The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument
2011 Edition

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The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument

DOMAIN 1
Planning and Preparation

Planning and Preparation
1a Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy

In order to guide student learning, accomplished teachers have command of the subjects they teach. They must know which concepts and skills are central to a discipline, and which are peripheral; they must know how the discipline has evolved into the 21st century, incorporating such issues as global awareness and cultural diversity, as appropriate. Accomplished teachers understand the internal relationships within the disciplines they teach, knowing which concepts and skills are prerequisite to the understanding of others. They are also aware of typical student misconceptions in the discipline and work to dispel them. But knowledge of the content is not sufficient; in advancing student understanding, teachers are familiar with the particularly pedagogical approaches best suited to each discipline. Elements of component 1a:

Knowledge of content and the structure of the discipline
Every discipline has a dominant structure, with smaller components or strands as well as central concepts and skills.

Knowledge of prerequisite relationships
Some disciplines, for example mathematics, have important prerequisites; experienced teachers know what these are and how to use them in designing lessons and units.

Knowledge of content-related pedagogy
Different disciplines have “signature pedagogies” that have evolved over time and have been found to be most effective in teaching.

Indicators:
• Lesson and unit plans that reflect important concepts in the discipline
• Lesson and unit plans that accommodate prerequisite relationships among concepts and skills
• Clear and accurate classroom explanations
• Accurate answers to student questions
• Feedback to students that furthers learning
• Interdisciplinary connections in plans and practice
1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students

Teachers don’t teach content in the abstract; they teach it to students. In order to ensure student learning, therefore, teachers must know not only their subject content and its related pedagogy but the students to whom they wish to teach that content. In ensuring student learning, teachers must appreciate what recent research in cognitive psychology has confirmed: namely, that students learn through active intellectual engagement with content. While there are patterns in cognitive, social, and emotional developmental stages typical of different age groups, students learn in their individual ways and may come with gaps or misconceptions that the teacher needs to uncover in order to plan appropriate learning activities. In addition, students have lives beyond school, lives that include athletic and musical pursuits, activities in their neighborhoods, and family and cultural traditions. Students whose first language is not English, as well as students with other special needs, must be considered when planning lessons and identifying resources that will ensure their understanding. Elements of component 1b:

Knowledge of child and adolescent development
Children learn differently at different stages of their lives.

Knowledge of the learning process
Learning requires active intellectual engagement.

Knowledge of students’ skills, knowledge, and language proficiency
Children’s lives beyond school influence their learning.

Knowledge of students’ interest and cultural heritage
Children’s backgrounds influence their learning.

Knowledge of students’ special needs
Children do not all develop in a typical fashion.

Indicators:
• Formal and informal information about students gathered by teacher for use in planning instruction
• Student interests and needs learned and used by teacher in planning
• Teacher participation in community cultural events
• Teacher-designed opportunities for families to share heritage
• Teacher-created database of students with special needs available for teacher use
1c Setting Instructional Outcomes

Teaching is a purposeful activity; even the most imaginative activities are directed towards certain desired learning. Therefore, establishing instructional outcomes entails identifying exactly what students will be expected to learn; the outcomes describe not what students will do but what they will learn. The instructional outcomes should reflect important learning and must lend themselves to various forms of assessment so that all students are able to demonstrate their understanding of the content. Insofar as the outcomes determine the instructional activities, the resources used, their suitability for diverse learners, and the methods of assessment employed, they hold a central place in Domain 1.

Learning outcomes are of a number of different types: factual and procedural knowledge, conceptual understanding, thinking and reasoning skills, and collaborative and communication strategies. In addition, some learning outcomes refer to dispositions; not only is it important for students to learn to read, but educators also hope that they will like to read. In addition, experienced teachers are able to link their learning outcomes with others both within their discipline and in other disciplines. Elements of component 1c:

Value, sequence, and alignment
Students must be able to build their understanding of important ideas from concept to concept.

Clarity
Outcomes must refer to what students will learn, not what they will do, and must permit viable methods of assessment.

Balance
Outcomes should reflect different types of learning, such as knowledge, conceptual understanding, and thinking skills.

Suitability for diverse students
Outcomes must be appropriate for all students in the class.

