Learning-focused Supervision:
Assessing and Developing Professional Practice
Using the Framework for Teaching

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Our conversations invent us. Through our speech and our silence, we become smaller or larger selves. Through our speech and our silence, we diminish or enhance the other person, and we narrow or expand the possibilities between us. How we use our voice determines the quality of our relationships, who we are in the world, and what the world can be and might become. Clearly, a lot is at stake here.

-Harriet Lerner, The Dance of Connection
Teaching is a complex act. Clearly understood and agreed upon evaluative criteria describing aspects of this skill set enable supervisors to provide specific feedback to teachers and to set the stage for goal-setting. Standards with a rating scale describing levels of effectiveness allows for gap analysis and ultimately independent self-assessment on the part of teachers regarding their performance.

The more actively engaged a teacher is in the evaluation process, the more learning will occur and the greater commitment to that learning.

Clear standards and rating scales allow for teacher gap analysis and goal setting, based on need and interest. This process requires conversations between the supervisor and teacher that are growth-oriented, developmental and learning-focused. The Framework for Teaching provides the “what” to talk about; Learning-focused Supervision offers the “how” to have these dialogues.
Assumptions Informing Learning-focused Supervision

In a learning-focused supervisory process, high quality, data-driven feedback stimulates teachers’ thinking about their work. To support the professional growth of teachers, learning-focused supervisors apply standards and structures for guiding their interactions with staff members. These patterns and practices operate in the moment and over time to initiate and sustain teacher learning that is guided by student learning needs. This approach is based on the following four assumptions.

1. Teaching is complex and contextual.

Teaching is a complex craft. Skillful teachers manage the social, emotional and academic needs of increasingly diverse student populations. Total classroom awareness requires attention to these three dimensions while simultaneously tracking the lesson plan, content accuracy, use of examples, clarity of explanations and directions and choice of language to match student readiness. These teachers provide relevant and meaningful tasks, attend to momentum and pacing while purposefully monitoring student understanding, making adjustments as needed. And all of this is orchestrated for individual students, small groups and the full class.

All of this work is done in an ever-shifting context inside and outside the classroom. These dynamics include changing politics and policies, shifting societal expectations, breakthroughs in the science of teaching and learning, ever-expanding content knowledge, and new technological tools that increase access to information.

- What are some contextual factors that are influencing your work?

- What are some ways that supervisory practice in your work setting reflects the complexity of teaching?

2. Research-based standards define effective teaching.

Well-articulated standards reflect the complexity of professional practice. These detailed descriptions provide common language and reference points for talking about teaching in a variety of domains. Clear standards organized by levels of performance foster shared agreement between teachers and supervisors about the qualities of effective teaching. A robust body of research clearly demonstrates that highly rated teachers produce high performing students.

Thoughtful and thorough depictions of teacher actions and student behaviors establish the foundation for meaningful conversations about and improvements of instructional practice. High quality, standards-driven feedback establishes growth targets for teachers across the range of teaching skills.

- What are some ways that conversations informed by clear and shared standards influence (or might influence) improvements in teaching practice and student learning?
3. **Supervision is a growth-oriented process.**

Learning-focused supervision is a developmental approach to supporting teacher learning. Like effective teachers, skillful supervisors differentiate their practice to increase expertise and support growth across novice to more expert career stages. This growth-orientation guides in-the-moment choices as supervisors draw from a rich repertoire of strategies to meet teachers’ immediate needs.

Skillful teaching takes years to master. There are always areas for growth. The primary goal of supervision is to increase teachers’ capacity to reflect on their own practice, self-assess, set goals and monitor for continuous improvement.

- *How does this developmental approach to supervision compare with present practices in your work setting?*

4. **The deepest purpose of supervision is to create a culture of learning**

A learning culture in schools makes knowledge public, spreads good ideas and energizes best practices. This reflective and inquiry-driven environment increases shared understanding of effective practice and provides a wide range of perspectives for examining critical issues. Learning-focused supervisory interactions create essential feedback loops that reinforce these values and amplify high expectations for all: students, teachers and supervisors.

Effective instructional leadership matters. Supervisors need to see themselves as learners and to believe in their own capacity and the capacity of others to grow. For supervisors, the ability to structure and facilitate learning-focused conversations lies at the heart of both one-on-one and collective work with teachers.

- *What are some things in your work setting that promote a culture of learning?*

- *What are some things that get in the way?*
Four Stances: The Continuum of Learning-focused Interaction

How supervisors interact with teachers is as important as what they interact about. In learning-focused conversations, accomplished supervisors shift between four stances: calibrating, consulting, collaborating, and coaching to develop teachers’ capacities to reflect upon data, to generate ideas and options, and to increase personal and professional awareness and skill. Versatility across this continuum of interaction supports supervisory practices that are developmentally and contextually appropriate for serving the learning needs of teachers across a range of skill and experience. The ultimate aim of each of these stances and their cumulative effect is to support continuous learning on the part of teachers and to enhance their capacity to engage in productive collegial relationships.

Three attributes ultimately define the supervisory stance in any learning-focused conversation. One defining trait is the way that information emerges during the interaction. The second defining trait is the source of problem definition and gap analysis related to differences between planned goals and actual results, or learning standards and student performance. The third defining trait is the source of goals for teacher growth.

Learning-focused Supervision: The Continuum of Interaction

Three Supervisory Capacities: Fluency, Flexibility and Fluidity

The skillful learning-focused supervisor draws upon three important capacities when navigating the continuum; fluency, flexibility, fluidity.

Fluency of interaction: Fluent supervisors recognize that they have choices in their approach to supervisory conversations. They are clear about the definition and purpose of each of the four stances and are able to operate across them, with a repertoire of strategies for each.

Flexibility of interaction: Flexible supervisors understand that different individuals and different contexts require different approaches. These supervisors have internalized criteria for choosing a given stance in a given situation and are able to be responsive to the teacher’s immediate cognitive and emotional needs while being mindful of the ultimate goal of development over time.

Fluidity of interaction: Fluid supervisors are able to skillfully apply the continuum, seamlessly shifting stances as needed. They attend to both verbal and nonverbal cues from colleagues; listening and responding strategically. These supervisors have a level of automaticity that supports their ability to attend and respond to complexities and nuances, drawing upon a wide repertoire of knowledge and skill to make the match that produces the most learning in the moment.

There is a sequence to the development of these capacities as they build upon one another. Fluent supervisors become flexible as they expand their skill sets to include differentiated practice and the ability to monitor goals for teachers’ development over time. As their integrated skill set becomes more sophisticated and nuanced, flexible supervisors can pay attention and construct responses with increased fluidity.
The Four Stances

In professional conversations, supervisors apply standards and communicate expectations as they support teachers in using data to determine performance gaps and establish goals for improving practice. Learning-focused supervisors operate across a continuum of interaction to accomplish these responsibilities.

In each stance, the approach to these functions differs, as does the internal question supervisors consider when determining which stance to apply.

Calibrating

In the calibrating stance, the guiding question is, “What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?”

In a learning-focused supervisory relationship, the calibrating stance is the stance of evaluation. Based on a variety of data sources, the supervisor determines a level of performance and organizes the data and the conversation to inform and discuss this rating with the teacher. It is the part of the conversation when the supervisor presents and explains his or her thinking about the teacher’s level of performance. In the most extreme cases, the calibrating stance becomes the dominant stance in the conversation, with the greater percentage of time spent there. Some triggers for this choice include: teaching behaviors that create an unsafe or harmful environment physically or emotionally, teacher responses that are inappropriate, classroom management that is non-existent, student performance that is consistently below expectations and instructional planning and delivery that is ineffective.

Verb to calibrate means an active process of matching an object or performance to an agreed upon value. Simplistically, that value might be a shoe size or the diameter of a section of tubing. In contemporary educational discourse such values are expressed as standards. Important standards include creating a learning environment of respect and rapport, managing classroom procedures and student behaviors, communicating effectively with students, parents and colleagues, engaging students in meaningful learning and demonstrating flexibility and responsiveness based on assessment of student performance.

To operate with integrity within a calibrating stance the conversation must be driven by data. These data are used to identify gaps between expected standards and the present results, and/or to reinforce and illuminate effective practices. Clearly articulating the standards and accessing available resource materials, learning-focused supervisors define and illuminate problems. They present models and examples of such standards in action that are content and grade level specific and explicitly name expectations. In planning for action, skillful supervisors determine achievable goals, success criteria and timelines for completion.

In most cases, the calibrating stance then leads to a rich conversation, shifting among the other stances. When used with chronically low-performing teachers or teachers who appear not to be “getting it,” this stance is the most prescriptive of the four. Follow-up and follow through on the part of the supervisor are vital to ensure standards are being interpreted appropriately, performance targets are clear and student progress is occurring. Taking this stance may be necessary when other approaches are not producing the evidence of the transfer of the teacher’s learning into improved classroom practices that produce positive changes in student actions and outcomes.

Cautions

For each stance there are potential pitfalls. In the calibrating stance, it is easy for our personal preferences to become prescriptions. It is critical then, that any judgments are data based and standards driven, supported by clear, external criteria and evidence.

Avoid subjectivity or bias by using literal observation notes, specific classroom artifacts and assessment data. Supervisors’ inferences or interpretations can increase the teachers’ potential perceptions of personal attack.
Calibrating

Principal Robinson has conducted two informal walkthroughs and a classroom observation of Mr. Miller’s fourth grade class. In each case, two-thirds of Mr. Miller’s students are out of their seats for much of the instructional period. Mr. Miller sits behind his desk and shouts at them to settle down. After 15 minutes, when they do take their seats, only a handful of students follow directions and participate in the lesson. Mr. Miller’s questions require only factual recall, and are rapid-fire with no wait time.

Based on these classroom visits, Principal Robinson organizes her observation data and prepares for a calibrating conversation. When she joins Mr. Miller, she begins:

“Given my observations of your classroom, there are two key areas that need to be addressed at this time: the first is managing classroom procedures and the second is questioning and discussion techniques. I’ve observed your classroom on three separate occasions and as these data indicate there are clear patterns that students are inattentive, there seem to be no clear procedures or effective interventions.”

(She refers to the time-coded script of the teacher’s language and the students’ actions).

“At this point in the year, students should be clear about behavioral expectations. Specific procedures need to be in place, and your students should understand consequences for violating them. Transitions from one subject to the next should be smooth and take no longer than two minutes, with students in their seats with materials ready.”

[Principal Robinson shifts to consultation and elaborates a menu of strategies for addressing these concerns, then directs Mr. Miller to choose one, or several for his action plan].

“The second area for improvement relates to questioning and discussion techniques. The scripted data indicate only recall questions with one second or less for students to respond. You answered eight of the fourteen questions yourself. Further, there were no strategies for distributed student response, such as signals, partners or choral response.”

(Again, she makes the data available to Mr. Miller)

“Effective questions require learners to think and reflect, to deepen their understanding, to support their answers with evidence and to test their ideas against those of their classmates. To construct thoughtful responses to these questions, students need at least three-five seconds of wait time. She refers to the data, drawing his attention to the observation notes. “Right here, for example, was an opportunity to ask Rachel for elaboration. And here, students might have signaled agree or disagree.”

The conversation continues as Principal Robinson names specific goals, identifies necessary next steps and establishes a timeline for achievement.

Consulting

In the consulting stance, the guiding question is, “What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?”

Based on the teacher’s responses to initial inquiries, the supervisor recognizes gaps in content knowledge, student knowledge, or instructional repertoire. In some cases the teacher’s problem frame is narrow, or potentially inaccurate or the range of strategies is limited. As a result, the supervisor shifts to the consulting stance.

**Supervisory Functions**

From the consulting stance, the supervisor clarifies standards by offering context specific examples to ensure that the teacher understands expectations. The consulting supervisor offers perspectives on present concerns, by naming possible causes and possible approaches to improve performance. Beyond this gap analysis, a thoughtful supervisor also shares essential information about learning and learners and curriculum and content as they relate to existing issues, principles of practice, connections to expected performance standards and relevant craft knowledge. By offering, “Here’s what you should pay attention to” and “Here’s why that matters” and “Here are some options,” learning-focused supervisors make their thinking transparent. As teachers internalize principles of learning and teaching, these understandings become resources for more generating their own approaches and solutions.
Ms. Brighton, a second year teacher, has been reviewing the observation notes provided by her principal, Mr. Grayson, in anticipation of their reflecting conversation. He recently observed a seventh grade math lesson.

The data indicate that a third of the student responses to the practice problems at the end of the lesson were incomplete or incorrect. Mr. Grayson begins from a coaching stance, citing the data and asking, “What’s your sense of what was happening for the students who were not successful?” Ms. Brighton considers this and suggests that these students may have been inattentive or confused during her explanations of the necessary math concepts.

Continuing from a coaching stance, Mr. Grayson inquires about formative assessment, and realizes that Ms. Brighton has limited repertoire in checking for students’ understanding as a lesson progresses. As a result, there is little modification of instruction during her teaching. He decides to shift to a consulting stance.

Consulting

“It is likely that your less successful students were confused early on. Consistently monitoring for student engagement and comprehension ensures that students have a good grasp of the building blocks before moving on. This practice is key to their learning success. One way you might do this is to pause and have students explain a key point to a partner and then randomly select several pairs to report. This pattern of pause, partner and survey increases your FRQ¿GHQFHDQGWKHLUVWKDWWKHIXQGDPHQWDOVDUHLQSODFH as you continue or, if they are not, it allows you to modify your instruction to address any confusion before moving ahead. As we review plans for upcoming lessons, please think about and indicate some pause points for applying this pattern.”

Ending the conversation from a coaching stance, Mr. Grayson asks Ms. Brighton to clarify her understanding and confirm next steps.

Collaborating

In the collaborating stance the guiding question is, “What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher’s experiences and expertise?”

The collaborative stance creates a shared platform for the co-construction of knowledge. In this stance, either participant can offer ideas, solutions, analysis, and so on. In many cases the learning-focused supervisor shifts to a collaborative stance to increase the teacher’s confidence in his or her own ability to analyze data, frame problems, develop strategies. Much like the gradual release concept in classroom practice, it works towards greater ownership of the information and actions generated.

In this stance, the supervisor provides support for idea generation balanced with respect for the teacher’s ability to generate ideas and solutions. A rich, inquiry-driven collaboration creates permission for the supervisor to add ideas and perspectives without dominating the conversation.
Supervisory Functions
From the collaborative stance, the supervisor and teacher jointly clarify standards to ensure shared understanding. Together, they use data to analyze gaps between expectations and current practice. In partnership, they analyze problems, generate potential causal theories, develop ideas and produce strategies for action. Shared perspectives lead to greater insights for both teacher and supervisor.

Each stance is in large part defined by which participant in the conversation is producing the information and/or analysis at a given moment. The collaborative stance has the widest range of participation. In this stance, both parties are contributing, however, the supervisor might lean more towards consulting by suggesting criteria or offering a principle of practice upon which to base the ideas. Or the supervisor might lead with a completely open-ended inquiry which leans more towards coaching.

Cautions
To collaborate with integrity, supervisors need to resist their own impulses to dominate and provide the bulk of the analysis and thinking. It is important to purposefully invite and create a space for teacher contributions. Pausing to allow the teacher time to think and prompting and encouraging idea production communicates a belief in their personal and professional capacities.

Learning-focused supervisors need to be especially careful to monitor for balance in the collaborative stance. Personal enthusiasm and interest in a topic, or a strong preference for a specific solution may override the intention to co-create ideas and actions. False collaboration then becomes disguised consultation or tacit calibration.

