The Framework for Teaching: Six Clusters Supporting High Level Learning

The *Framework for Teaching Clusters* provide a description of the skills demonstrated by accomplished teachers in promoting high levels of student performance—skills based on foundational knowledge and dispositions and grounded in a deep understanding of the nature of human learning. The Clusters are an outgrowth of *The Framework for Teaching* (the FfT), which has been validated through empirical studies as predictive of student learning as measured by state assessments. But while the FfT has enjoyed wide acceptance among members of the professional community of educators, its level of detail can make it cumbersome for everyday use. The FfT Clusters are an attempt to distill the "big ideas" of the FfT's four domains and 22 components into an efficient tool (composed of six large concepts) that can serve as the foundation for many purposes, most importantly— professional growth by teachers, not only through their own reflection on practice, but also through their conversations with colleagues, mentors and coaches, and supervisors.

The Clusters—like the full Framework—are themselves generic in nature; that is, they apply to all teaching situations, in all disciplines and at different ages and levels. Furthermore, they reflect teaching to high standards of student learning, as reflected in the Common Core State Standards and other high-level standards. Some of these principles of teaching for CCSS learning are, indeed, generic. For example, teaching for deep conceptual understanding, the use of precise academic language, and the skills of argumentation are evident in all disciplines. Similarly, student skill in questioning the reasoning of classmates and their perseverance with challenging content occur in all settings.

On the other hand, teaching occurs in real settings, with real students, and about specific content. Therefore, while there is a generic skill of argumentation, for example, it plays out differently in mathematics than in literacy. Hence, The Clusters document is offered in several versions: a generic version, and separate versions for literacy and mathematics. Literacy skills are evident not only in English classrooms for literary analysis, but also in other disciplines, such as social studies and science, for reading for meaning. These versions translate the generic language of the narratives and critical attributes, where appropriate, into content-specific language to guide both teachers and leaders.

Furthermore, while the FfT Clusters – like the full Framework for Teaching – reflect teaching practices that are common across all settings, actual teaching occurs with students in all their diversity – cultural, linguistic, and developmental. Hence, accomplished teachers must be familiar with their students' individual characteristics and needs, and create their plans and provide instruction accordingly. Therefore, when the language of the Framework refers to attending to individual students, it is to this full range of learners that it applies. These are the "Common Themes" of the Framework for Teaching, which permeate all the components, and elements, and ensure an inclusive environment for learning.

The generic version of the FfT Clusters, reflecting those instructional practices that are common across disciplines, comprises the remainder of this document.

For those familiar with *The Framework for Teaching*, the following table summarizes the relationship between The Clusters and the full FfT, together with the ways in which teachers might demonstrate their skill for each one. Sources of Evidence are provided for guidance, but the lists are not definitive. Not every artifact may be available. Quality evidence provides the raw data for meaningful, professional conversations.

The Link between the Six Large Component Clusters and the Full Framework for Teaching

Cluster Inquiry Questions	FfT Components/Elements	Sources of Evidence
1. Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content • *To what extent does the teacher demonstrate depth of important content knowledge and conduct the class with a clear and ambitious purpose, reflective of the standards for the discipline and appropriate to the students' levels of knowledge and skill?* • *To what degree are the elements of a lesson (the sequence of topics, instructional strategies, and materials and resources) well designed and executed, and aligned with the purpose of the lesson? To what extent are they designed to engage students in high-level learning in the discipline?* • *To what extent did the teacher make adaptations to the lesson?* • *To what extend did the teacher use formative assessment to check for student understanding?*	• 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d, 1f: Knowledge of content, clarity, and appropriateness for students of instructional outcomes; resources for classroom use, assessments aligned to instructional outcomes • 1e: Planned activities aligned to instructional purpose • 3a: Expectations for learning, accuracy of content, clarity of explanations, use of academic language • 3b, 3c: Questions, activities, and assignments aligned to instructional purpose • 3d: use of formative assessments aligned to instructional goals	• Planning documents: learning outcomes, instructional activities • Observation: ○Statements to students about purpose, conversation with students ○Accuracy of content ○Alignment of questions, activities, and assignments to purpose • Reflection: success in facilitating the lesson's objectives?
2. Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment • *To what extent do the interactions between teacher and students, and among students, demonstrate genuine caring and a safe, respectful, supportive, and also challenging learning environment? Do teachers convey high expectations for student learning and encourage hard work and perseverance? Is the environment safe for risk taking? Do students take pride in their work and demonstrate a commitment to mastering challenging content?*	• 2a: All elements • 2b: Expectations for learning and achievement, student perseverance in challenging work, and pride in that work	• Observation: ○ Interactions of students and teacher ○ Student perseverance and pride • Student surveys
3. Classroom Management • *Is the classroom well run and organized? Are classroom routines and procedures clear and carried out efficiently by both teacher and students with little loss of instructional time? To what extent do students themselves take an active role in their smooth operation? Are directions for activities clearly explained so that there is no confusion? Do students not only understand and comply with standards of conduct but also play an active part in setting the tone for maintaining those standards? How does the physical environment support the learning activities?*	• 2c: All elements • 2d: All elements • 2e: All elements	• Observation: ○ Routines ○ Student conduct ○ Physical environment

