within Domains 2 and 3. During the feedback session, the teacher discusses data their administrator collected from the observation and reflect on their personal growth as a teacher using the elements observed. These feedback sessions are intentional and meaningful conversations to help the teacher gain new insights and understandings about the teaching and learning process.

- Second Walkthrough and Feedback.

February - March

- Domain 1 – Planning and Preparation. The teacher is asked to upload a lesson plan of their choosing to Canvas. The principal rates the lesson plan and provides feedback, ensuring that the teacher plans for success.

- Second Observation (Scoring Domains 2 and 3: Classroom Environment and Instruction) Generally, the principal or administrator observes an entire class period or lesson so they can score all the elements within Domains 2 and 3. During the feedback session, the teacher discusses data their administrator collected from the observation and reflects on their personal growth as a teacher using the elements observed. These feedback sessions are intentional and meaningful conversations that will help the teacher gain new insights and understandings about the teaching and learning process.

- Mid-Year PDP Reflection - The administrator informs the teacher if they need to conduct the mid-year self-reflection of their PDP and provide feedback on progress. Even though the mid-year reflection is not an NMPED requirement, it is a good practice and might be a district mandate. The middle of the year is an excellent time to make sure teachers are on track to achieve their goals or if any adjustments are needed. Remember, the PDP goal does not change, but the strategies used to reach the goal, or the timeline may be amended.

April - May

- Domain 4 – Professionalism. The teacher is asked to upload artifacts of their choosing to Canvas. These artifacts should support the teacher's efforts to communicate with families, collaborate with colleagues, reflect on practice, demonstrate professionalism, and pursue professional development and learning opportunities. The principal will rate the artifacts and provide feedback.

- Third Walkthrough and Feedback.

- End of Year PDP Reflection - This reflection should include data, artifacts, and any evidence that supports how the teacher has met their SMART goal; reflect on how their goal impacted teaching and learning and discuss the challenges and successes of the process. The principal will score the End of Year Reflection and provide feedback.

- After all the evaluation components are reviewed and certified, the administrator will print a Summative Report generated automatically through Canvas. The teacher is asked to sign the report, and a copy is placed in the Human Resource (HR) Employee File.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION

1. Do I fully understand the purpose of the teacher evaluation and the process? If not, who will I ask for support?
2. Have I added due dates related to teacher evaluation to my calendar?
3. Do I clearly understand the four Domains of the NM Elevate Teacher Evaluation? If not, who can I ask for help?
4. What is my SMART goal?
5. Do I understand the elements of a good lesson plan?
6. Where can I find an exemplar lesson plan to review or use as a model?
7. What artifacts will I upload to support Domain 4?
8. During the feedback sessions, what clarifying questions should I ask? How have I reflected on my practice this year?

9. Have I implemented the actionable feedback provided by my administrator?

10. Have I received a copy of my Summative Report? What information did it include to help me become a better teacher? What will I do to improve next year?

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES FOR FURTHER LEARNING

For due dates and helpful videos for the school year: https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/bureaus/educator-growth-development/elevatenm/administrator-toolbox/

To Enroll in the Elevate NM Training for Administrators or Teachers and access resources including exemplars, training videos, and Canvas How-To complete each component videos, go to this link and click on the course card: https://nmped.catalog.instructure.com/browse/educator-growth-development

NM ELEVATE: New Mexico Educator Evaluation System. https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wpcontent/uploads/2020/07/NMPED_InfoPage_EducatorEvaluation_ Final2020-1.pdf

NM ELEVATE: Domains and Elements:
Domain 1- https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domain-1-1.pdf
Domain 2- https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domain-2-1.pdf
Domain 3- https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domain-3-1.pdf
Domain 4- https://webnew.ped.state.nm.us/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Domain-4-1.pdf

Goe, L. (2007). *The Link Between Teacher Quality and Student Outcomes: A Research Synthesis*. National Comprehensive Center for Teacher Quality.