Collaborating
Mr. Ruiz always looks forward to a lively engagement with Mr. Mathers after observing his tenth grade English class. Given the new curriculum, Mr. Mathers and his department colleagues are exploring strategies for increasing students’ skill in assessing and revising their own written work. For this conversation, the principal and teacher each have a copy of the collected observational data as well as student writing samples to focus their reflection.

The unit objectives included students’ ability to articulate, in writing, a persuasive argument supported by text-based evidence. During his observation, Mr. Ruiz noted students working as peer editors with the writing rubric between them, comparing their completed work to the standard. Mr. Mathers started the lesson with a review of the rubric and directed the students to use it to assess their essays. He rotated among the working groups during the class time. At the end of the period, he collected the edited work.

Mr. Ruiz begins the reflection from a coaching stance. Early in the conversation, he inquires about Mr. Mathers’ impressions of the collected student work. Mr. Mathers shares that the work was inconsistent and only a third of the students were able to clearly connect their own writing to a point on the rubric and use the standards to revise their work. As this was a new approach, he is not surprised by these results, but would like to figure out how to improve them and is uncertain about what specifically might have caused the lack of success.

Shifting to a collaborative stance, Mr. Ruiz suggests that they generate some potential causal factors. Based on their shared analyses, the list includes: poor choice of topic for this class, general gaps in written expression, lack of inferential reasoning skills, inability to incorporate text-based evidence, and a lack of clarity about the rubric itself.

Mr. Mathers considers this list, eliminating the skill-based causes based on his students’ generally successful performance on previous written assignments. He determines that the most likely cause involves use of the rubric and peer editing as a learning approach, especially since both of these practices are new to him and his class.

As a result, Mr. Mathers proposes that his students could use more models of both the rubric and of strategies for peer editing. He decides to design a whole class lesson demonstrating editing and revision using the rubric. Mr. Ruiz chimes in with thoughts about guided practice using specific language that tenth graders might use so they feel confident correcting their peers.

Mr. Ruiz suggests, “Let’s think about ways to monitor for students’ success. What will you look for to know that this approach is working?” They continue generating ideas.

Concluding the conversation from a coaching stance, Mr. Ruiz asks, “What are some specific next steps you’re taking away from this conversation?”
Coaching

In the coaching stance the guiding question is, “What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?”

The coaching stance assumes that the teacher has the resources necessary to engage in data-centered reflection on practice and modify and manage personal learning. Operating from this stance conveys the supervisor’s respect for the teacher’s expertise and potential regarding these capacities.

Supervisory Functions

In the coaching stance, the supervisor references teaching and learning standards and a variety of data as focal points for the conversation. The supervisor inquires into the teacher’s thinking about each of these resources as they relate to existing issues. In this stance, the teacher is the primary source of problem frames, gap analysis, potential solutions and strategies. Through an inquiry process, the supervisor’s role is to enhance teacher’s capacities for planning, reflecting, problem solving and decision-making. The coaching stance is one of inquiry. This means that there are multiple appropriate responses, and that the supervisor has not predetermined a correct answer.

In the coaching stance, the supervisor supports both idea production and the exploration of the “whys” and “hows” of choices, possibilities, and connections. This nonjudgmental approach applied over time, enlarges the frame, developing the teacher’s ever-increasing capacity for expert thinking and practice. The ultimate aim of the coaching stance is to develop a teacher’s internal resources for self-coaching so that with time and practice, an increasingly sophisticated inner voice guides professional self-talk. In planning for action, supervisor questions guide the teacher’s exploration of goals, success criteria and reasonable timelines for action.

Cautions

In a coaching stance, supervisors reduce potential frustration by posing developmentally appropriate questions. These questions should stretch, not strain, thinking. Questions that require more knowledge or experience than is presently available to the teacher create anxiety and feelings of inadequacy. In such cases, it is more effective to offer information from a consultative stance and then shift to a coaching stance to explore that information.

Effective questions should invite teachers’ thinking. The syntax and intonation of these inquiries welcomes multiple possible responses and does not signal that there is a preferred or correct answer. Supervisors should take care that their own preferences don’t influence their listening or direct their questions.

Coaching

With most of her staff, Dr. Salomon applies a coaching stance during post-observation conversations. This upcoming meeting regarding Ms. Mahoney’s sixth grade class should be no exception.

After teaching eighth grade for many years, Ms. Mahoney has moved to sixth grade and is challenged by different developmental issues for these younger students. One of her goals is to establish a culture for learning in which students are highly engaged and self-directed towards high standards of performance.

Dr. Salomon is familiar with Ms. Mahoney’s classroom having visited several times during the first weeks of school. This conversation involves a formal observation of a social studies lesson. She has sent ahead a copy of her observation notes along with some questions to think about. Ms. Mahoney, for her part, has recorded some of her own reflections about the lesson.

Dr. Salomon begins with an analysis question. “The data indicate that there was as much, or even more, student-to-student interaction about the topic as there was between you and the class. How does that compare to what you anticipated?” Ms. Mahoney shares that these basic interaction patterns are becoming more established, but that she’s also focused on the quality of the student engagement. She draws the principal’s attention to some of the student actions indicated in the data. She has already coded the observation notes for instances of peer support and praise and has noticed that of her 28 students, twelve exhibit these behaviors consistently, and many students don’t do them at all.

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Dr. Salomon invites her to explore some causal theories, “What’s your hunch about what might be producing the positive behaviors?”
The conversation continues. Ms. Mahoney thoughtfully considers her practice as she responds to each inquiry.

As a result, Dr. Salomon maintains a coaching stance throughout the conversation.
To conclude, Ms. Mahoney generates several new goals, and shares specific action steps for accomplishing them.

Navigating Strategically

Except for calibrating, stance is not predetermined and best practice suggests both entering the conversation from a coaching stance with an initial inquiry and ending the conversation with an inquiry to clarify next steps. Both supervisors and teachers must be clear that the intention of the supervisory process is to support learning and growth. Without this clarity, a potential “learning moment” might be lost, or the teacher might misinterpret the supervisor's intent.

The calibrating stance is unique in that it focuses on what needs to be learned; that is, it names gaps between present practice and expected standards. This stance does not produce the learning, it names the learning targets for the teacher.

Once learning goals have been established, flexible supervisors navigate strategically across the continuum, choosing the most appropriate stances for promoting a teacher’s growth.
### Learning-focused Supervision: The Continuum of Interaction

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#### Cues
- **Cautions**
  - Preferences become prescriptions.
  - Clear, external criteria.
- **Cues**
  - Liking natural language as in, "I think that..."
  - Using neutral language as in, "This example..."
- **Cues**
  - Clear, specific, and concrete.

#### Functions
- **Supportive**
  - Providing feedback that is clear and specific.
  - Offering encouragement and support.
- **Supervisor**
  - Identifying strengths and growth areas.
  - Offering guidance and feedback.
- **Teacher**
  - Identifying areas for improvement.
  - Setting personal goals.

#### Information, Analysis, Goals
- **Supervisor-driven**
  - Determining success criteria.
  - Delineating teacher actions and goals.
- **Teacher-driven**
  - Meeting the needs and interests of the teacher.
  - Recognizing new possibilities.

#### Collaboration
- **Coaching**
  - Expanding perspectives.
  - Preparing for practice.
- **Consulting**
  - Recognizing new possibilities.
  - Meeting the needs and interests of the teacher.

#### Consulting
- **Supervisor-driven**
  - Offering guidance and feedback.
  - Providing feedback that is clear and specific.
- **Teacher-driven**
  - Identifying areas for improvement.
  - Setting personal goals.

#### Calibrating
- **Supervisor-driven**
  - Identifying strengths and growth areas.
  - Offering encouragement and support.
- **Teacher-driven**
  - Recognizing new possibilities.
  - Meeting the needs and interests of the teacher.

### Supervisor’s Question for the Teacher
What are the gaps/growth areas indicated for this teacher based on present performance levels and the standards?

What information, ideas and technical resources will be most useful to this teacher at this time?

What are some ways to balance my contributions with this teacher's experiences and expertise?

What mental and emotional resources might be most useful for this teacher at this time?
Establishing the Third Point

Skilled supervisors establish a clear focus for the conversation, a third point. In learning-focused supervision, a lesson plan or data and the Framework levels of performance serve as effective third points. The third point shifts the cognitive and emotional energy from the supervisor/teacher relationship to the data. Effective use of a third point includes both verbal and nonverbal elements: a physical shift from face-to-face to eyes on the data; physical reference to the data source with a still hand, or frozen gesture; and neutral pronouns when referring to the data, for example: the observations, these results, this student work.

Learning-focused supervisors facilitate thinking from any stance. Skillful supervisors intentionally guide the teacher’s experience, through questions, highlights and references. Supervisors also use emphasis to clarify their purpose and importance, to sort significant principles or patterns from less significant details, and to create opportunities for their teachers to build and construct understanding.

Imagine, for instance, a supervisor and teacher are exploring post-observation data. They are focusing on Instruction (Domain 3) and reviewing the supervisor’s script of the teacher’s questions. The supervisor offers the following question:

**Supervisor:** “As you look at the script of your questions during this lesson, what are some comparisons you’re making between your choices and the rubric description for Using Questions and Discussion Techniques (3b)?”

**Teacher:** “I noticed that for three of the questions, there was practically no wait time and many of the questions were recall. But, those are the kinds of questions my students can answer.”

At this point, the supervisor might take a consulting stance, sharing some principles of practice related to teacher questions and promoting student thinking, offering a menu of ways to scaffold for greater student success. She might then use a similar pattern exploring other observational data related to Instruction (Domain 3). In this way the teacher has several concrete examples that clarify and calibrate the Framework components, as well as a model for a more sophisticated lens for examining her own practice. As they continue the conversation, the supervisor might then shift to a collaborative stance, suggesting that they brainstorm ideas for challenging student thinking.

Mediating Nonverbally

Physically referencing the third point in a space off to the side between the parties provides a psychologically safe place for information, concerns and problems. This careful use of space and gesture depersonalizes ideas. It is now not the supervisor’s information or problem, the teacher’s information or problem or even ‘our’ information or problem. It is simply information or a problem about which and with which to think. Information placed as a third point frees the teacher to accept, modify or reject the idea as an idea – not connected to personalities.

The use of a third point is especially important in the calibrating and consulting stances. Without this subtle, but critical distancing, the teacher might feel trapped in a web of relationship and have difficulty freely accepting or rejecting an idea, for fear of hurt feelings or repercussion. Thus, placement of the conversational focus creates a triangle, either literally or referentially, keeping the conversational container psychologically safe.

Nonverbal tools, such as posture, gesture and voice tone are all indicators of the stance we are taking. In a calibrating stance, physical and visual focus should be on the third point documents. While referencing the documents with a frozen gesture, speak with
a calm credible voice using neutral language such as “the standard”, “this domain”, “the results” to articulate expectations and performance gaps. The intention is to make standards and performance metrics the authority and not set up a power struggle between supervisor and teacher.

In a consulting stance, the third point information or referential space focuses the conversations on information and ideas and not on the supervisor or the teacher. Here again, the credible voice conveys the tonality of wisdom and experience. At times it may be appropriate to use personal pronouns as in, “Here’s how I’ve learned to think about issues like this.” or, “In my experience is often works best to…” The possible danger is that some teachers upon hearing the personal pronoun will respond to it as a command and not a suggestion. When in doubt use neutral language such as, “Best practices suggest that…” or, “Other teachers with this dilemma have had success with…”

In a collaborating stance supervisor and teacher are operating both physically and metaphorically side-by-side, dividing their attention between the third point information and each other. The supervisor’s voice tone is collegial and approachably confident using inclusive pronouns such as “Let’s think about this…” or, “We might want to start by…” or, “Our next step might be to…”

In a coaching stance, the third point information is a catalyst for idea generation and problem solving by the teacher. There tends to be greater eye contact between the teacher and supervisor who uses a more rhythmic and approachable voice modulation to create a safe space for thought and reflection. The dominant pronoun is “you”, as in “So you’re noticing some patterns in your classroom routines that seem to be working.” or, “What are some ways you’re thinking about increasing student engagement in your next math lesson?”

Skillful supervisors attend to the signals of the teachers with whom they are interacting to determine their choice of learning-focused stance. By attending to the teacher’s verbal and nonverbal behaviors as they generate ideas and respond to inquiries, the aware supervisor can assess the effectiveness of a given stance and know whether and when to move along the continuum.

During Learning-focused Conversations, skillful supervisors attend to:

The depth of content knowledge and pedagogy:
- How well does the teacher understand the knowledge, skills and concepts being explored by the lesson or unit being considered?
- To what degree does the teacher understand the connections between ideas in the curriculum?
- To what degree does the teacher understand and remember what came before and what follows a specific lesson?

The level of knowledge the teacher has about the students and their learning needs:
- Does the teacher describe the students in terms of their strengths and limitations to learning? Can the teacher articulate how the demographics represented in the class have influenced the planning?
- In what ways has the teacher made planning decisions based on individual students’ learning styles, language abilities, cultural differences, or possible limitations?

The teacher’s ability to select instructional outcomes for short and long-range student learning:
- Do the teacher’s goals depend solely on external sources such as the teachers’ guide, or do they display the teacher’s customization based on knowledge of the students and the content? How thoroughly does the teacher explain how the outcomes were selected?
• Does the teacher state the goals/outcomes in terms of student learning rather than activities?
• Does the teacher articulate both a short-range view of outcomes and long-range targets for problem solving skills and higher-level thinking?
• Does the teacher explain how the lesson connects to other lessons and larger contexts?

The depth of knowledge of a range of resources:
• How does the teacher plan to use the resources provided by the school, and those available through other sources?
• Does the teacher use resources for increasing personal expertise in either the content or pedagogy for this lesson?

What the teacher’s language reveals about the coherent design of the instruction:
• What information does the teacher give about the details and level of sophistication of the intended strategies?
• How extensive and with what degree of nuance does the teacher understand the strategies to be employed?
• Is a given strategy option the only piece of repertoire, or was it selected strategically from a group of choices?
• Does the plan include considerations of appropriate sequencing of learning activities and a balance of learning styles?

The nature of the teacher’s plan for formative and summative assessment:
• How does the teacher intend to determine if the learning goals are met? Is the teacher clear on the success criteria?
• Are the intended assessments congruent with the planned outcomes?
• What are the teacher’s intentions for using the assessment data, either during the lesson, or in future planning?

Versatility Matters

Expert supervision requires a repertoire of knowledge and skills for engaging teachers in productive formal and informal conversations. These professional resources provide the foundation for operating along the Continuum as we interact with colleagues. Having access to one’s repertoire opens up possibilities for successful learning-focused experiences and offers options for consideration when a given approach is not working. Knowing what we know and don’t know helps us to identify gaps in our repertoire so we can consciously expand our own capacities as growth agents.

Versatility matters. In any given conversation, any one of the four stances may be appropriate. By reading the verbal and nonverbal cues of the colleague with whom we are engaged and responding accordingly, we can then flex along the continuum to support learning and growth. This flexibility in stance is the key to successful supervisory relationships. If our goal is to increase teachers’ capacities for self-direction, we need to continually offer opportunities to think, reflect and problem-solve within the flow of the real work of learning to teach. Our ability to continually anticipate, monitor and flex our stance across the Continuum of Interaction is a vital component in developing and maintaining learning-focused supervisory relationships.
Structured Conversations

APPLYING a shared and agreed upon structure to our conversations maximizes time, and also serves to focus attention by providing a scaffold for supporting and challenging thinking within a specified context. For example, when a supervisor and teacher schedule planning or reflecting conversations, structure for guiding the interaction offers topical focus and permission to keep the conversation moving. A structure designed for planning increases rigor by highlighting the cognitive outcomes that support effective planning, such as predicting, envisioning and forecasting. A structure designed for reflection increases rigor by highlighting the cognitive outcomes that support effective reflection, such as recollection, cause-effect reasoning and generalizing. With consistent application, a conversation structure sets expectations for high engagement, complex thinking and no suprises or "gotchas".