Indicators:
- Outcomes of a challenging cognitive level
- Statements of student learning, not student activity
- Outcomes central to the discipline and related to those in other disciplines
- Assessment of student attainment
- Outcomes differentiated for students of varied ability
1d Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources

Student learning is enhanced by a teacher’s skillful use of resources; some of these are provided by the school as “official” materials; others are secured by teachers through their own initiative. Resources fall into several different categories: those used in the classroom by students, those available beyond the classroom walls to enhance student learning, those for teachers to further their own professional knowledge and skill, and those that can provide noninstructional assistance to students. Teachers recognize the importance of discretion in the selection of resources, choosing those that align directly with the learning outcomes and that will be of most use to the students. Accomplished teachers also ensure that the selection of materials and resources is appropriately challenging for every student; texts, for example, are available at various reading levels to guarantee all students access to the content and successfully demonstrate understanding of the learning outcomes. Furthermore, expert teachers look beyond the school for resources to bring their subjects to life and to assist students who need help in both their academic and nonacademic lives. Elements of component 1d:

Resources for classroom use
Materials align with learning outcomes.

Resources to extend content knowledge and pedagogy
Materials are available to further teachers’ professional knowledge.

Resources for students
Materials are appropriately challenging.

Indicators:
• District-provided materials
• A range of texts
• Guest speakers
• Internet resources
• Materials provided by professional organizations
• Teachers participating in continuing professional education courses or professional groups
• Community resources
1e Designing Coherent Instruction

Designing coherent instruction is the heart of planning, reflecting the teacher’s knowledge of content and the students in the class, the intended outcomes of instruction, and the available resources. Such planning requires that educators have a clear understanding of the state, district, and school expectations for student learning, and the skill to translate these into a coherent plan. It also requires that teachers understand the characteristics of the students they teach and the active nature of student learning. Educators must determine how best to sequence instruction in a way that will advance student learning through the required content. It further requires the thoughtful construction of lessons that contain cognitively engaging learning activities, the incorporation of appropriate resources and materials, and the intentional grouping of students. Proficient practice in this component recognizes that a well-designed instruction plan addresses the learning needs of various groups of students; one size does not fit all. At the distinguished level the teacher plans instruction that takes into account the specific learning needs of each student and solicits ideas from students on how best to structure the learning. This plan for implementation is then manifested in Domain 3. Elements of component 1e:

Learning activities
Instruction is designed to engage students and advance their learning through the content.

Instructional materials and resources
Materials and resources are appropriate to the learning needs of the students.

Instructional groups
Groups are intentionally organized to support student learning.

Lesson and unit structure
Organization is clear and sequenced to advance students’ learning.

Indicators:
- Lessons that support instructional outcomes and reflect important concepts
- Instructional maps that indicate relationships to prior learning
- Activities that represent high-level thinking
- Opportunities for student choice
- The use of varied resources
- Thoughtfully planned learning groups
- Structured lesson plans
1f Designing Student Assessments

Good teaching requires both assessment of learning and assessment for learning. Assessments of learning ensure that teachers know that students have learned the intended outcomes. These assessments must be designed in such a manner that they provide evidence of the full range of learning outcomes; that is, to assess reasoning skills and factual knowledge, different methods are needed. Furthermore, such assessments may need to be adapted to the particular needs of individual students; an ESL student, for example, may need an alternative method of assessment to allow demonstration of understanding. Assessment for learning enables a teacher to incorporate assessments directly into the instructional process, and to modify or adapt instruction as needed to ensure student understanding. Such assessments, although used during instruction, must be designed as part of the planning process. Such formative assessment strategies are ongoing and may be used by both teachers and students to monitor progress towards the understanding the learning outcomes. Elements of component 1f:

Congruence with instructional outcomes
Assessments must match learning expectations.

Criteria and standards
Expectations must be clearly defined.

Design of formative assessments
Assessments for learning must be planned as part of the instructional process.

Use for planning
Results of assessment guide future planning.