Cluster Inquiry Questions	FfT Components/Elements	Sources of Evidence
4. Student Intellectual Engagement • *To what extent are students intellectually engaged in a classroom of high intellectual energy? What is the nature of what students are doing? Are they being challenged to think and make connections through both the instructional activities and the questions explored? Do the teacher's explanations of content correctly model academic language and invite intellectual work by students? Are students asked to explain their thinking, to construct logical arguments citing evidence, and to question the thinking of others? Are the instructional strategies used by the teacher suitable to the discipline, and to what extent do they promote student agency in the learning of challenging content?*	• 1e: Design of instruction • 2b: Importance of the content • 3a: Explanations of content: their rigor and invitations for thinking • 3b: Quality of questions/discussions, student discourse • 3c: Intellectual challenge	• Planning documents • Observation: ○ The nature of the work students are doing ○ The quality of teacher presentation of content ○ The nature of student discourse and class discussion • Student worksheets or activities • Samples of student work
5. Successful Learning by All Students • *To what extent does the teacher ensure learning by all students? Does the teacher monitor student understanding through specifically designed questions or instructional techniques? To what extent do students monitor their own learning and provide respectful feedback to classmates? Does the teacher make modifications in presentations or learning activities where necessary, taking into account the degree of student learning? Has he or she sought out other resources (including parents) to support students' learning? In reflection, is the teacher aware of the success of the lesson in reaching students?*	• 1b: Knowledge of students • 1d: Resources for students • 1f: Design of summative and formative assessments aligned to outcomes • 3d: Monitoring of student learning, feedback to students, student self-assessment • 3e: Persistence, lesson adjustment • 4a: All elements • 4b: All elements • 4c: All elements	• Planning documents for formative and summative assessments • Observation: monitoring, feedback, adjustment • Reflection: comments on learning of individuals • Artifacts documenting both record keeping and communication with families
6. Professionalism • *To what extent does the teacher engage with the professional community (within the school and beyond) and demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional learning? Does the teacher collaborate productively with colleagues and contribute to the life of the school? Does the teacher engage in professional learning and take a leadership role in the school to promote the welfare of students?*	• 1d: Resources to extend professional knowledge • 4d: All elements • 4e: All elements • 4f: All elements	• Artifacts documenting ○ Contributions to professional culture ○ Engagement with professional learning ○ Participation in other professional activities

Cluster 1: Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content

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

Clarity of instructional purpose is essential to good teaching; classroom time is, after all, limited, and available time must be used wisely. Instructional purposes are statements, then, of what the teacher intends for students to learn; they should be clear and appropriately challenging for the students in the class. It is not sufficient for a teacher to state what the students will *do* during a lesson; he or she should also be clear about what they will *learn.* Admittedly, the learning outcomes are realized for students through the tasks and investigations in which they engage, but these activities and tasks must be designed such that they serve the teacher's instructional purpose.

Clarity of purpose implies alignment with the state's or district's curriculum outcomes (the Common Core or other high level state standards), consisting of the factual, conceptual and procedural knowledge, skills, and understandings identified in the standards as well as the strategies and processes that relate to and underlie these skills and understandings. The content should be challenging and rigorous, and also appropriate for the students in the class; this suggests that learning outcomes may have to be individualized, to some degree, to enable all students to access the curriculum and to accommodate different students' backgrounds, prerequisite understanding, language proficiency, and special needs.

Teachers demonstrate their deep knowledge of content and pedagogy in many ways, both in planning documents and during the course of a lesson, in which the presentation of content and responses to student questions and comments are essential to learning. Indeed, a knowledgeable teacher will know whether a student's question is important to the discipline and therefore worth pursuing in depth, or whether it represents a sidebar and can be answered immediately and the lesson moved along.

A lesson's activities, as revealed both in the planning documents and in their execution in the classroom, must serve to achieve the lesson's purpose. In a well-designed lesson, these tasks and activities are sequenced and are designed to engage students in the intellectual work of learning. Furthermore, "clarity" extends to the activity itself. Students should not be in the dark about how to complete an activity, what steps they should take, whether it's to be done on their own or with classmates, and how learning will be assessed. Instructive assessments will be grounded on the clarity of instructional purposes and the accuracy of content. The use of assessments is a focus of Cluster 5.