The conversation templates on the following pages are samples of efficient guides for purposeful interactions. They are based on fundamental and current theories of learning (see, for example, Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 1999; Marzano, Pickering & Pollack, 2001; Hattie 2009) that suggest the importance of specific intentions within a learning-focused interaction. The general templates are based on the three phases in the Pathways Learning Model (Lipton & Wellman, 2000).

Each phase on the template serves a specific purpose. The Activating and Engaging phase establishes context and frames of reference. It activates prior knowledge and experience, surfacing the orientation and perception of the teacher regarding the topic at hand. It engages relationship, as well as mental and emotional awareness, and sets the scene for a thoughtful, learning-focused conversation. The Exploring and Discovering phase, whether in planning or reflecting, provides an opportunity for examining the details of specific events, making inferences and analyzing experiences; while the Organizing and Integrating phase supports generalizing from these explorations and bringing new learnings forward.

The general template can be tailored for specific purposes. The Planning Template that follows supports effective thinking about lesson and unit design. Its counterpart, the Reflecting Template, is designed to elicit thoughtful reflection and produce transfer from one experience to many. Notice that these templates are designed to direct attention and focus on particular cognitive outcomes. For example, when planning, the supervisor’s paraphrasing and inquiry should cause the planner to predict, envision, and describe. While reflecting, the skillful supervisor guides analysis, cause-effect reasoning and synthesis. Each of these structures guides thinking and produces inferences, hypotheses and new connections.

Flexibility in stance is an integral part of applying the conversation templates on the pages that follow. While the questions are framed from a coaching stance, learning-focused supervisors shift stances to support the teacher in producing the information and thinking processes within each phase of the template. For example, from a calibrating stance within a planning conversation, the approach might include naming specific lesson goals linked to standards drawn from the content area of that lesson and naming explicit success criteria. Within a consulting stance, the supervisor might offer a menu of possible goals from which the teacher can choose, modify or adapt. As a consultant, the supervisor might also offer some possible success indicators for those goals. In a reflecting conversation, the supervisor might encourage a collaborative stance and join the teacher in brainstorming a list of possible cause-effect connections between what occurred and the approaches and actions upon which the teacher is reflecting.
## ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING (1a, 1b)

### CONTEXT
- What are some things about your students’ readiness (social skills, routines, self-management) that are influencing your lesson (unit) design?
- What are some of the skills/knowledge students will need to bring to this lesson (unit) to be successful?

### PRESENTING ISSUES
- What are some special areas/student needs you will need to address?
- What are some issues you anticipate might influence student learning?

## EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

### GOALS AND OUTCOMES (1c)
- As you think about what you know about your students, and the content, what are some key learning goals?
- What are some ways that these goals integrate with other content learning?
- What are some thinking skills students will need to apply?

### INDICATORS OF SUCCESS (1f)
- Given these goals, what are some things you expect to see/hear as students are achieving them?
- Given these goals, how will you monitor student learning?
- What kinds of assessments will you use to determine student success?

### APPROACHES, STRATEGIES AND RESOURCES (1d, 1e)
- What are some strategies you’re planning that will both challenge students and support their success?
- What are some ways you’ll ensure high engagement for all students?
- What are some resources or materials you/your students will need to support and extend student learning?

### POTENTIAL CHOICE POINTS AND CONCERNS (1e, 1f)
- As you anticipate teaching the lesson, what are some points where students might struggle?
- What are some options for supporting struggling students and enriching those who need greater challenge?
- Should you notice that students’ attention is drifting, what are some possibilities for reengaging them?

## ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

### PERSONAL LEARNING
- What are some ways that this lesson provides opportunities to pursue your own learning goals?
- What new learning/skills will you try or exercise in this lesson?

### NEXT STEPS
- As a result of this conversation, what are some next steps?
Learning-focused Conversations

A Template for Reflecting

ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING

RECOLLECTIONS
- As you reflect on this lesson/unit, what are some things that come to mind?
- Given your recollections, what are some things that captured your attention?

PERSPECTIVES AND PERCEPTIONS
- In this lesson/unit, what was particularly satisfying?
- In this lesson/unit, what were some things that concerned you?

EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

WEIGHING EVIDENCE
- What is some of the evidence that supports your impressions/judgments?
- What are some examples that stand out for you (student responses, work samples, interaction patterns)?

SEARCH FOR PATTERNS
- Given what occurred, how typical are these results?
- What percentage of the time does this (behavior, learning, response pattern . . .) tend to happen?

COMPARE/CONTRAST
- How similar or different is what you anticipated from what occurred?
- How might you compare students who were successful to those who were less so?

ANALYZE CAUSE-EFFECT
- What are some factors that influenced what happened?
- Given (specific success/concern), what’s your hunch about what may have it produced it?

ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

GENERALIZATIONS
- What are some big ideas that you are taking away from this conversation?
- Based on this experience, what are some new connections (about students, curriculum, instruction) that you are making?

APPLICATIONS
- What are some things that you are taking away from this experience that will influence your practice in the future?
- As a result of new learning, what are some goals you’re setting (for yourself, for your students, curriculum, this unit)?
Planning Conversations

Planning conversations offer fundamental learning opportunities for modeling and extending the intellectual habits of goal-driven thinking. Effective teachers set clear goals for their instruction, and identify specific systems for monitoring their achievement. They also generate contingencies should their initial planning prove unsuccessful during implementation. Attention to planning, and understanding the ways in which experts think about their plans, are especially important to the development of novice and low-performing teachers. Applying the template helps internalize important planning questions teachers must consider to produce high achievement for their students. These questions explore key components such as learning outcomes, student learning needs, instructional design and assessment. Doing so with the support of a supervisor increases a teacher’s confidence and capacity for effective, independent instructional planning.

In the Activating and Engaging phase, establishing the context for the lesson or event allows the supervisor and teacher to “get in the room together”, both the immediate space of moment-to-moment rapport and the conceptual space of the teacher’s classroom. Experienced supervisors preserve time for more elaborative thinking in the Exploring and Discovering phase by moving through this first phase as efficiently as possible.

The second phase, Exploring and Discovering, is where the bulk of the time is spent in a typical planning conversation. The four focus arenas are arranged in order of priority. This is especially important to emphasize to novice and low-performing teachers, who tend to spend more of their time designing activities and approaches, and less of their time clarifying goals and success indicators. Reducing activity-driven planning is an important goal for learning-focused supervisors. Teacher thinking is supported and enhanced through questions that reveal their knowledge and application of essential planning and preparation components.

The third phase, Organizing and Integrating, emerges from the general flow of the conversation. The two focus arenas in this phase of the template offer options for extending and solidifying awareness and clarifying next steps. Over time, skillful supervisors note potential stretch arenas for their teachers and select focusing questions and/or suggestions within these arenas accordingly.

In addition, lesson planning is an important opportunity for supervisors to support the development of a teacher’s thinking capacities (Clark and Peterson, 1986). By encouraging detailed planning that explores choice points and monitoring strategies, supervisors help novices develop the habits of mind of more skilled practitioners. By observing and participating in a teacher’s planning, supervisors gain insight into mental processes and can develop tailored strategies to support and extend thinking in this area.

By noting where in the planning process a teacher needs the most support, a skilled supervisor can decide when and how to move from coaching to consulting during a given conversation. She can also note general patterns of thought for this teacher and know when to support, and when and how to challenge this individual.

Specialized Applications for the Planning Conversation Template

We propose the conversation templates as frameworks and not as recipes to be followed in a step-by-step fashion. The questions, within each phase, beneath each focus arena are intended as models and possibilities; not as the only options. Different conversations will take on different flavors. Although these templates are relatively generic, thoughtful attention to their use for specialized functions produces powerful results.
Problem Solving Conversations

The Planning Template is also a useful scaffold for supporting problem solving. Hallmarks of an expert problem solver include the ability to envision the desired state and specify the outcomes of a viable solution. Skillful problem solvers can also articulate criteria for and indicators of success. The Planning Template is designed to pursue these topics as they relate to the teacher’s specific concerns. Again, learning-focused supervisors can apply one or several stances to the problem solving conversation, balancing support with challenge as they do so.

Goal-Setting Conversations

During the Activating and Engaging phase in a goal-setting conversation, it is important to take some time to clarify the roles, responsibilities and options available for both supervisor and teacher. Defining the supervisor’s role initiates a partnership which can be shaped and negotiated to serve the learning needs of both members. Discussing the expectations of each partner reduces the possibility of disappointment or miscommunication down the road. Sharing information about the four stances makes it possible for a teacher to request a certain type of interaction, depending on needs.

Use the Exploring and Discovering phase to establish clear goals for the supervisor-teacher relationship. Further, when a teacher clearly articulates his or her own learning goals, the supervisor can focus energy and resource on supporting the teacher in achieving them. Both types of clear, concrete and specific goal setting are important to the learning-focused relationship. The Planning Template is an effective structure for guiding these initial goal-setting conversations.

During the Organizing and Integrating phase, complete the goal-setting conversation by having the teacher summarize his or her understandings and name the next steps.

Reflecting Conversations

Reflecting conversations consolidate and extend professional thinking and habits of mind. They typically occur after lesson observations, or at scheduled intervals to reflect upon patterns of teaching practice and student learning. Reflecting Conversations are especially useful at transition points in the curriculum, when unit topics switch; or at significant points in the school year, such as the close of marking periods.

Here again, the Activating and Engaging phase matters greatly. The teacher’s issues and concerns and/or perspectives and perceptions are important to surface. Depending upon what emerges, the skilled supervisor will select a stance to explore the teacher’s current awareness. For example, if the teacher notes some issues of concern and not others that the supervisor deems equally important, the supervisor as calibrator or consultant may add these to the list of topics to explore during the Exploring and Discovering phase.

By reflecting with the teacher after lessons have been taught, supervisors support the re-examination of earlier thinking and help teachers make connections as they analyze successes and review shortcomings.

During the Exploring and Discovering phase, asking the teacher to weigh priorities is not only a respectful approach; but also provides a contextually sound assessment of the ways in which this teacher is developing as a professional. Experts notice more than novices. By noting what the teacher is noticing and about what the teacher is concerned, the aware supervisor can select an appropriate stance and help frame the content for reflection.
During the Organizing and Integrating phase, experienced supervisors widen the conversation from immediate issues to the bigger picture. The connection making, generalizations, applications and personal learnings that emerge at this phase increase the likelihood of transfer of new awareness and insight. This is the true test of learning-focused conversations. Building habits of reflection and supporting transfer of and applications of learning is a critical responsibility for supervisors.

Creating reflective, self-directed practitioners is an important aspect of the supervisor-teacher relationship. Formal, structured opportunities to do so make a powerful contribution to developing this disposition. Note that the Reflecting Template is designed to elicit personal discoveries, as well as new learning about teaching practice.

Navigating Within and Across the Conversation Templates

We offer a metaphor of ‘map’ for the Conversation Templates. A map defines boundaries, clarifying what belongs inside and what is external to the territory. So, too, do these structures provide clarity about the parameters of the conversation. In this way, when used skillfully, they are especially time efficient, allowing either colleague to return to the agreed upon purpose(s) of the meeting. A map also can be shared, so both parties know what territory can be explored and what routes are possible—whether we take the same path each time, or vary it. Further, while each area on a map is clearly defined, we may choose to apportion our time visiting several neighborhoods, or spend most of it concentrated in one or two. In fact, once the supervisor and teacher have had some experience with the Conversation Templates, they are rarely applied linearly. That is, moving from one arena (establishing goals and outcomes) to another (potential choice points) and then to a third (indicators of success) and then back to the first (for more goals and outcomes) is quite common. It also makes sense, frequently, to navigate across the templates—drawing from past experiences, or reflecting, while developing a plan. Or finishing a reflecting conversation with questions for applying new learning to a future plan.

The Planning and Reflecting Templates offer a structure to supervisor-teacher conversations. These guides enhance the efficiency of meeting time by providing a shared focus. They also serve as learning scaffolds, encouraging teachers to internalize the thinking protocols that guide effective planning and reflection about their own practice. The questions and ways of thinking that are explored during structured conversations become an internal voice for self-directed growth.

As a result, after several cycles of planning, observation and reflection using the Conversation Templates, the teacher comes to a planning or reflecting meeting prepared to respond to the challenging questions of the supervisor. This readiness and confidence sets the stage for increasingly rigorous conversations about teaching practice and increasingly effective solutions to the inevitable challenges of classroom life.
The Learning-focused Toolkit

Human beings are highly attuned to the nonverbal signals of others. We communicate our intention and degree of attention to others by our posture, degree of muscle tension, and how we respond verbally and nonverbally. We fully join the conversation and the relationship by aligning our body with that of another. This is especially important when the other person is ill-at-ease or when we are having difficulty understanding what is being said.

Ten minutes of our complete and focused attention is worth much more, in terms of maintaining a relationship and supporting learning, than thirty minutes with distractions. We actually maximize our time together by focusing our full attention on the teacher.

While our capacity to attend fully is an innate part of being human, there are times when the potential for distraction or lack of attention is high. For example, when we are fatigued or stressed our mind might wander away from the present moment, and away from our colleague. When we have a great deal to do, with little time available, the same conditions apply. Given the pressures of life in schools, conscious attention to being with the teacher is a challenge that is particularly important to overcome.

Communicating Our Attention

We signal our full attention nonverbally. Imagine you are in a restaurant, observing two people across the room. You can tell if they are relating well, even if you can’t hear what they are saying. You might observe them leaning in towards each other, nodding, smiling, and gesturing animatedly as they engage in conversation. When we align congruently with another individual, we are in rapport.

Alignment has three distinct categories: physical, which includes muscle tension, posture and gesture; vocal, which includes intonation, pace and word choices; and breathing, which includes depth, duration and rate. As described above, we are in rapport when several of these elements are matching. Often, rapport is naturally present. However, we can intentionally create it by matching our colleague’s use of these elements.

Being in rapport is a manifestation of our full attention to another. Generally, when we are fully focused on our colleague, rapport will be a natural part of the interaction. However, there are specific instances when we might pay particular attention to the use of rapport tools in our interactions (Costa & Garmston, 2002). These include times when we anticipate tension or anxiety or when tension or anxiety emerges within the conversation. For example, no matter how good the relationship between a supervisor and teacher, there is likely to be some anxiety when we engage in a reflecting conversation about a classroom observation or when reviewing a lesson plan with a beginning teacher. At these times it is important to consciously to pay attention to rapport elements.

Applying rapport tools is also useful when we are having difficulty understanding another person. Sometimes it feels like we’re operating on different wavelengths. When miscommunication occurs, intentionally realigning and matching a colleague’s nonverbal is often an effective strategy.

A fourth occasion for intentional monitoring of alignment is when we are distracted or having difficulty paying attention. So often, the limited time we have to meet with a teacher is “borrowed” from time we would devote to other tasks. Sometimes it is difficult to keep these tasks, both personal and professional, from distracting us. In this case, intentional monitoring of alignment keeps our attention fully on our colleague.