"Teaching is not just a job. It is a human service, and it must be thought of as a mission."
-Dr. Ralph Tyler

TEACHER YEAR AT A GLANCE

JULY

- ☐ Meet with an administrator to gain access to building/classroom keys.
- ☐ Ask for the staff handbook or new teacher information.
- ☐ Obtain your school id, employee id number, school address, phone number, and fax#. Put all this information in a readily available place, ideally your cell phone.
- ☐ Arrange for your mentor or co-teacher to give you a building tour.
- ☐ Inquire and sign up for available professional development opportunities.
- ☐ Review provided curriculum and resources – textbooks, programs, etc.
- ☐ Analyze your teaching space. How do you want your classroom to function? Small groups? Tables? Desks? Will you sit at your desk? How much space do YOU need?
- ☐ Ask for your student class list, data, and other available student information.
- ☐ Review class list and note which students have IEPs, 504 Plans, or extenuating circumstances (living arrangements, guardianships, etc.).
- ☐ Send out Welcome letters/emails to student families with key information about the start of school and introduce yourself as their teacher.

  o Identify what information you need from families
- ☐ Prepare/Design online platforms to reflect your in-person environment (Canvas, Google Classroom, Blackboard, etc.).
- ☐ Begin tracking system for professional development hours (create a file, excel spreadsheet).
- ☐ Learn the process for requesting sick leave and personal leave.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

AUGUST

☐ Review the school's master schedule and begin planning your day-to-day schedule.

☐ Create a personal classroom schedule unique to you and your content.

   o Elementary: Full day with subject areas (90 min. blocks) and specials

   o Secondary: Full week with class periods/subject/grade and prep periods

☐ Determine how your students will be seated within the classroom – determine seating charts & assigned seating or free choice seating.

☐ Get acquainted with school-wide behavior policies and expectations; fire drill exits; evacuation procedures; district/school apps.

☐ Decide upon and create a visual of your classroom rules & expectations.

   o Plan student involvement in the creation of rules and expectations.

☐ Set grading criteria/expectations (weight of daily work, quizzes, tests, projects, late work, etc.

   o Check to see if predetermined weights and percentages are used school wide.

☐ Ensure a variety of assignments will be graded and entered into the grade book.

☐ If your school does not provide one, find a lesson plan template that meets the needs and expectations of your school and your classroom.

☐ Ask about committees or teams you may need or want to join (Math team, ELA department, coding committee, sunshine committee. PTA, etc.).

☐ Start planning the first day of school with students in detail.

   o Include "getting to know you" activities.

   o Create routines and procedures for everything you can think of (sharpening pencils, starting class, bathroom breaks, turning in work, etc.).

   o Review emergency procedures: Drills are performed weekly.

☐ Determine the number of instructional days (Monthly and Semester 1 total).

☐ Access/Create Scope & Sequence to determine the standards you will be teaching and when you will be teaching them.

☐ Lesson/Unit plan for at least two weeks.

   o This allows for focus on both teaching and procedural/routine establishment

   o Including direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects

☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.

☐ Create a substitute folder or notebook with emergency lesson plans, schedules, seating charts, student information, procedures, routines, and other helpful information.

☐ Create a communication log for parental contacts.

☐ Plan time for reviewing district/school beginning of the year procedures and requirements (i.e., safety videos, information sheets). Don't wait until the last minute! Emergencies can happen at any moment!

- ☐ Review Elevate New Mexico Evaluation Rubrics and expectations you're your administrator/mentor.

  o Prepare for walk-throughs and feedback sessions.
- ☐ Prepare for Open House/Parent-Teacher Conferences (Aug./Sept.).

  o What information do you still need from your parents?
- ☐ Plan for BOY (Beginning of Year) assessments (WIDA, iStation, iLit, ECOT, iMSSA, etc.). Check with your administrator/mentor for specific assessments for your grade level.
- ☐ Inquire about testing security meetings. Do you have to be certified to administer tests? Identify your testing coordinator.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

SEPTEMBER

- ☐ Reflect on schedule, classroom arrangement, and lesson pacing.