Well-run classrooms are purposeful and businesslike; they may be joyful, but students and teachers are clear not only about what they are doing, but also about what desired learning is being pursued. There is a sense conveyed, through both words and actions, that what's going on in the lesson is important and that learning is exhilarating and empowering. Serendipity may permit the extension of the learning into other areas, but the fundamentals are clear and are grounded in the teacher's deep knowledge of the content and of the ways to engage students in that content.

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

Cluster 1: Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content Indicators	Cluster 1: Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content Inquiry Questions
• Clarity of instructional outcomes, reflecting not only knowledge of content and of CCSS or other high-level standards and practices, but also suitability for the students in the class (1a, 1b, 1c) • Instructional outcomes reflecting the range of important types of content represented in the discipline: for example, factual and procedural knowledge, skills of reasoning and group work, analysis (1c) • Planned resources and activities aligned to the instructional purpose (1d, 1e) • Planned assessments are aligned to the instructional purpose (1f) • Use of formative assessments are directly aligned to instructional goals (1f) • Expectations for learning, accuracy of content, clarity of explanations, and use of academic language (3a) • Activities and assignments, questions and student discussion, all aligned to the instructional purpose (3b, 3c)	• *To what extent does the teacher demonstrate depth of important content knowledge and conduct the class with a clear and ambitious purpose, reflective of the standards for the discipline and appropriate to the students' levels of knowledge and skill?* • *To what degree are the elements of a lesson (the sequence of topics, instructional strategies, and materials and resources) well designed and executed, and aligned with the purpose of the lesson? To what extent are they designed to engage students in high-level learning in the discipline?* • *To what extent did the teacher make adaptations to the lesson?* • *To what extend did the teacher use formative assessment to check for student understanding?*

Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
The instructional purpose and learning tasks are unclear; the information presented is inaccurate or inappropriate and unsuitable to the students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher's plans indicate weak content knowledge.* • *The teacher does not try to ascertain varied skill and ability levels among students in the class to use in planning.* • *Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are poorly aligned to the learning standards and either lack clarity or are stated as activities. They are unsuitable for a number of students in the class.* • *At no time during the lesson does the teacher convey to the students what they will be learning.* • *The teacher makes a serious error of content or academic language that will affect students' understanding of the lesson.* • *Students indicate through body language or verbal exchanges that they don't understand the content being presented.* • *Students appear confused about the learning task.* • *Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences are of low cognitive challenge, are unrelated to the lesson's stated purpose, or are not suitable for many students.*	The instructional purpose and learning tasks are somewhat clear; the information presented is primarily accurate and partially appropriate to the students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher's plans reflect rudimentary understanding of the discipline.* • *The teacher is aware that there are different skill and ability levels in the class but does not use this information in planning.* • *Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are a combination of outcomes and activities or lack clarity; they are only partially aligned to the learning standards. They are unsuitable for some students in the class.* • *The teacher refers in passing to what the students will be learning, or it is written on the board with no elaboration or explanation.* • *The teacher makes no serious content errors but may possibly make minor ones, including imprecise use of academic language.* • *The teacher's explanation of the content consists of a monologue, with minimal participation or intellectual engagement by students.* • *The teacher finds it necessary to clarify the learning task so that students can complete it.* • *Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences are of moderate cognitive challenge or are only partially related to the lesson's stated purpose, or both. They are unsuitable for*	The instructional purpose and learning tasks are clear, the information presented is accurate and suitable to the students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher can identify important concepts of the discipline and their relationships to one another.* • *The teacher's plans demonstrate awareness of possible student misconceptions and how they can be addressed using formative assessment materials and practices.* • *The teacher has identified broad skill groups of students within the class and uses this information in planning.* • *Learning outcomes, as stated by the teacher, are written in the form of student learning and are aligned to the learning standards. They are suitable for the groups of students in the class.* • *The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students are learning.* • *The teacher makes no content errors and models the correct use of academic language.* • *The teacher's explanation of content is clear and invites student participation and thinking.* • *Students engage with the learning task, indicating that they understand what they are to do; if modeling the process to be followed in the task is appropriate, the teacher does so.* • *Planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences support the lesson's*	The purpose and learning tasks of the lesson are very clear, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *The teacher cites intra- and inter-disciplinary content relationships.* • *The teacher is aware of the proficiency level of each student in the class and incorporates this understanding into plans.* • *The teacher's plans demonstrate awareness of possible student misconceptions and how they can be addressed using formative assessment materials and practices.* • *The teacher states clearly, at some point during the lesson, what the students are learning, and invites students to connect this learning with the longer sweep of curriculum outcomes.* • *The teacher explains content clearly, using metaphors and analogies or inviting student predictions to bring content to life.* • *The teacher's carefully-crafted questions enable students to extend the lesson objectives for deeper understanding.* • *Planned learning tasks and materials permit advanced students to extend the lesson's purpose and provide students who need it most with more time, attention, and supports.* • *Students have the opportunity for*

	some students.	*purpose; they are well sequenced, provide cognitive challenge, and are suitable for most students in the class.*	*reflection and closure on the content being learned, especially its relation to the unit or broader purposes.* • *The teacher is able to explain fully and specifically how planned learning tasks, materials, and question sequences are well suited for the particular goals and topics of the lesson, unit, or longer-term work, and to the students in the class.*

Cluster 2: Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment

In order to do their best work and in order to make a commitment to the activity we call school, students must feel respected and honored as people. They must sense that their teachers believe in their capabilities; many adults can trace their success in school and in later years to a teacher who believed they could *be* somebody. For some students, this teacher may be the first, or the only, adult who has conveyed such confidence. It can be life altering.