Alignment Categories

- **Physical**
  - Muscle Tension
  - Posture
  - Gesture

- **Vocal**
  - Intonation
  - Pace
  - Word Choice

- **Breathing**
  - Depth
  - Duration
  - Rate

Be Intentional When/If:

- You anticipate tension or anxiety
- Tension or anxiety emerges
- You are having difficulty understanding another person
- You are distracted
Blocks to Understanding

In addition to fluent application of the elements of rapport, listening with total attention, and without judgment, is a fundamental skill for supervisors. In this way, we signal our support and establish a safe environment for thinking together. Further, we increase our capacity to understand and better serve our colleague.

To maintain this quality of listening, our attention must be on the teacher. However, there are several common internal distractions. These blocks to understanding shift our listening focus inward, to our own opinion or interest or surety about a solution. This shift to ‘I’ distracts from understanding. For learning-focused supervisors it is particularly important to maintain awareness and listening discipline.

Listening from our own world view diminishes our capacity to understand a teacher’s perceptions and concerns. There are three specific categories of ‘I’ listening: personal referencing, personal curiosity, and personal certainty.

- **Personal Referencing**

  Personal referencing is ‘me too’ or ‘I would never’ listening. It occurs when our minds shift from listening to understand another to considering what is being said with reference to our own experiences and then judging its worth. This type of listening can be important in the consultant stance; but only after we’re sure we understand the teachers’s concerns, issues, and needs. Personal referencing often leads to judgmental responses or personal anecdotes.

- **Personal Curiosity**

  Personal curiosity drives our listening when we are interested in what the teacher is saying, not to understand his or her needs but because we want more information for ourselves. For example, an enthusiastic teacher is talking about accessing the internet for a thematic unit on ecology. We find ourselves intrigued and want to know what websites are available, what type of hardware or software is necessary—and our questions are driven by our personal curiosity. While this type of listening can build relationship and is sometimes useful during the collaborative stance, it takes our attention away from the teacher.

- **Personal Certainty**

  This listening block occurs when we are sure we know the solution to the problem, sometimes before we’ve listened enough to be sure that we understand the problem. Before a problem is fully framed and mutually understood, this type of listening leads to offers of advice, or inauthentic inquiries like “have you tried . . . ?” or “have you thought about . . . ?”

  Giving our full attention to a colleague contributes to relationship and to clear communication. These are the foundations for mutual learning and future exploration. As consciousness about full attention develops into automaticity in our ways of listening, we can further maximize our opportunities for learning by using shared and specific structures for guiding our interactions. Relationship and learning are intertwined both in-the-moment and over time. Learning and thinking draw upon person-to-person and person-to-idea connections. These linkages require purposeful assembly. Subtle moves and behaviors nurture the relationship and desired thinking processes. Our consciousness of these components helps us to support productive outcomes. Inattention to these elements can hinder or block interpersonal and intellectual connection-making.

‘I’ Listening

Be aware of:

- Personal Referencing
- Personal Curiosity
- Personal Certainty
Applying Verbal Tools

Language and thinking are interactive processes. Each energizes the other. Each limits the other. Learning-focused conversations create, nourish, and sustain language development. The ultimate goal of such conversations is to support language and thinking production capacities by teachers. In the process, we often extend our own thinking and language production capacities.

How we interact with others matters as much as the content about which we interact. Thought-filled conversations require carefully constructed containers to support them. We craft these containers from several important verbal elements drawn from a learning-focused toolkit.

Providing Emotional Safety

The important linguistic moves elaborated upon in the following pages need careful packaging to achieve their ultimate and most powerful effects within supervisory conversations. This package is shaped by several critical paralinguistic and linguistic structures. The prefix ‘para’ means above and around. In this case, the packaging elements are above and around the linguistic moves. These elements include such things as voice tone, inflection and pace. In other words, how we say what we say. Also, within our communication, several language components influence the emotional and cognitive resources available in the moment to the teacher. We call this packaging the invitation. We are, in fact, creating the emotional environment that invites our colleague to think with us. This notion builds upon current research in neurobiology which stresses the primacy of emotional processing and its direct links to higher cognitive processes. There are a greater number of neural fibers running from the brain’s emotional centers up into logical/rational areas than there are running in the opposite direction (Sylwester, 2000).

Threat or perceived threat inhibits thinking. Our brains are wired to detect the subtleties of muscle tension, posture, gesture and vocal stresses that signal danger in any form. Incoming sensory data moves through biochemically driven switching centers in the limbic portion of the brain. Branching circuits direct the signals first to a structure called the amygdala, which scans, codes, and assesses the present experience for signs of danger. If the incoming information passes this test, another circuit fires and sends the message to the prefrontal lobes of the cortex for processing. If any threat is detected, this ‘upshifting’ is either inhibited or aborted. A classic example of this is watching a student panic and freeze when asked a question in class. The answer may be in his brain but it is not biochemically accessible in that instance. We must provide emotional safety in order to produce cognitive complexity.

Pacing for Thoughtfulness: Using Pause

The pace of a conversation affects both the emotional and intellectual climate. Frequent, well-placed pauses contribute to a teacher’s confidence and capacity. For most people, however, consciously pausing to provide a space for thinking requires patience and

Language is not an innocent reflection of how we think. The terms we use control our perceptions, shape our understandings, and lead us to particular proposals for improvement. We can see only as far as our language allows us to see.

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practice. Silence can feel uncomfortable. The fast pace of our world tends to support the belief that there is a relationship between speed and intelligence. However, complex thinking takes and requires time.

Purposeful Pausing

Supervisors support teacher thinking when they strategically pause during learning-focused conversations. The positive effects of pausing in the classroom were first noted by science educator and researcher Mary Budd Rowe (1986) who labeled these pauses Wait Time. Wait Time is the length of time we pause to allow thinking. Rowe suggests three to five seconds. Higher-level cognitive tasks may require a full five seconds or more.

In supervisory conversations, there are four critical junctures for pausing: after asking a question, after the teacher has offered initial thinking, before paraphrasing and after a paraphrase.

1. Pause after asking a question. This pause allows time and signals support for thinking. It communicates our belief in the teacher’s capacity and willingness to think.

2. Pause after the teacher has offered initial thinking. This pause allows the teacher to mentally retrieve additional and/or related information.

3. Pause before paraphrasing. This pause allows the supervisor to fully absorb the teacher’s communication and to construct a paraphrase.

4. Pause after a paraphrase. This pause allows the teacher to confirm or correct the paraphrase and allows the supervisor to consider a strategic next move. Options include asking a question to move forward on the conversation template, to go deeper within the area being explored, or to inquire for detail or to shift to another stance on the Continuum.

Entering the Teacher’s World: Using Paraphrase

The purposeful use of paraphrase signals our full attention. It communicates that it is important to us to understand the teacher’s thoughts, concerns, questions and ideas. By signaling that we are listening, we earn permission to inquire for details and press for elaboration. Without the paraphrase, such inquiries can be perceived as interrogation. Well-crafted paraphrases align the speaker and responder, establishing understanding and communicating regard. Questions, no matter how well-intended, distance by degrees the asker from the asked.

Well-crafted paraphrases with appropriate pauses trigger more thoughtful responses than questions alone. Paraphrasing is a process, driven by:

- Intention to support thinking and problem solving
- Attention of the paraphraser, who listens fully for the essence of the message
- Communication skills of the paraphraser

In addition to their invitational qualities, paraphrases contain three important elements; they label the speaker’s content, the speaker’s emotions about the content and reflect a level of abstraction for holding the content. Skilled paraphrasing treats responses as gifts. The paraphrase reflects a speaker’s thinking back to the speaker for further consideration. It connects the speaker and the listener in a flow of discourse.
Three Types of Paraphrase, Three Intentions

Three types of paraphrase, with three different intentions, widen the range of possible responses for learning-focused supervisors. While each supports relationship and thinking, the paraphrase that shifts the level of abstraction of the speaker’s language is most likely to create new levels of understanding. While paraphrases often move through a pattern of acknowledging, then summarizing, then shifting level of abstraction, there is no ‘right’ sequence for application of these responses. Cues from the speaker will help suggest an appropriate response. Versatility in use of paraphrase gives a skillful supervisor a wide range of action from which to choose and a more effective repertoire for supporting growth.

In addition, these supervisors use paraphrase to communicate belief in the teacher’s positive intentions and capacity for productive action.

• Acknowledging and Clarifying
By restating the essence of someone’s statements, acknowledging and clarifying paraphrases provide an opportunity to identify and calibrate content and emotions. By design, they communicate our desire to understand, and our value for the person and what he or she is feeling and saying. Notice the intentional elimination of the personal pronoun ‘I’ in the paraphrase examples that follow.

For example, a teacher might say:

“I don’t know how I’ll get all of this work done. I’ve got a final exam to correct, end-of-term grades and then the paperwork for closing the year!”

To which a supervisor might respond:

“So you’re scrambling to successfully complete all of your professional responsibilities in what feels like an overwhelming situation.”

• Summarizing and Organizing
Summarizing and organizing paraphrases offer themes and containers which shape the initiating statement or separate jumbled issues. This type of paraphrase is useful when there’s been a great deal said in a long stream of language.

This type of paraphrase captures the key elements and offers some organization to which the speaker can react. It offers a ‘shape’ to the initiating statement.

For example, a teacher might say:

“I’m so confused. During language arts, my students work well in groups, participate in class and complete their assignments. In science, they are constantly off-task and I need to keep them doing individual work to keep control in the classroom.”

To which a supervisor might respond:

“You’re noticing significant differences between your students’ performance in language arts and their performance in science.”

• Shifting Level of Abstraction
Shifting the level of abstraction is a paraphrase that moves language, and therefore, thinking to a higher or lower logical level. The intention of this paraphrase is to illuminate large ideas or categories, often leading the speaker to new discoveries. Or, when shifting down, this paraphrase focuses and clarifies, increasing precision of thinking.

A Scaffold for Crafting Paraphrases

Acknowledge and Clarify
• So, you’re feeling ________
• You’re noticing that ________
• In other words ____________
• Hmm, you’re suggesting that ________

Summarize and Organize
• So, there seem to be two key issues here __________ and __________
• On the one hand, there is __________ and on the other hand, there is __________
• For you then, several themes are emerging; __________
• It seems you’re considering a sequence or hierarchy here; __________

Shifting Level of abstraction
(Up or Down)
• So, a(n) __________ for you might be __________

(Shifting up) (Shifting down)
• category • example
• value • non-example
• belief • choice
• assumption • action
• goal • option
• intention
For individuals who think in highly global patterns, the shift down is a way of grounding their thinking in specific examples and details. For individuals who think in highly sequential and concrete patterns, the shift up is a way of helping them explore a bigger picture and provides a wider context for their thoughts.

We move to higher levels of abstraction by naming the big ideas; including concepts, categories, goals and values. We focus by moving to lower levels of abstraction when concepts need grounding in details. We might offer specific details or an example.

For example, a teacher might say:

“My kids have trouble getting started, and they’re always asking for help.”

To which a supervisor might respond:

“So, you want your students to be clear about your expectations for learning and understand procedures. (Shift Up)

Or:

“For example, you’re finding that your students’ seem to be having trouble following directions.” (Shift Down)

A paraphrase that shifts to a higher level of abstraction is often particularly effective in problem solving situations. Initially, more abstract language widens the potential solution set and encourages broader exploration of ideas and strategies for problem solving.

For example, a teacher might say:

“This math text is much too difficult for many of my students.”

A supervisor might paraphrase with:

“So, you’re looking for instructional materials that meet the needs of all of your students.”

This shift up paraphrase of math text to instructional materials opens the conversation to consider a wider range of solutions to this teacher’s concern.

Paraphrase and Problem Solving

In addition to being an effective communication skill, paraphrasing a teacher’s words is an expression of value. In the hectic world of schools, time is a scarce commodity. Paraphrasing indicates your full attention and desire to understand. This gift of time and attention contributes to relationship and also increases emotional resourcefulness.

During problem solving conversations, supervisors may find themselves interacting with teachers who are by degrees confused, overwhelmed, or reacting with strong feelings to the event or issue under consideration. The human brain/body system does not make distinctions between feeling and thinking. Biochemically we are one interconnected and interacting mix of molecules regulating hormonal responses and the production or suppression of the neurotransmitters that support higher level thinking. The molecules of emotion and the molecules of cognition respond in-the-moment to the influences of thoughtful interaction.
At times like these, attentive supervisors strategically apply different types of paraphrases to support the emotional and mental resourcefulness of their teachers. A goal paraphrase is especially effective in this regard. A goal paraphrase illuminates potential outcomes. Once the emotional resourcefulness is available and the goal articulated, the intellectual readiness for problem solving emerges.

Well-Formed Goal Paraphrases
By attending fully to others and aligning physically, supervisors create the first level of psychological safety necessary for successful problem solving conversations. This skill couples with careful listening at multiple levels to the “story” being presented and to the “story-beneath-the story”. Goal paraphrases are built on this listening beneath the story. The listening blocks to understanding (personal referencing, personal curiosity and personal certainty) inhibit our ability to produce this level of understanding.

Attentive supervisors observe carefully as they offer goal paraphrases, watching for signs of goal agreement. These head nods, postural shifts, changes in muscle tension or verbal responses externally indicate that internal shifts are occurring. Goal paraphrases provide a futures orientation that psychologically removes the other person from the muddle of the moment. Well-crafted goal paraphrases name possible positive futures that when accepted, release the biochemical resources for problem solving.

Tips for framing goal paraphrases:
- When in doubt, offer fluffy goals. This is especially useful when paraphrasing strong emotional messages.
- Listen for the central emotional component of the message and flip it 180 degrees in your response.
  
  If the teacher offers,
  “I’m totally overwhelmed by all the preparation I have to do, I have no life!”
  You might respond with,
  “So, you want to feel some sense of control and organization.”

Goal paraphrases raise the level of abstraction of the conversation, making desired outcomes broadly visible and widening the solution set to increase problem solving options. Often, the goals that initially emerge are nominalizations, “So, you want to feel respect from your students’ parents”. Linguists define nominalizations as processes that are held internally as things or nouns. Nominalizations are handy mental shortcuts. Only the person being paraphrased really knows what that version of respect might sound or look like. If that goal emerges as a meaningful outcome for the teacher, the supervisor can then help to sort out and define a more precise definition of “respect” that is contextually appropriate for the colleague.

Verbal and Nonverbal Referencing
Human beings have a rich repertoire of nonverbal expressions. The brain and the body are an integrated system. What is happening on the inside is reflected in sometimes subtle, and in other times overt ways by various parts of the body.

In the early 1990’s neuroscientists Vittorio Gallese and Giacomo Rizzolatti at the University of Parma in Italy discovered a new class of neurons in the brains of macaques, a species of monkey. They named their discovery mirror neurons. These cells are active in the brain when a monkey performs a physical movement such as grasping or pointing.
The most important finding was that the same cells, or mirror neurons, are activated in the brains of other macaques that are observing these actions (Rizzolatti & Arbib, 1998).

Mirror neurons were soon discovered in human brains as well. Many researchers now think that these specialized brain cells provide the evolutionary and developmental link between gestural and verbal forms of communication (Motluk, 2001). In the human brain, major clusters of mirror neurons are located in the language processing and language production centers of the brain. These centers emerged 70,000 to 100,000 years ago making them relatively recent in our development as a species. They also appear slowly as human infants develop. Anyone who observes babies notices that gestures precede verbal skills as infants point at and clutch objects in their environment.

Gestural language and verbal language are linked systems and in many cases such as problem solving conversations, the gestural vocabulary may carry information that amplifies and or extends the verbal portions. In some cases the body knows more than the mouth or knows it before we are able to construct language that understands and conveys the message.