  o Adjust and change whatever is not efficient or not working.
- ☐ Meet with your administrator/mentor to write your Elevate New Mexico Professional Development Plan (PDP) goals for the year.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).

  o Ask for processes and guidance in providing needed support.
- ☐ Review IEPs, 504 Plans, and SAT documentation to ensure you meet these students' needs and requirements.
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress/behavior/concerns.
- ☐ Set individual student or whole class learning goals.
- ☐ Review Elevate New Mexico Formal Evaluation process with administrator/mentor.

  o Prepare/Schedule Evaluation
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and number of instructional days.

  o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Prepare for mid-nine weeks reports.
- ☐ Reflect on grading procedures and weighting. Consider -

  o Time management – how long is it taking you to grade/enter grades?

  o Accuracy – are student grades reflective of their independent progress or lack of? Is there a need for acceleration?

  o Tools/Rubrics – are you using various grading methods such as participation credit, practice & check, percentages, rubrics, and points earned?
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

OCTOBER

- ☐ Plan any fall or Halloween celebrations or crafts.
- ☐ Check and prepare grades for the end of 1st Nine Weeks: report cards, conferences, and awards ceremonies.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress, behavior, or concerns.
- ☐ Prepare for SAT fall administration (Secondary).
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.
  - o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

NOVEMBER

- ☐ Plan any fall or Thanksgiving celebrations or crafts.
- ☐ Begin reflecting on standards and skills for Final Exam products or assessments.
- ☐ Begin preparing ideas or materials for Holiday projects.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.
  - o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress, behavior, or concerns.
- ☐ Check progress towards student/class goals.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

DECEMBER

- ☐ Plan any winter or holiday celebrations or crafts.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.
  - o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Upload evidence for Elevate NM Domain 1- Lesson Plans and Feedback.
- ☐ Progress monitor reading assessment K-2.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress/behavior/concerns.
- ☐ Request Final Exam schedule (Secondary).

- ☐ Finalize and prepare to issue the Final Exam.
- ☐ Plan for the post-winter break.
- ☐ Reflect on first semester successes, struggles, and strategies.
- ☐ Set professional/instructional goals for the upcoming semester.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

JANUARY

- ☐ Prepare to review procedures and expectations when students return from Winter Break.
- ☐ MOY (Middle of Year) reading assessment for K-2 students.
- ☐ MOY (Middle of Year) ECOT Assessment for PreK students.
- ☐ District MOY Assessments (iLit, iStation, iMSSA).
- ☐ Check and prepare grades for the end of 2nd Nine Weeks/Semester 1: report cards, parent-teacher conferences, awards ceremonies.
- ☐ Reflect on first semester successes and struggles and strategize.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days (monthly and Semester 2 total).

    o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).
- ☐ Determine which standards should be re-taught, reviewed, or are a priority to teach before District/State Assessments in March.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

FEBRUARY

- ☐ Plan any Valentine and celebrations/crafts.
- ☐ Decide what to include or augment in your curriculum to celebrate Black History Month.
- ☐ Prepare for mid-nine weeks reports.
- ☐ Plan/Schedule for Parent/Teacher Conferences.
- ☐ Set individual student or whole class goals.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.

    o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).

- ☐ Determine which standards should be re-taught, reviewed, or are a priority to teach before District/ State Assessments in March.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

MARCH

- ☐ Plan any St. Patrick's Day celebrations/crafts.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.

    o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).
- ☐ Check and prepare grades for the end of 3rd Nine Weeks: report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and awards ceremonies.
- ☐ Plan review and testing strategy practice within lessons.
- ☐ Prepare for NM-MSSA (April administration).
- ☐ Ask about building/site state testing procedures and practices.
- ☐ Plan for activities and lessons appropriate for testing days.
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress/behavior/concerns.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

APRIL

- ☐ Plan and submit paperwork for the end-of-year field trips.
- ☐ Revisit classroom rules, expectations, and procedures upon return from Spring Break.
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.