Indicators:
• Lesson plans indicating correspondence between assessments and instructional outcomes
• Assessment types suitable to the style of outcome
• Variety of performance opportunities for students
• Modified assessments available for individual students as needed
• Expectations clearly written, with descriptors for each level of performance
• Formative assessments designed to inform minute-to-minute decision making by the teacher during instruction
The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument

DOMAIN 2
The Classroom Environment
2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport

An essential skill of teaching is that of managing relationships with students and ensuring that those among students are positive and supportive. Teachers create an environment of respect and rapport in their classrooms by the ways they interact with students and by the interaction they encourage and cultivate among students. An important aspect of respect and rapport relates to how the teacher responds to students and how students are permitted to treat one another. Patterns of interactions are critical to the overall tone of the class. In a respectful environment, all students feel valued and safe. Elements of component 2a:

**Teacher interactions with students, including both words and actions**
A teacher’s interactions with students set the tone for the classroom. Through their interactions, teachers convey that they are interested in and care about their students.

**Student interactions with other students, including both words and actions**
As important as a teacher’s treatment of students is, how students are treated by their classmates is arguably even more important to students. At its worst, poor treatment causes students to feel rejected by their peers. At its best, positive interaction among students is mutually supportive and create an emotionally healthy school environment. Teachers model and teach students how to engage in respectful interactions with one another and acknowledge respectful interactions among students.

**Indicators:**
- Respectful talk and turn taking
- Respect for students’ background and life outside the classroom
- Teacher and student body language
- Physical proximity
- Warmth and caring
- Politeness
- Encouragement
- Active listening
- Fairness
2b Establishing a Culture for Learning

A “culture for learning” refers to the atmosphere in the classroom that reflects the educational importance of the work undertaken by both students and teacher. It describes the norms that govern the interactions among individuals about the activities and assignments, the value of hard work and perseverance, and the general tone of the class. The classroom is characterized by high cognitive energy and by a sense that what is happening there is important and that it is essential to get it right. There are high expectations for all students. The classroom is a place where the teacher and students value learning and hard work. Elements of component 2b:

Importance of the content and of learning
In a classroom with a strong culture for learning, teachers convey the educational value of what the students are learning.

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

Student pride in work
When students are convinced of their capabilities, they are willing to devote energy to the task at hand, and they take pride in their accomplishments. This pride is reflected in their interactions with classmates and with the teacher.

Indicators:
• Belief in the value of the work
• High expectations, supported through both verbal and nonverbal behaviors
• Expectation and recognition of quality
• Expectation and recognition of effort and persistence
• Confidence in students’ ability evident in teacher’s and students’ language and behaviors
• Expectation for all students to participate
2c Managing Classroom Procedures

A smoothly functioning classroom is a prerequisite to good instruction and high levels of student engagement. Teachers establish and monitor routines and procedures for the smooth operation of the classroom and the efficient use of time. Hallmarks of a well-managed classroom are that instructional groups are used effectively, noninstructional tasks are completed efficiently, and transitions between activities and management of materials and supplies are skillfully done in order to maintain momentum and maximize instructional time. The establishment of efficient routines, and success in teaching students to employ them, may be inferred from the sense that the class “runs itself.” Elements of component 2c:

Management of instructional groups
Teachers help students to develop the skills to work purposefully and cooperatively in groups, with little supervision from the teacher.

Management of transitions
Many lessons engage students in different types of activities—large-group, small-group, independent work. Little time should be lost as students move from one activity to another; students know the “drill” and execute it seamlessly.

Management of materials and supplies
Experienced teachers have all necessary materials at hand and have taught students to implement routines for distribution and collection of materials with a minimum of disruption to the flow of instruction.

Performance of non-instructional duties
Overall, little instructional time is lost in activities such as taking attendance, recording the lunch count, or the return of permission slips for a class trip.