Attention to these nonverbal messages increases our communication's effectiveness and efficiency. That is, the subtle cue, given and received, maximizes the clarity of the information and leads to greater productivity for both parties. Attend to the vocal patterns, such as rhythm, pitch and pace that indicate changes in thinking, or feeling. Consider intonation, emphasis and volume as cues to what might be important or of primary concern in the narrative. Similarly, lengthy pauses, sighs and repetition are also meaningful signals.

Speakers place characters in space. Note how near, on which side and where the characters are in relation to each other. Concepts are located, and sometimes grouped or contrasted nonverbally, as well. Speakers also gesture for time orientation, for example, a hand from back to front or left to right indicating past, present and future. Gestural emphasis and patterns indicating a sequence or hierarchy of ideas or actions again give information about what might not be being said aloud, but what might matter to the speaker.

Human nonverbal communication patterns are as rich and distinctive as spoken language. We have unique external cues to our internal thinking processes. While the patterns might be idiosyncratic, we can make some useful generalizations. For example, handedness plays a part in these patterns. Discerning hand dominance and observing marker cues is a useful communication tool. By noting where in space a speaker places story elements and characters, we can paraphrase both verbally and nonverbally by referencing these locations with their own gestures. Watch for signs of cross-lateralization. The shift from left to right or right to left, indicates shifts across the corpus callosum which is the membrane that connects the brain's hemispheres. These shifts are external signs of brain integration and increasing efficacy towards problem solution.

Physical referencing is a subtle, but powerful skill that communicates understanding, increases psychological safety and mediates thinking. By paying attention to these elements as they are communicated, and continuing to develop increased acuity, an observant supervisor facilitates communication and accelerates learning.

### MARKER LANGUAGE
- Verbal Stress
  - Volume
  - Emphasis
- Repetition
- Pace
- Referencing

### MARKER GESTURES
- Physical Stress
  - Volume
  - Emphasis
- Repetition
- Pace
- Referencing

Physical Referencing
- Characters in space
- Concepts in space
- Sequence or hierarchy
- Time orientation
Invitational Inquiry: Designing Questions to Promote Thinking

Skillful supervisors are purposeful in their use of questions. A supervisor’s linguistic repertoire includes the capacity to frame language that opens thinking, as well as language that focuses thinking. Both types of questions mediate thinking. Questions intended to open thinking, invite multiple responses and are generally asked from a collaborative or coaching stance. These questions communicate a spirit of curiosity and a desire to explore information and ideas. Questions intended to focus thinking probe for increased specificity of information. These questions elicit examples, criteria, and details that support precision in verbal responses. This precision of language reflects precision in thinking. Both types of questions are an important part of the learning-focused supervisor’s repertoire. Both types of questions contain verbal and nonverbal elements designed to invite thinking.

A Template for Inquiry

Questions that extend and illuminate thinking invite a wide range of potential responses. Language and thinking once surfaced can always be honed and refined. But without it emerging, there is little with which to work. The intention of inquiry is to support a colleague in exploring issues, problems, concerns and ideas.

Well-crafted inquiries integrate three essential elements: an invitation to engage and think, a topic to think about and a cognitive focus for thinking about the topic.

These elements can be combined in a variety of ways and do not always appear in the same order. Both personal style and context play a part in question construction.

Inviting Thinking

Elements of the Invitation

The invitation to think functions as a total package wrapped around our communications. This invitation begins with clear signals that our full presence is available for this conversation and that we intend no harm. To these tools we add several important verbal patterns that invite thinking.

• Approachable Voice

The first verbal element in the invitation to think is the use of an approachable voice for framing our own language in a nontoxic manner. We learned this pattern from Michael Grinder, a classroom management expert and specialist in nonverbal patterns of communication (Grinder, 1997). An approachable voice is well modulated and tends to rise at the end of the statement, paraphrase or question, signaling openness and exploration. This intonation contrasts with the credible voice which is more evenly modulated and tends to drop at the end of a statement. Voice choice also signals the stance within which we are operating. The more approachable voice indicates a coaching stance; the more credible voice indicates a calibrating or consulting stance.
• Plural Forms

Two key syntactical choices make it emotionally easier for the teacher to think and increase the options for thinking. The first is to use plural forms: goals instead of goal, concerns rather than concern. This pattern frees the teacher from having to evaluate and sort at this point in the conversation. It is useful to generate a number of options before determining which are most central.

• Exploratory Language

The second language move is to use exploratory phrasing by inserting words like some, might, seems, possible and hunches into our questions. These terms, like the use of plurals, widen the potential range of response and reduce the need for surety. Words like could and why tend to decrease the confidence of listeners and may seem to seek premature commitment to ideas or actions.

Some examples of exploratory language include:

“How might you go about doing that?”

“You're naming some possible solutions. Which seem most promising at this point?”

“What are some of your hunches about why that may be so?”

• Nondichotomous Forms

Questions that invite thinking are framed with open-ended, nondichotomous question forms. A nondichotomous question is one which cannot be answered yes or no. For example, instead of asking “Did you notice any unusual behaviors?”, ask “What are some of the behaviors you noticed?” In fact, by eliminating dichotomous stems such as “Can you,” “Did you,” “Will you,” or “Have you” we invite thinking and communicate positive presupposition.

• Positive Presuppositions

Presuppositions are embedded in our language, not in the words, necessarily, but in the assumptions underlying the communication (Elgin, 2000). A positive presupposition communicates our belief in a colleague’s capacity, positive intention and willingness to engage.

For example, instead of asking, “Can you see any...?”, you might say “As you examine this student’s work, what are some of the details that you are noticing?” or “As you develop the plan for this class, what are some things that are important to you?”

Intention-Driven Questions: Providing Cognitive Focus

Planning, problem solving and reflecting require specific ways of thinking. Learning-focused supervisors craft inquiries that are purposefully driven by a specific cognitive intention. For example, we develop expertise in planning by identifying, predicting and sequencing. Similarly, we make sense of experience by inferring, comparing and analyzing cause and effect. Productive reflection derives from generalizing, hypothesizing, applying and synthesizing. Questions that invite and focus thinking build professional capacity and self-directed learning. Each phase of the Conversation Templates is intended to focus and produce specific cognitive processes.
Directing the Inquiry: The Topic

The choice of language for the topic of a question influences degree of focus. Potential topics can range from higher to lower levels of abstraction. Inquiries with topics at higher levels of abstraction stimulate a broader range of responses. Inquiries with topics at lower levels of abstraction narrow the focus of the response. For example, a question topic might be classroom management, “What are some ways you monitor classroom management procedures?” The response categories might include instructional grouping, managing materials, or record keeping.

Or the topic could be student transitions, “What are some ways you monitor transitions?” In this case, the responses would be directed towards maximizing instructional time, student clarity about what to do and where to move, or giving clear directions about expectations. Higher levels of abstraction include Domain names, in this case Classroom Environment. Lower levels of abstraction include indicators, critical attributes or specific examples.

Focusing the topic increases the time efficiency of the conversation by allowing the supervisor to go directly to critical areas, while still inviting teacher thinking about the topic. Further, a more directed question feels safer for the teacher, because there is less ambiguity about a potentially desired response.

Vague Language

Our brains filter incoming information, searching for recognizable patterns. From these, we form generalizations that shape and guide thinking. Human language reflects these thinking habits, offering surface vagueness that often masks the rich details that lie beneath. Our brains create and are created by models of reality built from our experiences in the world and from our interpretations of those experiences. We delete and distort incoming and outgoing data to fit these deeply embedded templates (Bandler & Grinder, 1971). As human beings and human brains evolved, generalizations, deletions and distortions in thinking and in language served our hunting and gathering ancestors well, as they made the quick decisions necessary for survival.

These same thinking and language attributes are often barriers in contemporary human communication. One important way that supervisors make a difference for teachers is by supporting precision in language, which in turn supports precision in thinking. By focusing on and clarifying specifics, the alert supervisor can help shift a situation from one that might feel overwhelming to the teacher to one that is more manageable emotionally, physically and intellectually. Like many supervisory skills, probing for specificity is based on listening. In this case, the skill set is listening for vague language and then deciding which terms, if clarified, would support the most productive shifts in thinking.

Vague thinking and language patterns appear within five major categories. These categories become listening lenses for the attuned supervisor who selects a focus for clarification, paraphrases the essential ideas, then probes for specificity within target areas. In many cases, more than one category of vagueness appears in the same statement. In all cases, the pattern of pause, paraphrase and then inquire is applied.

- Vague Nouns and Pronouns

Vague nouns and pronouns occur commonly in everyday language. In schools we hear about, ‘my students’, ‘the class’, ‘my fourth period’, ‘classroom management’, ‘student behavior’, ‘technology’, ‘the parents’, ‘the administration’, ‘central office’ and a host of other unspecified nouns. For many teachers, someone named ‘they’ causes most of
the problems in their class or school. ‘We’, ‘us’, and ‘them’ are other possible sources of concern and/or joy.

If we hear a teacher say, “my students don’t understand fractions,” we need to find out how many students are confused about fractions and what elements of fraction learning are most problematic to them. Without these essential details, we can’t know where to target our energy and attention within the problem solving process. Narrowing the field of focus in this case might identify subsets of students with distinct learning needs that can be addressed systematically by the teacher and the students.

We would also need to determine the teacher’s definition of ‘understand’, which leads us to the next category of vagueness.

- Vague Verbs
Planning, problem solving and reflecting require specificity for focused action and personal learning. The term ‘understand’ in the vignette above is a prime example. Once we have determined who has the problem, we need to clarify the goal of understanding. Just what does this teacher mean by ‘understanding’; and how will students display their ‘understanding’? With some teachers, these specifications may lead us to unpacking their understanding of fractions as well.

Teacher goal setting is a ripe area for probing the action words. Words like; ‘plan’, ‘improve’, ‘design’, ‘modify’, ‘enhance’ and ‘prepare’ are all examples of unspecified verbs that have little meaning without clarification and details.

- Comparators
There are two primary types of vagueness relating to comparators; the criteria for comparison and the source of comparison. When a teacher says, “Today’s lesson was much better,” two queries would be productive; “In what ways was it better?” and/or “What was it better than?” Until we discover the speaker’s criteria for ‘better’, we don’t know how to proceed with the conversation. Is this ‘better’ a success to build on or are poorly understood factors at work here that leave this ‘better’ a mystery? Other vague comparators are words like ‘best’, ‘larger’, ‘slower,’ ‘more’, ‘less’ and ‘least’.

Supervisors support teachers by helping them to specify their criteria and standards for comparison. This action supports rigor in planning and problem solving, which leads to targeted action and measurable signs of success. When a teacher says “I want students to get better results on my next quiz,” a supervisor might respond by probing for the qualities that would define better results. For example, does the teacher mean a higher class average or some other improvements in student responses?

We also often need to surface the lost comparator. For example, was this lesson better than the best lesson the teacher has taught to date—or better than the worst? Our continued conversation would be quite different, depending upon the response.

- Rule Words
We all have a set of rules that guide our ways of perceiving and operating in the world. We are not always conscious of these internal codes but they appear in our language when we say things like, “I have to,” “I must,” “I can’t,” and “I should have” or “I shouldn’t have.” When a supervisor hears a teacher use a phrase like those above, it may be appropriate to paraphrase and then inquire for the rule behind the statement. “What might happen if you didn’t?” “What stops you from doing that?”

Intonation matters greatly here. The supervisor’s voice must be carefully modulated and nonthreatening to create a safe environment for exploring the internal rules governing the situation.
• Universal Quantifiers

“All the parents of my class are upset about the new report card.” “The students always get confused when I give directions.” Linguists label words and phrases like ‘everyone’, ‘all’, ‘no one’, ‘never’ and ‘always’ as universal quantifiers. They also use the term ‘deity voice’ as a label for this type of language because these terms are spoken as if the statement possesses a universal truth of which ‘everyone’ is aware. By clarifying the universal quantifier, a supervisor helps the teacher ground the conversation with measurable details and supportable data. When the teacher says, “No one in my class completes their assignment,” the supervisor might respond by paraphrasing, then inquiring: “Which of your students seem to be having the most difficulty finishing their work?”
Learning-focused Supervision: Developing Expertise

NO ONE is born knowing how to teach. Classroom instruction is one of the most complex intellectual and emotional tasks that any professional undertakes in our society; and the journey towards expertise is a lifetime’s work.

Successful journeys are guided by skilled counsel. For the learning to be increasingly purposeful, supervisors need frameworks and language for describing the complexity of teaching. This complexity falls into two main areas: what professional teachers think about and pay attention to in their classrooms; and how they think about it before, during and after instruction. This knowledge base organizes the expert teacher’s planning, problem solving and decision-making. Mental access to these resources supports effective teaching practice that is goal-driven and targeted to the needs of individual students. These capabilities, brought to conscious attention, then guide the supervisor’s own interactions with teachers.

Developing a Vision of Learning

Learning to teach means continually managing the disequilibrium that new questions and newly recognized quandaries produce. Given the limits of attention and the limits of craft knowledge, some teachers do not know what they do not know.

Supervision, therefore, means a continual balance of supporting current learning needs for teachers, with providing appropriate challenges for growth at opportune moments. It also means acknowledging the sense of loss and lowered confidence that often accompanies new awareness of knowledge and skill gaps. These are territories of constructive mismatch that require emotional sensitivity and scrupulous attention to the teacher’s current state and developmental level. The information on teaching expertise outlined in this section is intended to focus the supervisor’s attention and frame this learning agenda. School-based curriculum initiatives, such as the Common Core, intersect with this repertoire to promote collegiality and learning communities in the school.

According to Jean Piaget, learning is a process of disturbing current constructs with new experiences and exposure to novel ideas. These discoveries then need to be assimilated and/or accommodated to form new conceptual understandings. Skillful supervisors know when and how to gently disturb a teacher’s current state of development as they escort them on their journey to more expert teaching.

Defining and Developing Expertise

Developing expertise in any field involves the acquisition, storage and contextually appropriate application of knowledge and skills. A defining characteristic of experts is the ways in which this knowledge base is mentally structured and internally cross-referenced for productive application in both predictable and novel situations. As teachers become increasingly skillful they develop both rich conceptual bases and more extensive case knowledge. Case knowledge is the treasure trove of practical experiences that experts draw upon to solve routine problems. These are the tricks-of-the-trade that make professional practice time and energy efficient.

Expert teachers are able to operate both in the moment and over time with clear outcomes in mind; skillfully managing students, content, equipment, materials, the clock and the calendar. They also apply greater complexity and sophistication in analyzing and understanding instructional problems. For example, while managing student learning, master teachers focus first on defining and representing the dilemmas they encounter.
in their classrooms. In contrast, beginning teachers go directly to developing solutions without first framing the problem (Swanson, O’Connor, and, Cooney, 1990). This difference in the approach to problem solving is one reason for the importance of a strategy like the Think-Aloud. By thinking aloud about a problem when taking the consulting stance, a supervisor models how an ‘expert’ contemplates a situation, thereby widening the conceptual, emotional and moral frame for the teacher.

Experience and expertise are not the same thing. Experts in all fields develop sophisticated sets of guiding principles, templates and tools to apply to the problems they encounter. The hallmarks of expertise are knowing which principles and tools to apply to a given situation, the limits of these resources and when current templates and tools need to be modified or adapted to better match present requirements.

As we think about the role of supervisors as growth agents in helping to develop teachers’ skills, it is useful to consider the nature of learning and the structure of expertise. The following principles emerge from the literature on expert problem solving and expert teaching.