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

The atmosphere of support and respect is not confined to students as people but extends to them as learners. Many adults are convinced that they "can't do science" or "were never good at reading poetry." While it's difficult to know the origin of such sentiments, teachers should never convey them. Thus, when teachers indicate that they sincerely honor all students in their journey for understanding, then students can engage in that quest assured of deep support by the teacher. It's a safe environment, in other words, for students to take intellectual risks, to try out ideas, to question the teacher's—or the book's, or another student's—account. Students know they need not fear ridicule, or unkind sarcasm, from the teacher or from other students. As the emotional environment clearly signals support and respect, the physical environment also conveys that learning is important and is rich and inviting.

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

Student cultural attitudes toward work vary profoundly from one age group, and from one school, to another. Overwhelmingly, young children are keen to learn and to explore the world; if instructional tasks are interesting, then they will participate willingly and aim to excel. With older students, the situation is more complex; most of the efforts these students must make to succeed in school, after all, take place in private— for example, completing their homework assignments and studying for tests. But other actions occur in public, in front of their peers, such as participating in class discussions and engaging in group work. Thus, students who decide to make a commitment to high-level work in school are making a public declaration of that commitment. It's essential that they not become isolated or "punished" by their peers for that commitment.

In some settings, student norms already expect such commitment, for example, schools in communities whose families appreciate the importance of a rigorous education to ensure a successful future, or schools that have made a serious commitment to creating a culture for learning. But in other settings, particularly schools serving students of poorly educated families, the challenge for educators is far greater. Students' parents may themselves not have experienced the benefits that accrue from a solid education and from further study beyond secondary school. Parents may set expectations for their children's future based on their limited access to classrooms.

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

Teachers whose classrooms constitute a safe and challenging environment for student learning have artfully combined challenge with support. They know their students well enough to know when a student has "blown off" an assignment, or when, in contrast, the student simply does not understand a concept well enough to complete high-quality work. When it comes to student commitment to learning, teachers don't take no for an answer, yet they are ready to provide necessary assistance when needed. This teaching is not formulaic; it

is a high-level professional enterprise in which teachers know when to cajole, when to reteach, when to praise, and when to enlist the participation of other students—all in the service of high-level learning within an environment of challenge and support. Within this environment, students persevere in their quest for deep understanding and mastery.

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

Cluster 2: Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment Indicators	**Cluster 2: Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment Inquiry Questions:**
▪▪ Language of caring and respect between teacher and students and among students, and teacher's awareness of students' interests in and beyond school (2a) ▪▪ High levels of cognitive energy (2b) ▪▪ A safe environment for student risk taking (2a) ▪▪ High expectations for students' capabilities for learning (2b) ▪▪ Productive student engagement in small group work (2c) ▪▪ Students persevere, even in the face of challenges (2b)	• *To what extent do the interactions between teacher and students, and among students, demonstrate genuine caring and a safe, respectful, supportive, and also challenging learning environment?* • *Do teachers convey high expectations for student learning and encourage hard work and perseverance?* • *Is the environment safe for risk taking?* • *Do students take pride in their work and demonstrate a commitment to mastering challenging content?*

Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
Interactions between teacher and students and among students are characterized by negativity, lack of support, low expectations, and low levels of student perseverance, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher uses disrespectful talk toward students; student body language indicates feelings of hurt or insecurity.* • *The teacher does not address disrespectful interactions among students, or the teacher's attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior are not successful.* • *The teacher displays no familiarity with, or caring about, individual students' interests or personalities.* • *The teacher conveys, to at least some students, that the work is too challenging for them.* • *Students exhibit little or no pride in their work; they abandon their efforts in the face of difficulty.* • *Students participate in only routine responses and tasks.* • *Students receive no support from their classmates.* • *Students show no sign of active collaboration, answers are copies or one student dominates group work.*	Interactions between teacher and students and among students are a mix of high and low support, moderate expectations, and modest levels of student perseverance, through some combination of the following: • *The quality of interactions between teacher and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect.* • *The teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students, with uneven results.* • *The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that the efforts are only partially successful.* • *The teacher conveys only modest expectations for student abilities.* • *The teacher encourages students to persevere with challenging work; but only some do so, or they do so in a desultory manner.* • *Few students offer their ideas on questions that seem to entail intellectual risk.* • *Students offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner when prompted by the teacher.* • *Group work is sometimes collaborative, sometimes not. Teacher makes intermittent attempts to support group processes.*	The classroom is characterized by interactions that are both supportive and challenging, with student perseverance in challenging work, through some combination of the following: • *Talk between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with little to no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.* • *The teacher makes connections with individual students.* • *The teacher demonstrates a high regard for student abilities.* • *Student work and conduct during a lesson indicate commitment to high quality; students persevere in understanding challenging content.* • *Students participate willingly and appear confident in offering their ideas in front of classmates.* • *Students spontaneously offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner.* • *Students are productively engaged collaboratively with a partner or during small-group work.*	Classroom interactions indicate high levels of caring and respect, and student assumption of responsibility for the culture of civility, mutual support for work of high quality, and perseverance in achieving that quality, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *Talk between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.* • *The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about the lives of students beyond school.* • *Student questions and comments indicate a desire for deep understanding of the content.* • *Students take initiative in improving the quality of their work.* • *Students volunteer ideas, even when these ideas might seem to be unpopular among classmates.* • *Students recognize and express appreciation for the efforts of their classmates.* • *Group work is productive; groups take shared ownership of, and pride in, the products of their work. All members contribute to the group's work.*

Cluster 3: Classroom Management

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

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

Routines and norms should be created with student participation.

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

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

Routines must be taught.

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

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

Cluster 3: Classroom Management Indicators	**Cluster 3: Classroom Management Inquiry Questions**
▪▪ Efficient procedures for non-instructional activities: taking roll, distributing and collecting materials, making transitions, etc. (2c) ▪▪ Clear guidelines for student work when it is unsupervised, e.g., in small groups (2c) ▪▪ Evidence of clear standards of conduct, understood by the students, monitored by the teacher, corrected successfully (when necessary) by teacher or students, or both (2d) ▪▪ Physical environment supportive of learning activities (2e) ▪▪ Productive contribution to the class by volunteers and paraprofessionals (2c)	• *Is the classroom well run and organized?* • *Are classroom routines and procedures clear and carried out efficiently by both teacher and students with little loss of instructional time?* • *To what extent do students themselves take an active role in their smooth operation?* • *Are directions for activities clearly explained so that there is no confusion?* • *Do students not only understand and comply with standards of conduct but also play an active part in setting the tone for maintaining those standards?* • *How does the physical environment support the learning activities?*

Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
The classroom environment is disorganized and chaotic, through some combination of the following: • *Classroom procedures for transitions and other non-instructional duties are either absent or inefficient, resulting in the loss of much instructional time.* • *Groups not working with the teacher are not involved in productive work.* • *No standards of conduct appear to have been established, or the teacher does not monitor student behavior, or, when noticing student misbehavior, appears helpless to do anything about it.* • *There are physical hazards in the classroom, endangering student safety.* • *Volunteers and paraprofessionals have no defined role and may be idle much of the time.*	The classroom environment is a little rough, through some combination of the following: • *Procedures for transitions, materials, and other non-instructional duties seem to have been established, but their operation is rough or inconsistent, resulting in some loss of instructional time.* • *Small groups are only intermittently engaged while not working directly with the teacher.* • *Standards of conduct appear to have been set, but the teacher's attempts to maintain order meet with uneven success, or the teacher's response to student misbehavior is inconsistent: sometimes very harsh, other times lenient.* • *The physical environment is not an impediment to learning but does not enhance it.* • *Volunteers and paraprofessionals participate but require frequent supervision or their work is not well integrated with classroom activities.*	The classroom functions smoothly and efficiently, through some combination of the following: • *Efficient procedures have been established for non-instructional activities, such as distribution and collection of materials and supplies, transitions to other grouping patterns, etc. resulting in minimal to no loss of instructional time. Students carry out procedures with little or no teacher direction.* • *All students are productively engaged during small-group work, a fact indicating established procedures.* • *The teacher regularly monitors student behavior; student behavior is generally appropriate. When needed, the teacher's response to misbehavior is effective.* • *The classroom is arranged to support the instructional goals and learning activities.* • *Volunteers and paraprofessionals work with minimal supervision in synch with classroom goals.*	The classroom functions seamlessly, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *Students take the initiative with their classmates to ensure non-instructional routines run smoothly.* • *Students ensure productive small-group work by, for example, assigning roles.* • *The teacher's monitoring of student behavior is seamless and preventive, accomplished through nonverbal means; student behavior is entirely appropriate.* • *Productive classroom norms are well established, and students as well as the teacher act to maintain them.* • *Students take the initiative to contribute to and adjust the physical environment so it supports learning for all students.* • *Volunteers and paraprofessionals take initiative in their work in the class, a fact indicating clear roles and training.*