Indicators:
• Smooth functioning of all routines
• Little or no loss of instructional time
• Students playing an important role in carrying out the routines
• Students knowing what to do, where to move
2d Managing Student Behavior

In order for students to be able to engage deeply with content, the classroom environment must be orderly; the atmosphere must feel businesslike and productive, without being authoritarian. In a productive classroom, standards of conduct are clear to students; they know what they are permitted to do and what they can expect of their classmates. Even when their behavior is being corrected, students feel respected; their dignity is not undermined. Skilled teachers regard positive student behavior not as an end in itself, but as a prerequisite to high levels of engagement in content. Elements of component 2d:

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

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

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

Indicators:
• Clear standards of conduct, possibly posted, and possibly referred to during a lesson
• Absence of acrimony between teacher and students concerning behavior
• Teacher awareness of student conduct
• Preventive action when needed by the teacher
• Fairness
• Absence of misbehavior
• Reinforcement of positive behavior
2e Organizing Physical Space

The use of the physical environment to promote student learning is a hallmark of an experienced teacher. Its use varies, of course, with the age of the students: in a primary classroom, centers and reading corners may structure class activities, while with older students, the position of chairs and desks can facilitate, or inhibit, rich discussion. Naturally, classrooms must be safe (no dangling wires or dangerous traffic patterns), and all students must be able to see and hear what’s going on so they can participate actively. Both the teacher and students make effective use of computer (and other) technology. Elements of component 2e:

Safety and accessibility
Physical safety is a primary consideration of all teachers; no learning can occur if students are unsafe or if they don’t have access to the board or other learning resources.

Arrangement of furniture and use of physical resources
Both the physical arrangement of a classroom and the available resources provide opportunities for teachers to advance learning; when these are skillfully used, students can engage with the content in a productive manner. At the highest levels of performance, the students themselves contribute to the physical environment.

Indicators:
• Pleasant, inviting atmosphere
• Safe environment
• Accessibility for all students
• Furniture arrangement suitable for the learning activities
• Effective use of physical resources, including computer technology, by both teacher and students
The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument

DOMAIN 3
Instruction
3a Communicating with Students

Teachers communicate with students for several independent, but related, purposes. First, they convey that teaching and learning are purposeful activities; they make that purpose clear to students. They also provide clear directions for classroom activities, so that students know what it is that they are to do. When teachers present concepts and information, those presentations are made with accuracy, clarity, and imagination; when expanding upon the topic is appropriate to the lesson, skilled teachers embellish their explanations with analogies or metaphors, linking them to students’ interests and prior knowledge. Teachers occasionally withhold information from students (for example in an inquiry-based science lesson) to encourage them to think on their own, but what information they do convey is accurate and reflects deep understanding. And the teacher’s use of language is vivid, rich, and error free, affording the opportunity for students to hear language well used and to extend their own vocabularies. Teacher presents complex concepts in ways that provide scaffolding and access to students. Elements of component 3a:

Expectations for learning
The goals for learning are communicated clearly to students. Even if goals are not conveyed at the outset of a lesson (for example, an inquiry-based lesson in science), by the end of the lesson students are clear about what they have been learning.

Directions and procedures
Students are clear about what they are expected to do during a lesson, particularly if they are working independently or with classmates, without direct teacher supervision. The directions for the lesson activities may be provided orally, in writing, or in some combination of the two.

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

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

Indicators:
• Clarity of the purpose of the lesson
• Clear directions and procedures specific to the lesson activities
• Absence of content errors and clear explanations of concepts
• Students comprehension of content
• Correct and imaginative use of language
3b Questioning and Discussion Techniques

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

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

In order for students to formulate high-level questions, they must have learned how to do so. Therefore, high-level questions from students, either in the full class, or in small group discussions, provide evidence that these skills have been taught. Elements of component 3b:

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

Discussion techniques
Effective teachers promote learning through discussion. Some teachers report, “We discussed x” when what they mean is “I said x.” That is, some teachers confuse discussion with explanation of content; as important as that is, it’s not discussion. Rather, in a true discussion, a teacher poses a question and invites all students’ views to be heard, enabling students to engage in discussion directly with one another, not always mediated by the teacher.

Student participation
In some classes a few students tend to dominate the discussion; other students, recognizing this pattern, hold back their contributions. Teacher uses a range of techniques to ensure that all students contribute to the discussion and enlists the assistance of students to ensure this outcome.