1. Expertise develops from frameworks of experience, culture and context.

Expert thinkers are aware of the influence of their previous experiences on the ways in which they perceive and approach their practice. Teacher’s behaviors and patterns of thinking are guided by their beliefs, values and principles (Clark & Peterson, 1998). Growth oriented supervisors help teachers surface and articulate the background experiences and the frameworks they hold. This conceptual and cultural knowledge can then be compared to that of students, parents and colleagues as a point of reference for planning, problem solving and reflecting.

During learning-focused conversations, a skillful supervisor discovers what and how teachers think in relation to a specific situation. The supervisor can then illuminate potential misconceptions, biases or gaps in thinking and offer alternative perspectives and ways of thinking about the issue or situation.

Ways of understanding are idiosyncratic. Teachers as learners construct meaning based on their beliefs, understandings and prior experiences. Mindful supervisors respect the interests and passions of their teachers – what they know, where they’ve been, what inspires them, what they are able to do and what they’d like to be able to do. The supervisor can then support the teacher in bridging prior experiences and new ideas.

2. Expert thinking is organized by big ideas and core concepts.

How knowledge is organized matters. Experts develop mental clusters of interrelated information (Bransford, et al, 1999). Each cluster has distinctive elements and features that are mentally flagged for ease of retrieval. Experts have more available information units than non-experts. Experts organize these mental clusters for accessibility so they retrieve and apply knowledge and skills to different problem solving situations (Chi, et. al, 1981).

Expert teachers have organizers with conceptual labels stored in their long-term memories. These interrelated categories are efficiently accessed to make sense of practice, to support planning and to guide classroom decisions and actions. These categories help teachers plan curricula, differentiate instruction and analyze student work.

Experts know their way around the landscape. They are familiar with significant features and are able to locate and use available resources (Greeno, 1991). Knowing where one is in a landscape requires a network of connections that link the present location to the larger space. Within the classroom landscape, expert teachers are able to articulate their perspectives and the ways of seeing and perceiving that they draw upon to make decisions and solve problems (Bransford, 1986).
Skilled supervisors use learning-focused conversations to help teachers connect broader principles of practice to specific solutions and strategies. By moving beyond the isolated parts, these supervisors orient teachers to a larger view of professional practice. These connections are often accomplished with by using a pattern of explaining the “What”, “Why”, and “How” of an approach or strategy when taking a consulting stance, or offering a principle of practice to provide a wide view.

Skilled supervisors inquire into their teachers' thinking to determine which connections are being made, where gaps exist and to note the width and depth of the frame for holding a given situation or problem. They also ask teachers to describe the reasons for the choices they are making related to instruction, curriculum and student and parent interactions. When any gaps surface, the needed information or perspectives can be offered.

3. Experts frame and reframe problems before seeking solutions.

The way in which a problem is framed either expands or limits the possible solutions that might be generated and applied to it. The literature on expert problem solving refers to this phenomena as problem setting (Grimett, 1988, Schon, 1983). Real world problems do not come with givens. They arise within situations that are troubling and uncertain. The ways in which a problem is set frames the boundaries of our attention and supplies any sense of coherence that identifies what is wrong within the situation. These problem frames point out the potential direction of any changes we might make. During problem setting we notice the things to which we might pay attention and develop the context within which we will attend to them (Schon, 1983).

Experts have greater acuity for problem elements and conscious lenses for examining issues from a variety of perspectives. Experts often frame and reframe problems before pursuing solutions.

Skilled supervisors help teachers define professional problems. They purposely and overtly offer problem frames before offering solutions, strategies and approaches. These, “here's how I think about that” exchanges from a consulting stance are opportunities to introduce ideas, applications and principles of practice.

These supervisors invite their teachers to join them in problem framing conversations. As the relationship unfolds, and in developmentally appropriate ways, they support teachers in developing these patterns of thinking. This approach is especially important if patterns of problem types emerge within the teacher's classroom practice and/or within learning-focused conversations.

4. Expertise results from internal and external mediation.

The self-talk of experts differs greatly from that of less effective practitioners. Expert teachers develop and internalize patterns and behaviors that free their attention for the more interactive and dynamic needs of classroom practice. Expert teachers automatize routines for management tasks like taking attendance and focusing students’ attention (Leinhardt and Greeno, 1986, Berliner, 1987). They have mental scripts (Shavelson, 1986, and Berliner, 1987) for tasks like monitoring student understanding, giving directions and varying call and response patterns. These micro-maps and moves free attention for more subtle student-centered interactions and responses. Less effective teachers tend to notice and respond to discreet instances and events in isolation. Developing instructional routines and automatizing repertoire are building blocks to expert practice.

Skilled supervisors make their internal self-talk overt and explicit when talking with teachers. They share the concepts they draw upon, the connections they are making and the ways in which they perceive and frame issues. Such supervisors offer broad terms
rather than singular examples as they talk about such things as goals, outcomes, routines, cues and signals. In this way, they supply categories for holding and connecting information that can be accessed by the teacher at a later time.

Skilled supervisors mediate thinking and prompt metacognition, inviting the teacher to notice and reflect upon his or her own patterns of thinking and problem solving. For example, during planning conversations, the supervisor supports thinking about goal identification and indicators of success, designing coherent instruction and using assessment data to make decisions. With sufficient supported practice, the teacher internalizes and applies this type of thinking independently. The challenge for supervisors is to find the appropriate balance between promoting a teacher’s rapid development of needed skills and routines and promoting the deeper understandings about principles of practice to support more independent growth.

5. Experts recognize the limitations of their own knowledge base and seek resources and strategies to increase their proficiency.

Disequilibrium and the uncertainty of not knowing are milestones on the pathway to any new learning. Knowing what one does not know is as important a learning resource as knowing what one does know (Lipton and Wellman, 2000). The ability to recognize the limitations in one’s current knowledge base and developing the confidence to seek new strategies and information are essential to learning, and to teaching. The ability to monitor one’s present level of understanding and decide when more information or resources are necessary is an important characteristic of expertise.

Skillful supervisors offer appropriate formative assessment during learning-focused conversations. This focused feedback increases the teacher’s capacity for on-going self-assessment. Clear, nonjudgmental feedback offers evidence of success as well as the information to clarify ideas and identify misconceptions.

These supervisors help teachers move beyond simply learning to perform specific procedures or apply specific strategies in isolated contexts. Through coaching, collaborating and consulting they promote transfer of ideas between content areas, topics and situations. The most effective transfer comes from the balance between specific examples, generalizable principles and clear criteria for measuring success. This learning-focused feedback, builds the capacity for determining increasingly effective actions leading to continuous improvements in practice.

**Acquiring Craft Knowledge**

Day-to-day classroom work draws upon a reservoir of craft knowledge for planning instruction, solving problems and analyzing effectiveness. This sophisticated knowledge base is acquired through the years as teachers master the various tasks required by their work. In the 1980’s, Donald Schon described this wisdom in his seminal work on reflective practice (Schon 1983; 1987). Schon suggests that experienced professionals rely very little on theoretical or academic knowledge to solve practical problems. They rely instead on an extensive body of context specific craft knowledge that allows them to relate past experiences to current situations. Thus, the primary source for learning for experienced teachers is, in fact, reflection on their own practice.

To access this learning, and to apply the wisdom of practice to new and novel contexts, teachers need to be able to unpack the purposes and processes of automated routines, and to bring them to their own conscious awareness. The opportunity to explore instructional decisions, and to analyze their effectiveness is one of the gifts of the supervisor/teacher relationship. Articulating one’s own craft knowledge increases its usefulness and extends the craftsmanship and capacity of the user.
Craft knowledge and expertise in teaching take time to acquire. This growth occurs in predictable stages. David Berliner suggests the following five developmental stages (Calderhead, 1996).

**Novice to Expert Stages of Teacher Development**

1. **Novice** Seeking rules and recipes to guide actions.
2. **Advanced Beginner** Seeking contextual and strategic knowledge and beginning to understand when the rules are appropriate and when they might be broken.
3. **Competent** Making conscious choices about what to do and how to monitor and modify actions to meet goals.
4. **Proficient** Operating intuitively with know-how, viewing actions holistically within both short and long term goals.
5. **Expert** Integrating the teacher and the task, operating fluently with automaticity and few surprises, in control of the situation.

- **Novice Teachers**
  Novice teachers seek the comfort of rules and procedures for guidance. With little repertoire to draw from, they attempt to duplicate the structured lessons in the teacher’s manual. This might mean preparing and implementing a guided reading lesson for a specific story in the precise sequence described in the district’s reading text. Initially, there is little variation from the scripted text and scant attention to individual student responses. The novice presents the lesson as written in the manual, following her advanced preparation.

- **Advanced Beginner Teachers**
  Advanced Beginners start to stretch the pattern a bit. They are at the early stages of developing richer knowledge about basic classroom operations, their students and teaching specific subjects. For example, they still might use the reading series as a foundation for lessons, but with a bit more comfort and confidence in basic routines, they add strategies like experiential language charts to expand the lesson structure. They also might modify the sequence that the publisher suggests, incorporating tips from colleagues as they develop personal preferences in both stories and techniques.

- **Competent Teachers**
  Competent teachers are goal oriented across a spectrum of instructional concerns. They have the ability to change course during lessons to better meet the immediate needs of learners. During the planning and teaching of a reading lesson, for example, they consider the needs of specific learners and tailor the lesson to help each student develop literacy skills. Assessment of student progress is ongoing and shapes each day’s lesson design. The teacher’s manual no longer controls instructional practice.

- **Proficient Teachers**
  Proficient teachers operate at multiple levels simultaneously. They have goals for the class, goals for each student and goals for themselves. They skillfully organize instruction that has both short-term and long-term coherence. Reading lessons, which extend throughout the day and across the curriculum, are not limited to a special period. Students are flexibly grouped and regrouped as skills develop. There is increased attention and greater sophistication in applying informal and formal assessments. These are used to organize differentiated lessons and to form specialized groups.
• Expert Teachers

Expert teachers expand personal and professional proficiency in all areas of their teaching. There is an organic flow to the day that extends to the ways students self-manage many classroom routines. Teachers at this stage anticipate potential management and learning bottlenecks and intervene before problems emerge. They are able to fluidly apply a vast technical repertoire of knowledge and skills about learning and learners. While seeing children as unique individuals, their personal catalog of learner types helps them to assemble targeted materials and lessons that smooth learning pathways. This confidence and comfort allows them to establish routines that promote independence and students’ sense of personal responsibility for learning outcomes. Individual and small group conferences enhance students’ abilities to self-assess and make appropriate learning choices.

Transitioning From Novice to Expert

According to Berliner, the novice stage occupies the first year of teaching. Most teachers reach the competent stage after three or four years, with only a modest proportion moving to the proficient stage and fewer still attaining expert status. The growth from novice to more expert teaching requires more than simple experience. It is also a highly personal voyage through the seas of adult development. Having a skilled navigator along to plot the course and find safe harbors increases the safety of the journey and allows one to enjoy the adventure. Skilled supervisors come equipped with a chart, a compass, and knowledge of the route ahead.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Using Reading Instruction to Illustrate Stages of Teacher Development</th>
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| **Novice:** Seeks rules and recipes to guide actions.  
A guided reading lesson is prepared and implemented in the exact method and sequence described in the teacher’s manual. There is little variation from the scripted text and scant attention to the student responses. |
| **Advanced Beginner:** Seeks contextual and strategic knowledge; beginning to stretch beyond the prescribed lesson.  
The reading series is still the foundation for the lesson, but increased confidence and developing personal style allow for enhancements. For example, an experiential language chart might be used to expand the lesson structure. Sequence of instruction might be modified to better meet student needs, or to adjust to schedule constraints. |
| **Competent:** Makes intentional choices about what to do and how to monitor and modify actions to meet goals.  
Knowledge of specific learners is applied to the reading lesson planning. In planning and implementation, the lesson is tailored to help each student develop literacy skills, as needed. Reading groups are flexible and multiple methods are drawn upon to support learning. |
| **Proficient:** Operates intuitively with know-how, viewing actions holistically across both short and long term goals.  
Reading lessons extend throughout the day and are part of content area instruction. There is increased attention and greater sophistication in applying formal and informal reading assessment to monitor student progress and target student needs. Special interest reading and writing centers are central to the learning, providing for differentiated skill development and in-depth exploration of a variety of topics. |
| **Expert:** Integrates the teacher and the task, in control of the classroom, operating fluently with few surprises.  
Reading routines promote students’ independence and personal responsibility for meeting learning goals. Individual and small group conferencing, self-directed projects and self-assessment inventories enhance students’ abilities to analyze their own progress, set new goals and pursue increasingly sophisticated learning outcomes. |

Metacognition as an Organizer for Professional Practice

Experts think differently about their practice than do less effective practitioners. They also think about their thinking differently. Metacognition refers to two aspects of complex thinking processes. One is awareness of one’s thinking processes while they are occurring. The other is the self-regulation of these processes.

Expert teachers exercise metacognitive skills in a variety of ways, monitoring decisions, choices and the impact of actions. This is the inner voice of expertise. As they access this resource, master teachers continually sort through their internalized knowledge-bases about the structure of the discipline they are currently teaching, their instructional repertoire, knowledge of the individual students with whom they are working and knowledge about their own goals, values and beliefs. We describe these knowledge-bases in more detail later in this section. As they sort this treasure-trove of options, master teachers mentally articulate and apply clear criteria for their selections.

It is the kinds and qualities of their filters that most separates experts from novices. Expert teachers are able to pursue multiple goals for a wider variety of students during the flow of the lesson than are novices. They always have big picture outcomes for thinking and social skills and continually reinforce them. They manage relationships with the whole class at the same time that they intervene with and support individual learners. Experts design specific lessons that fit within a bigger curriculum plan that is operating all the time. Novice teachers tend to be more immediate, intent on managing the flow of a specific lesson plan or controlling student behavior.

Self-regulation of thinking processes is the essence of intention-driven action in the classroom. This vital feedback loop helps alert teachers calibrate their choices and behaviors with their intentions, encouraging in-flight reflection and self-monitoring. This attention might mean monitoring the pace of one’s speech and use of pauses to elicit student thinking. It also might mean controlling emotions when responding to a difficult student. In essence, it is the thermostat of self-control that regulates attention, task-focus, impulsiveness, humor and a host of emotional, mental and physical responses.

A skilled chemistry teacher notices something is not right in her classroom. The noise level and level of student attention to the lab task does not match her sense of what is most appropriate for this lesson. As an expert teacher and expert thinker she first notices her own awareness, remembering how she might have responded in her first years of teaching. She quickly scans the class to gather additional information to formulate her next decision. She controls the impulse to admonish students for their behavior. The wisdom of experience has taught her that when students are off-task, there might be something wrong with the task itself. These thoughts and the monitoring of these thoughts all occur in split seconds as she mentally sorts out possible issues and possible actions.

Moving to the center of the lab, she calls for a pause in the action and calmly asks selected students to describe the source of their confusion. This action restores a sense of order and purposefulness to the room. By noticing and controlling her thinking, this master teacher is able to resolve this issue and smoothly extend student learning. Had she reacted impulsively, without monitoring and controlling her inner responses, she might have broken the lesson flow by contributing to student distraction and breaking momentum for all involved.
An Expert Teacher’s Professional Lenses

The knowledge base on teaching is both wide and deep (Saphier, Haley-Speca and Gower, 2008). For our purposes, we are organizing it here within five broad perspectives. We draw on the work of Lee Shulman (1987) for the first four: knowledge of the structure of the discipline(s); self; teaching skills and strategies; and learners and learning, and have added a fifth -- knowledge of collaborative work.