Cluster 4: Student Intellectual Engagement

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

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

A useful rule of thumb that indicates the degree of student intellectual engagement is the answer to the question, "Who's doing the work?" When students listen while the teacher makes a presentation, demonstrates a procedure, or applies a rule, their role may be entirely passive; they may be simply watching while the teacher performs. However: a teacher may present new material in such a way that students are invited to connect new information with prior understanding or predict outcomes of a scenario. When teachers structure lessons in such a way that students are intellectually active, those students must explore the nuances of meaning of various concepts, and generate new understanding. This process involves thinking. Thus, a variation on the maxim "Who's doing the work?" is "Who's doing the thinking?" Only when students are actively thinking (as part of a presentation of content, engaging in a discussion led by the teacher or with classmates or completing a task) can they be said to be intellectually engaged.

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

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

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

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

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

Rich learning tasks.

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

students, but that, through their expansion, or through the teacher's asking a more demanding follow-up question, can challenge the more-advanced students in the class. Employing this technique is not a simple matter and is developed only after considerable teaching experience.

Another characteristic of rich learning tasks relates to being "group-worthy," that is, they invite multiple perspectives that may be represented by the different students working together in groups. Much classroom activity, after all, takes place in pairs or small groups, with the teacher playing a mediating, rather than a direct "teaching," role. Tasks that are suitable for collaborative work enable students with different strengths to make a contribution to the overall effort. In order for such work to be productive, of course, students must have acquired the skills of collaboration described in Cluster 2.

Student discourse

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

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

Cluster 4: Student Intellectual Engagement Indicators • The content is seen as worthwhile, important, and interesting (2b) • Content is presented in a manner that engages students in thinking and reasoning (3a) • Learning tasks require students to engage intellectually, to *think;* some may involve productive struggle (3c) • Questions/discussions involve higher-order cognitive activity; students have time to develop their ideas and productive habits of mind (3b) • The lesson has a recognizable structure, with time for reflection and closure (3c) • Students explain their thinking and question the thinking of others (3b)		**Cluster 4: Student Intellectual Engagement Inquiry Questions** • *To what extent are students intellectually engaged in a classroom of high intellectual energy?* • *What is the nature of what students are doing? Are they being challenged to think and make connections through both the instructional activities and the questions explored?* • *Do the teacher's explanations of content correctly model academic language and invite intellectual work by students? Are students asked to explain their thinking, to construct logical arguments citing evidence, and to question the thinking of others?* • *Are the instructional strategies used by the teacher suitable to the discipline, and to what extent do they promote student agency in the learning of challenging content?*	
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
The level of intellectual engagement on the part of students is low, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher conveys no energy for the importance of the learning goals and assignments.* • *Content is presented in a didactic manner, with no invitation for students to think.* • *Learning tasks require only recall or have a single correct response or method; students are not invited to stretch their thinking.* • *The teacher's questions are rapid-fire and convergent, with a single correct answer, and do not invite student thinking.* • *All discussion is between the teacher and individual students; students are not invited to speak directly to one another.* • *The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking.* • *Few students are involved in the activities and discussions.* • *The lesson has no recognizable structure; it's a random series of events.*	The level of intellectual engagement on the part of students is modest, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher displays little energy for the lesson's purpose or assignments.* • *The teacher's explanation of concepts includes perfunctory invitations for student thinking.* • *Learning tasks are so highly scaffolded that the result is a single pathway to completion.* • *The teacher's questions are a mix of those with a single correct answer and methodology and other questions inviting student thinking.* • *The teacher attempts to provide time for students to formulate their ideas; some make productive use of this time.* • *The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another's ideas, but few students do so.* • *The teacher asks students to explain their reasoning and cite specific evidence, but only some students attempt to do so.* • *About half the students are involved in activities and discussions.* • *The lesson has a recognizable structure, although parts of it may be rushed, while others drag.*	The classroom is a cognitively busy place, with students encouraged to use their minds, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher exhibits energy for the topic and conveys its importance.* • *The teacher's explanation of concepts invites student intellectual engagement.* • *Learning tasks, some of which are "group-worthy," demand higher-order thinking, inviting students to take initiative, and may involve productive struggle.* • *Many of the teacher's questions are open-ended, or have multiple correct answers, inviting students to think. (When low-level questions are used, they provide scaffolding for new learning.)* • *Wait time is used productively; students engage in thoughtful reflection during discussion.* • *Students direct their comments to one another during full class discussions; there is lively discussion during small-group work.* • *Students are asked to explain their thinking, citing specific reasons; most do so.* • *Virtually all students are involved in the activities and discussions.* • *The lesson has a clear structure, with time for students to engage in thoughtful participation in discussions and learning tasks.*	The classroom is a cognitively vibrant place, with students encouraged to use their minds, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *Students appear to relish challenging tasks and push their classmates with extended questions.* • *Students initiate higher-order questions.* • *Students extend the discussion, enriching it.* • *Students invite comments from their classmates during a discussion and push their classmates with extended questions in both small group and whole class contexts.* • *Students modify a learning task to make it more meaningful or relevant to their needs.* • *Students themselves ensure that all their classmates are involved in the activities and discussions.* • *Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.* • *Students build on each other's ideas and make conjectures/connections aimed at either deeper conceptual understanding or at connecting procedures to underlying concepts.*