Indicators:
- Questions of high cognitive challenge, formulated by both students and teacher
- Questions with multiple correct answers, or multiple approaches even when there is a single correct response
- Effective use of student responses and ideas
- Discussion in which the teacher steps out of the central, mediating role
- High levels of student participation in discussion
3c Engaging Students in Learning

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

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

In observing a lesson it is essential not only to watch the teacher but also to pay close attention to the students and what they are doing. The best evidence for student engagement is what students are saying and doing as a consequence of what the teacher does, or has done, or has planned. Elements of component 3c:

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

Grouping of students
How students are grouped for instruction is one of the many decisions teachers make every day. There are many options: students of similar background and skill may be clustered together, or the more advanced students may be spread around into the different groups. Alternatively, a teacher might permit students to select their own groups or to form them randomly.

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

Structure and pacing
No one, whether adults or students, likes to be either bored or rushed in completing a task. Keeping things moving, within a well-defined structure, is one of the marks of an experienced teacher. And since much of students’ learning results from their reflection on what they have done, a well-designed lesson includes time for reflection and closure.

Indicators:
• Activities aligned with the goals of the lesson
• Student enthusiasm, interest, thinking, problem-solving, etc.
• Learning tasks that require high-level student thinking and are aligned with lesson objectives
• Students highly motivated to work on all tasks and persistent even when the tasks are challenging
• Students actively “working,” rather than watching while their teacher “works”
• Suitable pacing of the lesson: neither dragging nor rushed, with time for closure and student reflection
3d Using Assessment in Instruction

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

Of course, a teacher’s monitoring of student learning, though the action may superficially appear to be the same as that of monitoring student behavior, has a fundamentally different purpose in each case. When teachers are monitoring behavior, they are alert to students who may be passing notes, or bothering their neighbors; when teachers are monitoring student learning, they look carefully at what students are writing, or listen carefully to the questions students ask, in order to gauge whether they require additional activity or explanation in order to grasp the content. In each case, the teacher may be circulating in the room, but his/her purpose in doing so is quite different in the two situations.

Similarly, on the surface, questions asked of students for the purpose of monitoring learning are fundamentally different from those used to build understanding; in the former, teachers are alert to students’ revealed misconceptions, whereas in the latter the questions are designed to explore relationships or deepen understanding. For the purpose of monitoring, many teachers create questions specifically to determine the extent of student understanding and use techniques (such as exit tickets) to ascertain the degree of understanding of every student in the class. Indeed, encouraging students (and actually teaching them the necessary skills) of monitoring their own learning against clear standards is demonstrated by teachers at high levels of performance. In this component. Elements of component 3d:

Assessment criteria
It is essential that students know the criteria for assessment. At its highest level, students themselves have had a hand in articulating the criteria for, for example, a clear oral presentation.

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

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

Student self-assessment and monitoring of progress
The culmination of students’ assuming responsibility for their learning is when they monitor their own learning and take appropriate action. Of course, they can do these things only if the criteria for learning are clear and they have been taught the skills of checking their work against clear criteria.

Indicators:
• Teacher paying close attention to evidence of student understanding
• Teacher posing specifically created questions to elicit evidence of student understanding
• Teacher circulating to monitor student learning and to offer feedback
• Students assessing their own work against established criteria
3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

“Flexibility and responsiveness” refers to a teacher’s skill in making adjustments in a lesson to respond to changing conditions. When a lesson is well planned, there may be no need for changes during the course of the lesson itself. Shifting the approach in midstream is not always necessary; in fact, with experience comes skill in accurately predicting how a lesson will go and readiness for different possible scenarios. But even the most-skilled and best-prepared teachers will on occasion find that either a lesson is not going as they would like or that a teachable moment has presented itself. They are ready to respond to such situations. Furthermore, teachers who are committed to the learning of all students persist in their attempts to engage each student in learning, even when confronted with initial setbacks. Elements of component 3e:

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

Response to students
Occasionally during a lesson an unexpected event will occur which presents a true teachable moment. It is a mark of considerable teacher skill to be able to capitalize on such opportunities.

Persistence
Committed teachers don’t give up easily; when students encounter difficulty in learning (which all do at some point) these teachers seek alternate approaches to help their students be successful. In these efforts, teachers display a keen sense of efficacy.