    o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Review student achievement data, monitor student progress, and ensure all students have access to the Multiple Layers of Support System (MLSS).
- ☐ Prepare for SAT Spring administration (Secondary).
- ☐ Determine and plan appropriate culminating projects for EOY.
- ☐ Contact parents/families regarding student progress/behavior/concerns.
- ☐ Reflect on Student/Class goals.
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

MAY

- ☐ Plan any End of Year celebrations/crafts.
- ☐ EOY (End of Year) Reading Assessment for K-2 students
- ☐ EOY (End of Year) ECOT Assessment for PreK students
- ☐ District EOY Assessments (iLit, iStation, iMSSA, etc.)
- ☐ Review Scope & Sequence and determine the number of instructional days.

    o Plan and include direct instruction, reviews, quizzes, tests, and projects.
- ☐ Plan classroom extensions: speakers, field trips, virtual field trips, projects, etc.
- ☐ Check and prepare grades for the end of 4th Nine Weeks/Semester 2: report cards, parent-teacher conferences, awards ceremonies.
- ☐ Reflect on the year's successes, struggles, and goals.
- ☐ Set goals and write considerations for planning next year.
- ☐ Sign up for summer professional development opportunities.
- ☐ Look through documentation and paperwork from the year and determine what should be filed, shredded, or thrown away.
- ☐ Organize teaching resources for easy access during the summer break in case of meetings/planning.
- ☐ Determine which spaces in the classroom will remain and which will be taken down or revamped.
- ☐ Inventory classroom furniture, supplies, and books.
- ☐ Pack room for deep cleaning (per district/building requirements).
- ☐ Reflect on the month's activities and make notes.

JUNE

- ☐ Submit requests for supplies or special orders.
- ☐ Make a summer reading list.

    o Professional reads or previewing new books for student reads
- ☐ Attend professional development and training.
- ☐ Celebrate yourself and your year!

GLOSSARY

Accommodation - An accommodation allows a student to complete the same assignment or test as other students, but with a change in the timing, formatting, setting, scheduling, response, and presentation. The accommodation does not alter in any significant way what the test or assignment measures. (Reference: https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.accoms.mods.pdf)

Assistive Technology (AT) Device - According to IDEA, any item, piece of equipment, or product system, whether acquired commercially off the shelf, modified, or customized, used to increase, maintain, or improve the functional capabilities of a child with a disability. Exception. - The term does not include a medical device that is surgically implanted or the replacement of such a device. (Reference: https://sites.ed.gov/idea/statute-chapter-33/subchapter-i/140O)

Assessing Comprehension and Communication in English State-to-State (ACCESS) - A summative assessment measuring academic English language proficiency in grades K-12 for students identified as English Language Learners. A version of this test, Alt-ACCESS, is specifically designed for English Language Learners with severe disabilities.

AVANT STAMP – This summative assessment evaluates the Spanish language proficiency of students enrolled in a state-funded bilingual multicultural education program who have not yet reached Spanish language proficiency.

Balanced Assessment System - A balanced assessment system recognizes that formative classroom assessments and other local practices co-exist with state summative assessments as multiple measures to provide a complete picture of a student's performance. A balanced assessment system aims to provide students, parents, educators, policymakers, and communities with a variety of information about academic achievement and progress.

Behavior Intervention Plan (BIP) - A written plan with specific actions to improve a student's behavior. It is based on a functional behavior assessment.

Checks for Understanding (CFU) - CFUs are informal, quick strategies within the lesson delivery that help a teacher determine how well students are learning the content.

Collaborative learning - An educational approach of using groups to enhance learning by working together to solve problems, complete tasks, or learn new concepts. Students get knowledge and instructions not only from their teacher but also from each other. It helps learners engage in processing and synthesizing information and concepts.

Combination Class - A multigrade classroom consists of one teacher and students from two or more consecutive grades.

Common Core State Standards (CCSS) - High-quality academic standards in mathematics and English language arts/literacy (ELA). These learning goals outline what a student should know and be able to do at the end of each grade.

Content Standard - A statement about performance that describes what students should know and be able to do in content areas at each grade level.