These five lenses offer frameworks for exploring growth areas for teachers. They provide organizers for the supervisor to structure learning-focused conversations with a teacher; to set learning goals; and to assemble resources for supporting and sustaining growth in personal and craft knowledge.

Knowledge of the Structure of the Discipline

Teacher knowledge of the structure of a given content discipline correlates highly with student success in that area. This understanding moves beyond content knowledge alone and into the organization of knowledge within each domain. The structure of the discipline means knowing the big ideas within a content area; the organizing principles, key concepts and the ways in which they influence one another. In elementary mathematics, for example, understanding means being able to explain and illustrate a sense of number and how various operations such as addition and subtraction relate to each other. In social studies, it means showing students how to apply geographic, political, historical, economic and social perspectives to a given situation.

These deeper understandings greatly influence lesson design and lesson flexibility so that students can develop meaningful cognitive maps of their own (Darling-Hammond, 1997). When teachers have fragmented understandings themselves, they transfer these to their students and contribute to student misconceptions within that content area.

Teachers with rich structural knowledge are more flexible and resourceful in meeting the challenges that arise during classroom lessons. Real learning is messy. Students do not always fit neatly within the boundaries of lesson plans. Therefore, teacher content knowledge must always be greater and more complexly structured than that of their students. This allows teachers to prioritize and select those content objectives most appropriate for their students.

During planning and reflecting conversations, supervisors need to listen carefully for gaps in a teacher’s understanding of important curricular ideas. Creating a climate in which it is safe for a teacher to ask for help with content understandings is a necessary condition for growth. No one knows everything about a discipline. This is especially true for elementary teachers . . . also apply greater complexity and sophistication in analyzing and understanding instructional problems.
teachers and others who teach more than one content area. Providing resource materials and including mini-tutorials during conversations reduces anxiety and at the same time helps to ensure content accuracy for that teacher’s students.

It is important for teachers to understand and be able to model the specialized ways of thinking in a given field. Literature and physical science, for example, each have their own principles of inquiry. In social studies, ideas are organized in specific ways. Mathematics has a rich problem solving repertoire. Writing narrative text is different than writing expository text. Each of these ways of knowing is a rich element within its content area. By promoting these skills and perspectives, teachers help students discover how those who produce knowledge and knowing in a specific domain develop and modify ideas. So, too, do supervisors create these understandings for the teachers with whom they work.

Each content area is a minefield of misconceptions. Experienced teachers learn to anticipate these as they appear within curriculum topics. Their lesson plans reflect this thinking as they design ways to surface and dispel these barriers to deeper understanding. Knowing which misconceptions are developmentally appropriate at certain stages of learning is valuable craft knowledge. Knowing how to help students work through them is even more useful. The blend of content knowledge, learner knowledge and teaching knowledge that connects subject matter to targeted learning strategies is called pedagogical content knowledge (Shulman, 1987). Expert teachers assemble and draw upon a rich collection of analogies, models, memory aids and explanatory approaches to represent ideas and understandings to their students. They also develop tricks-of-the-trade for helping students to grapple willingly with misconceptions and to accept these as part of the learning process. One study of first year biology teachers noted that when the novices were presenting topics with which they had great depth of knowledge, they let their classes explore ideas as they asked questions that were more open-ended and promoted richer classroom discourse. When the novices were less confident of their own content knowledge, lessons were structured more rigidly the teachers themselves talked more and asked lower cognitive level questions (Carlson, 1991).

Helping teachers anticipate likely misconceptions and sharing instructional solutions is one way that supervisors increase effective practice. It is important to remember that individual teachers approach each subject differently (Shulman, 1987). For elementary teachers this means the ways they approach specific content areas such as reading or mathematics. For secondary teachers this usually means specific topics within a curriculum.

A teacher’s approach to specific subject areas is a special consideration for supervisors of both elementary and secondary teachers. The choice of stance—coaching, collaborating, consulting or calibrating may need to be weighted differently for different content areas or curriculum topics. While teachers encounter a general set of universal challenges, content specific issues need to be analyzed for possible interventions. If classroom management issues crop up at specific times of day, the teacher’s comfort with a specific subject area maybe an element to consider.

A supervisor’s own content knowledge is a factor here as well. We all have our stretch areas. Sharing these with a teacher communicates a belief in lifelong learning. It is possible that the teacher may have content strengths to share with the supervisor and can contribute to mutual learning in that manner.

Expert teachers exercise metacognitive skills in a variety of ways, monitoring decisions, choices and the impact of actions. This is the inner voice of expertise.
Knowledge of Self

Knowledge of self includes the territories of conceptual, ego and moral development. It also includes knowledge of the personal values, beliefs and standards that guide daily decision-making. If teachers are to be effective with an increasingly diverse student population, they need to recognize and understand their own worldviews before they can appreciate and honor the worldviews of their students (McAllister & Irvine, 2000, Lindsey, Robins & Terrell, 2009).

Values and beliefs shape the perceptions and judgments that carry teachers through their days. They undergird the goals teachers set for themselves and for their students. Beliefs and values are the most influential element in the type of classroom culture and learning environment that teachers develop with their students (Pajares, 1992).

Beliefs about the nature of learning and the purposes and process of teaching shape curricular and instructional preferences. These beliefs also shape personal standards for what students should learn and the desired qualities of student performances and products. In what ways is learning about the transmission of important cultural knowledge and the development of basic skills? In what ways is it about developing students’ thinking and problem solving skills and capacities? In what ways is it about developing a just society infused with democratic principles? In what ways is it about helping students discover and reach for their full potentials as human beings? And in what ways is it about promoting students’ ethical and spiritual development (Eisner, 1994)?

These goals often overlap. In the heat of teaching and with the press of the clock and calendar, each teacher makes decisions about what to emphasize and what to let slide. These choices are at heart a matter of values and beliefs. Bringing these to conscious attention helps a teacher navigate conflicting options and the sometimes conflicting goals he or she encounters when his or her own beliefs bump headlong into institutional beliefs and values. Current stages of adult development influence how each teacher resolves these dilemmas. Caring supervisors support these explorations as vital lessons on the road to developing confidence and expertise as a teacher.

Knowledge of one’s own learning style preferences is a special area of self-knowledge. It is important for teachers to realize that their preferred style may not be that of all of their students. Some of us perceive and process the world globally. Others prefer more sequential approaches. Some of us are task-driven and others are relationship driven. Some of us are visually dominant and others orient towards kinesthetic or auditory processing strategies (Guild & Garger, 1998).

All these style preferences, and the many subtle ways they manifest themselves, appear in our teaching. The ability to stretch against one’s own preferred style is the hallmark of flexibility and the mark of a master teacher who can connect with a wide variety of learners.

Style is also an important area for supervisors to consider in their interactions with teachers. Flexibility in approach is especially important when the supervisor and the teacher have very different learning style preferences. The supervisor needs to remember that these are preferences and that the most resourceful people can stretch and flex as needed. It is also useful to remember that under stress we revert to our most dominant learning styles. This means that supervisors need to be especially aware of this dimension during times of predictable stress during the school year. It is also an important consideration when a teacher has had a particularly trying experience and needs to process it.
The reflecting conversation, offers an opportunity for sorting out the dilemmas and tensions teachers encounter in their daily work. Blocks or confusions in thinking are often a sign that a teacher has encountered a situation with students, parents or colleagues that violates some deeply held value or belief. This belief may not have consciously surfaced yet, but it is at the heart of this particular matter. A skilled supervisor will focus the conversation by exploring tensions from the teacher's point of view to help him or her discover the values that he or she perceives are being violated. With self-knowledge as a frame, the supervisor and teacher can then pursue other perspectives and possible approaches to the situation. The supervisor may also need to take a consulting stance to share other viewpoints and alternative explanations that have not occurred to the supervisor.

**Knowledge of Teaching Skills and Strategies**

Expert teachers, like concert violinists, consciously develop their performance repertoires. They assemble and hone microroutines that are combined and applied to fit a wide variety of conditions and settings. Master teachers automatize many routines and basic moves to free cognitive space for more sophisticated sensing of the needs of their learners. Such unconscious competence is the mark of an expert in the classroom. The lack of automaticity with basic moves, such as getting and maintaining student attention, giving clear directions and establishing routines for smooth classroom transitions, consumes the emotional and physical energy of many low-performing teachers. This is why these and other areas of basic classroom management are usually the first level of concerns addressed in the supervisory relationship. Until these fundamentals are under control, there is often little space for more sophisticated investigations of instructional practice.

Lack of comfort in these arenas blocks teachers' openness to ideas and resources that address other areas of teaching practice. It is often useful to front load face-to-face time at the beginning of the school year to share practical strategies and routines that work well.

Content specific pedagogy is an important variable that increases student success (Wenglinsky, 2000). Students whose teachers help them to develop higher-order thinking and problem solving skills linked to specific content areas outperform students whose teachers only convey lower-order skills (McLaughlin & Talbert, 1993). Supervisors support this essential part of the developmental journey and also extend the teacher's skills during planning conversations when they inquire into these elements. This is a place where the consulting stance adds great value at the point in the conversation when specific teaching techniques are being considered.

**Knowledge of Learners and Learning**

Knowledge of who learners are and how each learns best guides the special relationship between teacher and students. The greatest teaching repertoire in the world is wasted if it is not well matched to the needs of learners (Saphier, Haley-Speca & Gower, 2008). The push for smaller class sizes and smaller schools is a response to the need to know one another. In an increasingly diverse world, personal knowledge and close relationships help to connect learners to teachers, to important ideas and to each other.

The exploding knowledge base about brain development, learning styles, multiple intelligence, developmental differences and cultural patterns energizes Lee Shulman's conception of the need for pedagogical learner knowledge on the part of all teachers (Shulman, 1987). Developmental differences extend far beyond the primary grades. Over the years, these differences amplify as the span between students widens in Piagetian terms. There are many middle school and high school students who operate at a solid concrete operational level. These learners often run headlong into a curriculum organized
by abstractions introduced through symbol systems. When teachers recognize these learning patterns and they approach instruction flexibly, they begin lessons and units with concrete experiences, then help students represent ideas with pictures and graphics as they support student language development and meaning making. This pathway leads students to firmer conceptual development and richer understandings of abstract ideas (Lipton & Wellman, 2000).

Given a changing student population, there is an increasing need for culturally respectful approaches to teaching and learning. Materials and methods that engage one population of learners may confuse or offend another. There is an important overlap here for teachers between this area and knowledge of self. How a teacher came to know an idea or discipline may not be an appropriate or effective cultural match for the students to which he or she is now teaching that same material.

Language differences are emerging as an important variable for teachers to consider. There is a critical variance between students’ social discourse and their formal knowledge of the structure and norms of academic discourse in specific content fields (Lee & Fradd, 1998). Skilled teachers help students bridge their own language to formal academic language, integrating personal and cultural relevance with content understandings. This learning is more robust and more likely to be retained by students. This concept means that ultimately all teachers, no matter what their content specialties, are teachers of language and teachers of thinking.

**Knowledge of Collaboration**

Knowledge of the whys and hows of collaboration is a hallmark of expert practice. Developing expertise in teaching is a joint venture. By participating in communities of practice, teachers expand and energize their own learning which in turn enhances the learning of their students. In powerful professional communities, the work of teaching and the craft knowledge for doing it skillfully are collective property. Studies of the best school systems in the world note well-developed patterns of high-quality, collaborative, professional engagement. In these settings, teachers work together to improve their own and others’ instructional skills (Barber & Mourshed, 2009). Productive teacher teams regularly gather evidence of student learning and use these data to evaluate and modify instruction to target their students’ learning needs (Hattie, 2009).

Successful collaboration requires and develops the knowledge, skills and dispositions for learning with and from colleagues. An essential value is that working with others is an important part of the work not something that keeps teachers from their work. In healthy collegial cultures professionals take collective responsibility for all of their students’ learning and understand the links to how their own ways of working drive improvements in student performance. Ongoing cycles of assessment, inquiry and analysis, pattern-seeking and planning provide teachers with a fine-grained sense of the cumulative effects of shared practices (Lipton & Wellman, 2012).

Expert collaborators have practical knowledge of how adults work and learn together in groups. They know how to contribute to the learning of others and how to develop ideas and resource with their fellow professionals. Productive peer interaction takes courage as teachers navigate the vulnerabilities and insecurities of opening their physical and metaphorical classroom doors to the scrutiny of others.

Structuring and supporting the growth of teachers as colleagues is a critical supervisory responsibility. This is an important arena for applying the Continuum of Interaction during learning-focused conversations with individuals and teams.

We all have our stretch areas. Sharing these with others communicates a belief in lifelong learning.
Supervision as a Professional Vision

As supervisors gain experience and perspective on the craft of supervision, they gain new insights into themselves as teachers and as learners. This learning occurs on multiple levels. On one level, supervisors develop richer understandings about the craft of teaching. While engaging in personal reflection and articulating their own knowledge base to teachers, they deepen and integrate personal knowledge about professional practice. On another level, supervisors revisit their own history as teachers as they monitor the growth of teachers and come to see the parallel between this journey and the journey all learners take in any new field of endeavor. Yet on another level, the supervisor is learning about the art of supporting teachers. This, too, becomes a voyage of discovery in the passage from novice to expert supervision.

In an increasingly diverse world, personal knowledge and close relationships help to connect learners to teachers, to important ideas and to each other.
References:


Lipton, L. & Wellman, B. (2000) Pathways to understanding: Patterns and practices in the learning-focused classroom. Sherman, CT: MiravAia LLC.


Learning-focused Supervision:
Assessing and Developing Professional Practice
Using the Framework for Teaching

Exercise Section
Mix, Match, Exchange

Name

• One thing I find stimulating in my work:

• One thing I find challenging in my work:

• A belief I hold about learning-focused supervision:

Name

• One thing I find stimulating in my work:

• One thing I find challenging in my work:

• A belief I hold about learning-focused supervision:
Think & Write

As you consider developing learning-focused relationships, what are some goals you are setting:

• For yourself?

• For your supervisory relationships?

What are some things to which you will pay attention to determine your success?
Six Strategies for Learning-Focused Consultation

Offer a Menu
If one idea is useful, several are even more effective. Suggesting multiple options when planning or problem solving (we suggest at least three) provides information and support while leaving the choice making, and the responsibility for making that choice, with your colleague. “Given your concerns about developing meaningful homework assignments, here are three options to consider . . .

Think Aloud
Just as in instructional problem solving or modeling strategic reading strategies for students, sharing the thought process along with a solution or idea enhances the learning and maximizes the likelihood of transfer to future applications. “When I encounter student confusions like this I first search for the underlying knowledge gaps and thinking patterns that might be contributing to those confusions. Then I try to figure out the instructional building blocks that will help develop essential understandings. So, in this case, you might look at ways to scaffold your students’ understandings of these objectives.”

Share What, Why and How
When sharing expertise, an effective verbal pattern is describing the ‘what, why and how of an idea or suggestion. This might sound like: “Here is a strategy for addressing that issue (what); which is likely to be effective because (why); and this is how you might apply it (how).

State A Principle of Practice
Connecting a specific strategy or solution to the broader principles of effective practice provides an opportunity to learn and apply the principle, as well as the individual idea, in other situations. This might sound like: “An important principle of practice related to (topic) is ________; so a strategy like (suggestion) should be effective in this situation.”