Indicators:
- Incorporation of student interests and events of the day into a lesson
- Visible adjustment in the face of student lack of understanding
- Teacher seizing on a teachable moment
The Framework for Teaching Evaluation Instrument

DOMAIN 4
Professional Responsibilities
4a Reflecting on Teaching

Reflecting on teaching encompasses the teacher’s thinking that follows any instructional event—an analysis of the many decisions made both in planning and implementation of a lesson. By considering these elements in light of the impact they had on student learning, teachers can determine where to focus their efforts in making revisions and what aspects of the instruction they will continue in future lessons. Teachers may reflect on their practice through collegial conversations, journal writing, examining student work, informal observations and conversations with students, or simply thinking about their teaching. Reflecting with accuracy, specificity, and ability to use what has been learned in future teaching is a learned skill; mentors, coaches, and supervisors can help teachers acquire and develop the skill of reflecting on teaching through supportive and deep questioning. Over time, this way of thinking and analyzing instruction through the lens of student learning becomes a habit of mind, leading to improvement in teaching and learning. Elements of component 4a:

Accuracy
As teachers gain experience, their reflections on practice become more accurate, corresponding to the assessments that would be given by an external and unbiased observer. Not only are the reflections accurate, but teachers can provide specific examples from the lesson to support their judgments.

Use in future teaching
In order for the potential of reflection to improve teaching to be fully realized, teachers must use their reflections to make adjustments in their practice. As their experience and expertise increases, teachers draw on an ever-increasing repertoire of strategies to inform these plans.

Indicators:
• Accurate reflections on a lesson
• Citations of adjustments to practice, drawing on a repertoire of strategies
4b Maintaining Accurate Records

An essential responsibility of professional educators is keeping accurate records of both instructional and noninstructional events. This record keeping includes student completion of assignments, student progress in learning, and records of noninstructional activities that are part of the day-to-day functions in a school setting, including such things as the return of signed permission slips for a field trip and money for school pictures. Proficiency in this component is vital, because these records inform interactions with students and parents and allow teachers to monitor learning and adjust instruction accordingly. The methods of keeping records vary as much as the type of information that is being recorded. For example, records of formal assessments may be recorded electronically with the use of spreadsheets and databases, that allow for item analysis and individualized instruction. A less formal means of keeping track of student progress may include anecdotal notes that are kept in student folders. Elements of component 4b:

Student completion of assignments
Most teachers, particularly at the secondary level, need to keep track of student completion of assignments, including not only whether the assignments were actually completed, but students’ success in completing them.

Student progress in learning
In order to plan instruction, teachers need to know where each student “is” in his or her learning. This information may be collected formally or informally, but must be updated frequently.

Non-instructional records
Non-instructional records encompass all the details of school life for which records must be maintained, particularly if they involve money. Examples are such things as knowing which students have returned their permissions slips for a field trip, or which students have paid for their school pictures.

Indicators:
• Routines and systems that track student completion of assignments
• Systems of information regarding student progress against instructional outcomes
• Processes of maintaining accurate noninstructional records
4c Communicating with Families

Although the ability of families to participate in their child’s learning varies widely due to other family or job obligations, it is the responsibility of teachers to provide opportunities for them to both understand the instructional program and their child’s progress. Teachers establish relationships with families by communicating to them about both the instructional program and about individual students, and they invite families to be part of the educational process itself. The level of family participation and involvement tends to be greater at the elementary level, when young children are just beginning school. However, the importance of regular communication with families of adolescents cannot be overstated. A teacher’s effort to communicate with families conveys an essential caring on the part of the teacher, a quality valued by families of students of all ages. Elements of component 4c:

Information about the instructional program
Frequent information is provided to families, as appropriate, about the instructional program.

Information about individual students
Frequent information is provided to families, as appropriate, about students’ individual progress.

Engagement of families in the instructional program
Successful and frequent engagement opportunities are offered to families so that they can participate in the learning activities.