Culturally and Linguistic Responsiveness (CLR) - A framework to ensure that underserved populations have access to programs and services that affirm a diversity of cultures and languages while meeting their social, emotional, and academic needs.

Data-Driven Instruction (DDI) - Data-Driven Instruction encapsulates a robust set of ongoing practices that focuses on assessing student learning, analyzing assessment data, and adjusting instruction in response to the assessment data in intentional cycles (daily, weekly, etc.).

Differentiation - Adjusting instructional methods or approaches to meet individual student learning needs.

Dynamic Learning Maps (DLM) - An assessment measuring what students with the most significant cognitive disabilities can do in English Language Arts, Mathematics, and Science in grades 3-8 and high school. The DLM is used as an interim, formative, and summative assessment.

Early Childhood Observation Tool (ECOT) - An observational assessment conducted three times a year provides a well-rounded view of pre-K and Kindergarten students. It covers the following areas: physical development, health, and well-being, literacy, numeracy, scientific conceptual understanding, self, family, and community, and approaches to learning.

Early Warning System – A system based on student data to identify students who exhibit behavior or academic performance that puts them at risk of failing or dropping out of school.

ELEVATE NM - New Mexico's System for Teacher Evaluation.

English Learner - A student whose native or heritage language is not English and who is unable to read, write, speak, or understand English at a sufficient ability level to meet state standards.

Equality - Equality means every student gets the same resources and support to be successful socially, emotionally, and academically.

Equity - Equity in the classroom means ensuring that every student has the support and resources they need to be successful socially, emotionally, and academically.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) - The current federal law governing K-12 education.

Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE): As part of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), students with disabilities are provided no-cost special education and services related to their unique needs to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living. (Reference: https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/fape.index.htm)

Formative Assessment - An integrated classroom instructional practice that provides "real-time" data and information to teachers and students. They are most effective when aligned to identified learning targets and reflective of the curriculum focus provided during instruction.

Formative Item Sets from the Interim Measure of Students Success and Achievement (iMSSA) – iMSSA offers questions aligned to standards for educators to create formative assessments for Reading, Mathematics, Writing and Language Usage for students in grades 3 - 8.

Functional Behavior Assessment (FBA) - A process to collect and study data to identify the cause and function of a student's behavior.

Individualized Education Program (IEP) - A written program for students who qualify for special education services. It is updated each year and is created for a student with a disability who requires specially designed instruction.

Instructional Strategies - The techniques teachers use to help students become independent learners. These strategies include different tools, processes, and ways of presenting content to students to understand, practice, and internalize new information.

Interim Assessment - Assessments administered throughout the school year are designed to evaluate learning and knowledge progression.

Interim Measure of Students Success and Achievement (iMSSA) - An assessment measuring performance and growth toward grade-level proficiency in Reading, Mathematics, Writing and Language Usage. Indicates students' strengths and identifies areas for improvement in grades 3-8.

Formative Assessment - An integrated classroom instructional practice that provides "real-time" data and information to teachers and students. They are most effective when aligned to identified learning targets and reflective of the curriculum focus provided during instruction.

IDEA: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act - The federal law makes available a free appropriate public education to eligible children with disabilities and ensures special education and related services.

Istation's Indicators of Progress (ISIP) - assesses student development in early reading, math, and English language acquisition through BOY, MOY, and EOY benchmark assessments and provides continuous progress monitoring throughout the year. Enables teachers to plan individualized instruction tailored to meet the specific needs of each student. These assessments are available from Pre-K through 8th grade but are only required K- 2nd grade. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

Learning Targets – Learning Targets are concrete goals written in student-friendly language that clearly describe what students will learn and be able to do by the end of a class, unit, etc. They begin with an "I Can" statement and are typically posted in the classroom.

Local Education Agency (LEA) - A public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a state that maintains administrative control of public elementary or secondary schools for a given location.

Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) - A requirement of federal law that students with disabilities receive their education with their non-disabled peers to the maximum extent possible. Students with disabilities may be placed in a separate class ONLY if it is necessary to meet their unique needs.