Cluster 5: Successful Learning by All Students

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

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

Ascertaining whether students have, in fact, learned what was intended requires the design (or adoption) of summative assessments aligned to those outcomes (so that the teacher can take corrective action before moving on), and formative assessments to be used, on short notice, during the course of a unit or lesson. This requires sophisticated record-keeping systems. In addition, in order for teachers to modify their approach to ensure that all students are making progress towards the instructional purposes of the lesson, they must not only be aware of resources (in the school or, more broadly, in the district or the community) that can be brought to bear; they also must be committed to do what is needed to help every student succeed.

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

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

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

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

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

students' success in school, and draw on the insights of their families in how to enhance that success.

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

Cluster 5: Successful Learning by ALL Student Indicators		**Cluster 5: Successful Learning by All Students Inquiry Questions**	
• Both summative and formative assessments, aligned to learning outcomes, have been planned (1f) • The teacher monitors student learning during the lesson (individuals and groups) through a variety of means (3d) • Students receive specific feedback on their work from the teacher, the activities themselves, or other students (3d) • If necessary, the teacher modifies the lesson to ensure that students "get it," drawing on other resources as needed (1d, 3e) • The teacher's records permit detailed analysis of learning by individuals and groups of students (4b) • The teacher enlists, as appropriate, the engagement of families in student learning (4c) • In reflection, the teacher assumes responsibility for student learning (4a)		• *To what extent does the teacher ensure learning by all students?* • *Does the teacher monitor student understanding through specifically designed questions or instructional techniques?* • *To what extent do students monitor their own learning and provide respectful feedback to classmates?* • *Does the teacher make modifications in presentations or learning activities where necessary, taking into account the degree of student learning?* • *Has he or she sought out other resources (including parents) to support students' learning?* • *In reflection, is the teacher aware of the success of the lesson in reaching students?*	
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
The teacher makes no attempt to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following: • *Summative assessments are poorly aligned with the learning outcomes.* • *No formative assessments have been designed for use during the lesson.* • *The teacher makes no effort to determine whether students understand the content of the lesson or ignores indications of student boredom or lack of understanding.* • *Feedback to students is only global, such as, "Good job, everyone."* • *The teacher makes no attempt to adjust the lesson, even when such action is clearly needed.* • *The teacher conveys to students that when they have difficulty learning it is their fault.* • *Record-keeping systems are in disarray.* • *Families are unaware of their children's progress.* *In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites the extent to which students were busy or were well behaved, with no comments about the extent to which they achieved the intended outcomes.*	The teacher makes sporadic or inconsistent attempts to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following: • *Only some of the instructional outcomes are addressed in summative assessments.* • *Plans refer to the use of formative assessments but with no specificity.* • *The teacher requests global indications of student understanding, such as, "Any questions?"* • *Feedback to students is neither specific nor oriented toward future improvement of work.* • *The teacher's efforts to modify the lesson are only partially successful.* • *The teacher conveys to students a sense of responsibility for their learning but also uncertainty about how to assist them.* • *The teacher maintains school-required record-keeping systems but does little else to inform families about student progress.* • *The teacher communicates sporadically with families regarding student learning.* • *In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites only limited evidence of student attainment of the instructional goals with an emphasis on other factors, such as whether students were busy or were well behaved.*	The teacher makes genuine attempts to ensure the learning of all students, through some combination of the following: • *All the learning outcomes have a method for summative assessment, differentiated, as needed, for students with different learning goals.* • *Plans include specific formative assessments for use during instruction.* • *The teacher monitors student learning through a variety of means, including using specifically formulated questions, differentiated as needed, to elicit evidence of student understanding.* • *Feedback includes specific and timely guidance on how students can improve their learning.* • *The teacher makes productive changes to the lesson plan in response to evidence of student difficulties.* • *The teacher conveys to students that s/he has other approaches to try when the students experience difficulty.* • *The teacher maintains a coherent record-keeping system on student learning and regularly sends home information about student progress.* • *The teacher communicates regularly with families regarding student learning.* • *In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher cites* specific examples of student attainment of the instructional goals.	The teacher indicates a deep commitment to the learning of all students, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *The teacher constantly "takes the pulse" of the class; monitoring of student understanding is sophisticated and continuous and makes use of strategies to elicit information about individual student learning.* • *The teacher's plan for summative and formative assessment explicitly provides information to students about their progress in real time.* • *Students monitor their own learning, either on their own initiative or as a result of tasks set by the teacher.* • *When appropriate, students use assessment information to guide their next steps.* • *High-quality feedback comes from many sources, including other students; it is specific and focused on improvement.* • *The teacher actively encourages two-way communication with families regarding student learning.* • *In reflecting on the lesson, the teacher has specific ideas about how the lesson could be improved. The teacher cites student*