Indicators:
• Frequent and culturally appropriate information sent home regarding the instructional program and student progress
• Two-way communication between the teacher and families
• Frequent opportunities for families to engage in the learning process
4d Participating in a Professional Community

Schools are, first of all, environments to promote the learning of students. But in promoting student learning, teachers must work with their colleagues to share strategies, plan joint efforts, and plan for the success of individual students. Schools are, in other words, professional organizations for teachers—organizations whose full potential is realized only when teachers regard themselves as members of a professional community. This community is characterized by mutual support and respect and 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. Inevitably, teachers’ duties extend beyond the doors of their classrooms and include activities related to the entire school and/or larger district. These activities include such things as school and district curriculum committees or engagement with the parent-teacher organization. With experience, teachers assume leadership roles in these activities. Elements of component 4d:

Relationships with colleagues
Teachers maintain a professional collegial relationship that encourages sharing, planning and working together toward improved instructional skill and student success.

Involvement in a culture of professional inquiry
Teachers contribute to and participate in a learning community that supports and respects its members’ efforts to improve practice.

Service to the school
Teachers’ efforts move beyond classroom duties by to contributing to school initiatives and projects.

Participation in school and district projects
Teachers contribute to and support larger school and district projects designed to improve the professional community.

Indicators:
• Regular teacher participation with colleagues to share and plan for student success
• Regular teacher participation in professional courses or communities that emphasize improving practice
• Regular teacher participation in school initiatives
• Regular teacher participation and support of community initiatives
**4e Growing and Developing Professionally**

As in other professions, the complexity of teaching requires continued growth and development in order to remain current. Conscientiousness about continuing to stay informed and increasing their skills allows teachers to become ever more effective and to exercise leadership among their colleagues. The academic disciplines themselves evolve, and educators constantly refine their understanding of how to engage students in learning; thus growth in content, pedagogy, and information technology are essential to good teaching. Networking with colleagues through such activities as joint planning, study groups, and lesson study provides opportunities for teachers to learn from one another. These activities allow for job-embedded professional development. In addition, professional educators increase their effectiveness in the classroom by belonging to professional organizations, reading professional journals, attending educational conferences, and taking university classes. As they gain experience and expertise, educators find ways to contribute to their colleagues and to the profession. Elements of component 4e:

**Enhancement of content knowledge and pedagogical skill**
Teachers remain current by taking courses, reading professional literature, and remaining current on the evolution of thinking regarding instruction.

**Receptivity to feedback from colleagues**
Teachers actively pursue networks that provide collegial support and feedback.

**Service to the profession**
Teachers are active in professional organizations so that they can continually improve their personal practice and provide leadership and support to colleagues.

Indicators:
- Frequent teacher attendance in courses and workshops; regular academic reading
- Participation in learning networks with colleagues; regular sharing of feedback
- Participation in professional organizations supporting academic inquiry
4f Showing Professionalism

Expert teachers demonstrate professionalism in service both to students and to the profession. Teaching at the highest levels of performance in this component is student focused, putting students first, regardless of how this sense of priority might challenge long-held assumptions, past practices, or simply what is easier or more convenient for teachers. Accomplished teachers have a strong moral compass and are guided by what is in the best interest of students. Such educators display professionalism in a number of ways. For example, they conduct their interactions with colleagues with honesty and integrity. They know their students’ needs and seek out resources in order to step in and provide help that may extend beyond the classroom. Teachers advocate for their students in ways that might challenge traditional views and the educational establishment, seeking greater flexibility in the ways school rules and policies are applied. These dedicated educators also display their professionalism in the ways they approach problem solving and decision making, with student needs in mind. Finally, teachers consistently adhere to school and district policies and procedures but are willing to work to improve those that may be outdated or ineffective. Elements of component 4f:

Integrity and ethical conduct
Teachers act with integrity and honesty.

Service to students
Teachers put students first in all considerations of their practice.

Advocacy
Teachers support their students’ best interests, even in the face of traditional practice or beliefs.

Decision making
Teachers solve problems with students’ needs as a priority.

Compliance with school and district regulations
Teachers adhere to policies and procedures.

Indicators:
- Teacher having a reputation as someone who can be trusted and often being sought as a sounding board
- Teacher frequently reminding participants during committee or planning work that students are the highest priority
- Teacher supporting students, even in the face of difficult situations or conflicting policies
- Teacher challenging existing practice in order to put students first
- Teacher consistently fulfilling school district mandates regarding policies and procedures