Metacognition – The awareness and understanding of one's thought processes.

Modification – A modification is an adjustment to an assignment or a test that changes the standard or what the test or assignment is supposed to measure. (Reference: https://www.wrightslaw.com/info/sec504.accoms.mods.pdf)

MLSS - Multiple Layers of Support System - A layered framework that uses data to help match academic, social-emotional, behavioral assessment, and instructional resources to every student's needs. The New Mexico MLSS is a three-layer intervention system: Layer 1 (Universal), Layer 2 (Targeted), and Layer 3 (Intensive).

New Mexico Instructional Scope (NMIS) - A state-wide set of instructional tenets aligned to MLSS. It clarifies grade-level standards and best practices for instruction and outlines the most critical prerequisites for knowledge and skills.

New Mexico Measures of Student Success and Achievement (NM-MSSA) - A summative assessment measuring grade level proficiency in Mathematics and English Language Arts (ELA) in grades 3-8. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

New Mexico Assessment of Science Readiness (NM-ASR) - A summative assessment measuring science proficiency aligned to the New Mexico STEM Ready! Science Standards in grades 5, 8, and 11. There is an English and Spanish version of the test.

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) - A summative assessment providing a common measure of student achievement in Mathematics and Reading. This assessment is administered every other year to a sample of students in all 50 states in grades 4 and 8.

New Mexico Technical Evaluation and Assessment Manual (NMTEAM) -
A resource containing guidelines for determining IDEA Part B Special Education Services eligibility.

Observation - A formal process in which a principal or school administrator is present during a class period or watches the delivery of a lesson plan and provides constructive feedback based on the Elevate NM domains.

Priority Standards - A selected subset of the essential skills and knowledge a student must be able to know and do by the end of the school year to be prepared for the next grade level.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) - A group of educators that meet regularly to share their knowledge and collaborate on improving instruction to increase students' academic achievement.

Progress Monitoring - A form of assessment in which students' learning is measured regularly (weekly, bi-weekly, monthly) to determine growth within a specific skill or standard.

Realia – Real-life objects teachers use to support visual and EL learners in the classroom.

Screener - The purpose of this individualized assessment is to predict future academic success and identify students who are at risk. The test may be conducted at least three times a year, and the progress monitoring tool, once a month.

Section 504 - Section 504 is a federal civil rights law under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. It protects against discrimination against individuals with disabilities.

Section 504 Accommodation Plans - A plan of support developed for students identified as having a mental or physical impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.

Self-efficacy – An individual's belief in their capacity to perform the behaviors necessary to achieve performance outcomes.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) - A summative digital assessment administered during the SAT School Day that consists of 3 timed tests in Reading, Writing & Language, and Mathematics in grade 11.

Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol (SIOP) Model - A research-based and proven instructional model that effectively addresses the academic needs of English learners.

SMART Goals - A process for setting specific, measurable, attainable, results-oriented, and time-bound goals.

Spanish Reading Standards-Based Assessment (SBA) - A summative assessment measuring the knowledge and skills in Spanish reading standards of grade 11 students in their first three years in U.S. schools or their 4th or 5th years with an approved ELL waiver.

Summative Assessment - These springtime assessments measure individual student performance using a standardized benchmark and focus on grade level outcomes for identified content areas. NM PED uses standardized summative assessments aligned to adopted grade-level content standards. The outcomes of summative tests measure a student's grade level proficiency and progress toward college and career readiness.

Supporting Standards – Those standards that support, connect to or enhance the Priority Standards.

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) International Association - An organization dedicated to advancing high-quality teaching for the English language.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) - A framework to improve and optimize teaching based on scientific research on how humans learn.

Walkthrough - A 10–15-minute observation to provide feedback on teaching within the classroom environment. A principal or administrator conducts it.

World-Class Instructional Design and Assessment (WIDA) - A consortium of organizations whose goal is to research, design, and implement high-quality standards-based language development programs for K-12 multilingual learners.