Cluster 6: Professionalism

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

As in other professions, the complexity of teaching requires continued growth and development in order for teachers to keep their knowledge and skills current. Continuing to stay informed and increasing their skills allows teachers to become ever more effective, and to exercise leadership among their colleagues, and to constantly refine their understanding of how to engage students in learning. Thus, growth in content and content-specific pedagogy is essential to good teaching. And to the extent that information technology is an aid to student learning, it's essential for teachers to stay abreast of developments in that area as well.

Networking with colleagues through such activities as joint planning, study groups, and lesson study provides opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. In particular, sharing perspectives while jointly examining student work can provide invaluable insight, that is not available in any other way, into the cognitive processes of individual students who may have wrestled with concepts. These activities allow for job-embedded professional development. In addition, professional educators increase their effectiveness in the classroom by belonging to professional organizations (at the regional, state, or even national level), reading professional journals, and attending educational conferences, workshops, or university classes. As they gain experience and expertise, educators find ways to contribute to their colleagues and to the profession.

Expert teachers also demonstrate professionalism in service both to students and to the profession. Teaching at the highest levels of performance requires that teachers remain focused on students, putting them first regardless of how this stance might challenge long-held assumptions, past practice, or simply an easier or more convenient procedure. For example, dialogue around the issues surrounding the appropriate use of homework is certain to be spirited, and reveal teachers' deep belief about student learning and how best to support it.

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

Cluster 6: Professionalism Indicators • Collaboration with colleagues for joint planning, and school/district and community initiatives (4d) • Active engagement in workshops, courses, and activities to improve practice (1d, 4e) • Integrity and honesty in dealing with colleagues and parents on behalf of students (4f)		**Cluster 6: Professionalism Inquiry Questions** • *To what extent does the teacher engage with the professional community (within the school and beyond) and demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional learning?* • *Does the teacher collaborate productively with colleagues and contribute to the life of the school?* • *Does the teacher engage in professional learning and take a leadership role in the school to promote the welfare of students?*	
Level 1	**Level 2**	**Level 3**	**Level 4**
The teacher makes no attempt to continue with professional learning or engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher's relationships with colleagues are characterized by negativity and lack of trust.* • *The teacher avoids involvement both in school activities and in district and community projects.* • *The teacher ignores or avoids opportunities to participate in activities for professional learning.* • *The teacher declines to participate in team and departmental decision making, except when required by superiors.* • *The teacher does not prioritize the needs of students and operates in a self-serving manner.* • *The teacher ignores school and district regulations.*	The teacher makes sporadic or inconsistent attempts to continue with professional learning or engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher has cordial relationships with colleagues and is trusted by them.* • *When asked, the teacher participates in school activities as well as district and community projects.* • *The teacher participates in professional activities when they are required or provided by the district.* • *The teacher participates minimally in team and departmental decision making.* • *The teacher notices the needs of students but is inconsistent in addressing them.* • *The teacher minimally complies with school and district regulations.*	The teacher makes genuine attempts to continue with professional learning and to engage with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following: • *The teacher has supportive, collaborative, and trusting relationships with colleagues and is known for having high standards of integrity.* • *The teacher frequently volunteers to participate in school events and in school, district, and community projects.* • *The teacher seeks opportunities for continued professional development.* • *The teacher actively participates in team and departmental decision making.* • *The teacher actively addresses student needs and actively works to provide opportunities for student success.* • *The teacher completely complies with the spirit, as well as the letter, of school and district regulations.*	The teacher indicates, through various actions and statements, a deep commitment to continuing professional learning and engagement with the professional community to advance the interests of students, through some combination of the following, in addition to elements listed under "Proficient": • *The teacher takes initiative and a leadership role in organizing collaborative projects.* • *The teacher regularly contributes to, and leads, significant district and community projects.* • *The teacher takes a leadership role in finding opportunities for continued professional development and in contributing to professional organizations.* • *The teacher takes a leadership role in team and departmental decision making, and enjoys the trust of colleagues in terms of honesty, integrity, and confidentiality.* • *The teacher makes a concerted effort to ensure opportunities are available for all students to be successful, even when these efforts challenge school or district policies.* • *The teacher makes material suggestions for the improvement of school and district regulations.*