Generate Categories
Ideas or solutions as categories provide a wider range of choice and a richer opportunity for learning than discrete strategies or applications. For example, a category such as ‘grouping students’ is broader than ‘putting students in pairs’ or suggesting a specific partnering strategy. This approach is especially effective when categories are offered as a menu. This might sound like: “Several broad categories of successful classroom management include attention moves, establishing routines, maintaining momentum and developing effective transitions between activities.”

Name Causal Factors
Rather than suggesting potential solutions, it can be very productive to offer several factors that might be producing the problem. This option is particularly effective when working with experienced teachers. This might sound like: “There are several things that typically would produce that behavior (or result); for example ________, ________, or __________.” Followed by a shift to a coaching stance to add: “Given what you know about your situation, what’s your hunch about which of these, if any, might be an influence?”
### Scenario

In this middle school Math lesson, the teacher's objective is: Students will analyze properties of plane geometric figures in order to identify properties of angles, parallel, and intersecting line segments. Students will view a local neighborhood map and identify parallel, intersecting and right angled streets, using their own geometric solid shapes, rulers, colored pencils, paper, math book as reference.

Please show me the right angles, how about the ones that are not right angles?

Where will you put your solid figures?

Can you show me an acute angle?

How about your parallel streets? Perpendicular?

I can't wait for you to show your work…

You are doing such a good job!

We are coming up on 15 minutes, and I love what I see---I'm going to choose a couple that are making progress, and are about 75% done…

(As T moves among pairs, students show her their work, and she asks them to point out the features, parallel, intersecting, right angles, etc.)

Let's give this pair a big hand for their work…

### Stance Shifting

Coaching Inquiry

Consultative Strategy

### Scenario

In a sixth grade lesson, the teacher's stated objective is, "Students will understand tone and mood, and the tools an author uses to get the reader to feel something and get to know the characters."

How many have seen the movie Mary Poppins? (8 hands up) What do you think the tone was that the author intended? (1 hand up: tired of kids being spoiled) ok, turn and talk at tables, what is the mood of Mary Poppins? (Table talk for 35 seconds) 5,4,3,2,1

What kind of feeling, emotion, attitude were they trying to give you?

-----waiting------

(One st) ok, Christian (stuff's not always perfect) T writes on board

Ok so quickly, you will watch the preview. What is the author trying to convey in the preview---what is the feeling they are trying to get you to feel?

T displays the preview of M Poppins

What kind of emotion did they convey? (1: happiness)

What else? Caitlin (sadness) what part was sad?

What else? (cheerful) what made it cheerful, Josh?

Aria? (dancing and singing) that made it cheerful…

### Stance Shifting

Coaching Inquiry

Consulting Strategy

Coaching Inquiry
Paraphrasing: Increasing Confidence and Consistency

Acknowledge and Clarify

*Emotions and Content*

- So, you’re feeling _______
- You’re noticing that _______
- In other words ____________
- Hmmm, you’re suggesting that _______

1. This concept is really tough to teach at this grade level. It requires a degree of intellectual development that I don’t think all kids have at this age.

2. I’m not sure that all parents are ready support the new homework policy. It’s a real break with tradition that is sure to upset those people that want our policies to still be like things were when they were in school.

3. I have a kid in my 3rd period class that is really getting to me. I think he stays up at night thinking of ways to provoke me. He knows he gets to me and that upsets me even more.

4. Today’s lesson really went well. It was the first time that the cooperative groups really worked well together both socially and academically. I hope we have more days like today.
Summarize and Organize

*Stating themes and big ideas, separating confusing or jumbled ideas.*

- So, there seem to be two key ideas here ________
- One the one hand ________ and on the other ________
- For you then, several themes are emerging ________
- It seems you’re considering a sequence or hierarchy here ________

1. What a day I’ve had! The kids were all wound up by the change in the schedule --- I hope that settles down soon. And on top of that, the network went down today and I had to scramble to run my lesson without Internet access. It’s really frustrating when you take time to plan for technology integration and there are so many student and technical variables.

2. Jerome’s mother is coming in to see my tomorrow and I’m really worried. He’s basically a good kid, but he’s slacking off and not paying attention in class. I need to figure out what’s going on for him but I’m not sure his mother and I are seeing things the same way.

3. I finally figured out how to teach that lab on density in a way that helps kids get the concept and not get lost in all the math and measurements. But, wow does it take time to do it right. Now, I’m behind in the curriculum with kids who are finally more confident as science learners.

4. Developing good formative assessments sure takes time both in their creation and then in the scoring. I think it’s ultimately going to be worth it in terms of student learning but there is sure a lot of upfront work for teachers and teams.
Shifting Level of Abstraction --Up

Reframing the speaker’s language to a higher level of abstraction

So, a(n) _______ for you might be ____________

• category or concept
• value
• belief
• assumption
• goal
• intention

1. I really love teaching expository writing. It’s really about helping students learn to think clearly and express those thoughts in interesting ways. When kids care about the topic and have something to say, it’s rewarding to help them find their voice and communicate ideas effectively.

2. We just had the worst meeting of the year. People were all over the place --- no one stayed on the topic and people kept interrupting one another. If our students behaved that way we’d stop things and talk about respect and effective process. I’m at a loss as to why our classroom norms don’t transfer to the meeting room.

3. This new social studies unit still needs work. The materials are disorganized and the major concepts are not stated clearly. I practically have to revise each lesson from scratch to sort it out for the next day. This really should have been field-tested better before it was dropped on us.

4. I don’t know why my students aren’t doing better with reading comprehension. I’ve been working on building background knowledge and teaching them strategic reading skills and they still are struggling when I check for understanding or give them short quizzes.
Shifting Level of Abstraction -- Down
Reframing the speaker's language to a lower level of abstraction

So, an _______ for you might be ___________

- example
- nonexample
- strategy
- choice
- action
- option

1. I really love teaching expository writing. It’s really about helping students learn to think clearly and express those thoughts in interesting ways. When kids care about the topic and have something to say, it’s rewarding to help them find their voice and communicate ideas effectively.

2. We just had the worst meeting of the year. People were all over the place --- no one stayed on the topic and people kept interrupting one another. If our students behaved that way we’d stop things and talk about respect and effective process. I’m at a loss as to why our classroom norms don’t transfer to the meeting room.

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Crafting Goal Paraphrases

Construct a paraphrase to respond to each of the following statements. Check your language for its invitational quality. Be particularly aware of positive presuppositions.

1. I don't understand why these kids aren't more engaged in their work. I design interesting lessons, I'm enthusiastic and I work hard. It's all very demoralizing!

2. My principal visits my classroom every day and I'm worried about what she's thinking. I don't know where I stand with her or if she even likes me.

3. This curriculum is confusing for my students. The concepts are too abstract and inappropriate for this grade level and the activities don't make sense.

4. Parents only contact me when they have a complaint or concern. It seems like no one notices all the good things going on in my classes and all of the positive things that I'm doing for their children.
Paraphrasing: Shifting the Level of Abstraction

With your partner, craft a shift level of abstraction paraphrase (up or down) for each example.

1. I think that I need to spend more time working on the deeper conceptual building blocks of math with my primary students to build a firmer foundation of understanding and less time on computational practice. I hope that I can get parents to understand why this matters.

2. My students really got excited when we held a debate about global warming. They really dug in and did their research on the environmental data, the economic implications and the political issues.

3. My grade level team is struggling when we work with student performance data. We tend to hold back any comments that might appear to be criticism of each other. We all know that this is going on but we can’t seem to move through it.

4. I have a student this year who is making me crazy. He’s really bright but he’s only doing just enough work to get by. In fact, he seems to be calculating the exact grades he needs to get on each assignment to maintain a passing score. I think he’s really enjoying the game.
The Road to Learning

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Try This

Embedding Positive Presuppositions When Asking Questions

Identify the presupposition(s) in each of the following questions. Consider the intention of the question, and rewrite a question that communicates positive presupposition.

1. Do you have any hands-on materials for this lesson?

2. Can you think of any reasons for that behavior?

3. What two things would you change about this assignment?

4. At what point did you notice the lesson wasn't working?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inquiry</th>
<th>From Present Practice</th>
<th>To Desired Practice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Establish classroom routines.</td>
<td>With minimal guidance and prompting, students follow routines.</td>
<td>Follow established routines. With regular guidance and prompting, students follow routines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is consistently successful.</td>
<td>Some disruption of learning due to ineffective classroom procedures.</td>
<td>No disruption due to inconsistent classroom discipline and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher’s management of instructional groups is inconsistent, leading to some disruption of learning.</td>
<td>Some instructional time is lost due to only partially effective classroom routines.</td>
<td>There is little loss of instructional group time due to effective classroom routines.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With regular guidance and prompting, students follow established routines.</td>
<td>Partially effective classroom routines and for the handling of materials and supplies.</td>
<td>Effectively execute classroom routines and for the handling of materials and supplies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Elements Include:
- Managing Classroom Procedures
- Developing Teacher Expertise
- Inquiry Exercise
- Management of instructional groups
- Management of transitions
## Communicating with Students

Elements include:
- Expectations for learning
- Directions and procedures
- Explanations of content
- Use of oral and written language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>From Present Practice</th>
<th>To Desired Practice</th>
<th>Inquiry</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher’s attempt to explain the instructional purpose has only limited success, and/or directions and procedures must be clarified after the initial student confusion.</td>
<td>The instructional purpose of the lesson is clearly communicated to students, including where it is situation within broader learning; directions and procedures are explained clearly.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher’s explanation of the content may contain minor errors; some portions are clear while other portions are difficult to follow.</td>
<td>The teacher’s explanation of content is well scaffolded, clear, and accurate and connects with student knowledge and experience.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The teacher’s explanation consists of a monologue, with no invitation to the students for intellectual engagement.</td>
<td>During the explanation of content, the teacher invites student intellectual engagement.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher’s spoken language is correct; however, vocabulary is limited or not fully appropriate to students’ ages or backgrounds.</td>
<td>The teacher’s spoken or written language is clear and correct. Vocabulary is appropriate to students’ ages and interests.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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</table>
### From Present Practice to Desired Practice

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Learning tasks and activities are partially aligned with the instructional outcomes but require only minimal thinking by students to be passive or merely compliant.</td>
<td>Learning tasks and activities are aligned with the instructional outcomes and are designed to challenge student thinking, resulting in active intellectual engagement by most students with important and challenging content and with teacher scaffolding to support that engagement.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The lesson has a recognizable structure; however, the pacing of the lesson may not provide students the time needed to be intellectually engaged. Support that engagement begins with teacher scaffolding to encourage students with important and challenging instructional outcomes. By most students to be passive or merely thinking, resulting in active intellectual engagement by design with the instructional outcomes and are designed with learning tasks and activities are aligned with the instructional outcomes. Elements include: Grouping of Students, Instructional Materials and Resources, Structure and pacing, Engaging Students in Learning, Activities and Assignments.
Using Questions, Prompts and Discussion Techniques

Elements include:
- Quality of questions/ prompts
- Discussion techniques
- Student participation

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<td>The teacher’s questions lead students along a single path of inquiry, with answers seemingly determined in advance.</td>
<td>While the teacher may use some low-level questions, he or she poses questions to students designed to promote thinking and understanding.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher attempts to frame some questions designed to promote student thinking and understanding, but only a few students are involved.</td>
<td>The teacher creates genuine discussion among students providing adequate time for students to respond and stepping aside when appropriate.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher attempts to engage all students in the discussion and to encourage them to respond to one another, with uneven results.</td>
<td>The teacher successfully engages most students in the discussion, employing a range of strategies to ensure that most students are heard.</td>
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</table>
Try This

Review the following examples. Identify the vague language. How might you probe for specificity? In what ways would this tool be useful to a learning-focused supervisor?

1. These kids never do their homework!

2. Parents don't care.

3. My students are always wild.

4. I'm not ready.

5. I have to do this.

6. This strategy is better.
### Managing Classroom Procedures

**Elements include:**
- Management of instructional groups
- Management of materials and supplies
- Management of transitions
- Management of procedures

### Questions that Focus Thinking • Inquiry Exercise

#### Paraphrase

<table>
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<td>My kids do great working in groups. I love to give them team tasks and watch them go to it!</td>
<td>I can't seem to get my students to focus. We waste so much time just taking attendance and settling in each morning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My class usually responds very quickly to signals. But some students just aren't with the program yet.</td>
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**Paraphrase:**

My kids do great working in groups. I love to give them team tasks and watch them go to it! I can't seem to get my students to focus. We waste so much time just taking attendance and settling in each morning. My class usually responds very quickly to signals. But some students just aren't with the program yet.
### Inquiry

- Paraphrase:

  - In my experience, my students are not really motivated to read in social reading. When I ask questions, I don’t get very many hands up.

- Teacher:

  - None of my students are really motivated to read in social reading. I ask questions, but I don’t get many hands up.

### Paraphrase

- Reward:

  - Perhaps I should do some kind of reward. Maybe I should offer a small prize for completing a task or for participating in class discussions.

- Teacher:

  - Maybe I should do something to motivate my students to participate in class discussions. I could offer small rewards for those who participate.

### Paraphrase

- Elements include:

  - Engaging Students in Learning
  - Grouping of students
  - Instructional materials and resources
  - Structure and pacing
  - Activities and assignments

- Teacher:

  - I spend hours making games and activities for my kids, but they still don’t participate in class discussions. Perhaps I should consider offering small rewards for participation.
### Using Questions, Prompts and Discussion Techniques

Elements include:

- Quality of questions/prompts
- Discussion techniques
- Student participation

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<th>Paraphrase</th>
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<td>When I ask a question, the same students raise their hands. How can I get more kids to participate?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>I don’t like group work. When I put my students into groups, one or two end up doing all the work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>This is a great strategy. My students really like it.</td>
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</table>
### Inquiry Exercise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
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<tr>
<td>1  Several students are texting under their desks while Mr. T is explaining the problem on the whiteboard. After several minutes he notices these behaviors and says “Would it help if I text the problem to you?” Two of the students put their smart phones away; two do not.</td>
<td>Based on your experience with this class, how typical is this student response pattern?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Given your experience with classroom management, what might be some alternative choices for correcting inattentive behavior?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2  The objective is clearly written on the board in Ms. M’s 5th grade classroom. She begins the lesson with a ten-minute lecture on the land rush using a timeline and a US map for visual reference, with no mention of the learning objectives.</td>
<td>What were some indicators that your students were clear about the objective and the expectations for learning in this lesson?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>As you were describing the land rush, what were some indications of students’ understanding of the content and connections the posted objective?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3  “This is hard, but most of you will be able to do it.” Teacher circulates among students as they are working. Student 1: “Mr. P, I can’t figure this out.” Mr. P “Just do the best you can.” Student 2: “Mr. P, I’m not sure if I’ve got this.” Mr. P. “You’ve solved these kinds of equations before, think about the variable here.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4  Ms. J claps three times; 15 of 24 students clap back. She directs students to their small groups. Five of the groups move to tables and choose a materials manager within 4 minutes, ready for next directions. When Ms. J is ready to describe the task, one group (of six) is not yet in place.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5  As students are entering the room, Ms. G smiles, greets them and directs them to the problem on the board. Some students get right to work, others go to their seat but don’t take out materials, still others are milling in the back of the room sharing stories about their weekend. Without addressing the standing students, Ms. G moves to the board and begins the lesson.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6  Ms. H has projected a snapshot of student writing on the whiteboard for a demonstration lesson on editing. However, the image clarity and print size is impossible for the students to read. She keeps the students in place at their desks rather than inviting them to move forward.</td>
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The objective is clearly written on the board in Ms. M’s 5th grade classroom. She begins the lesson with a ten-minute lecture on the land rush using a timeline and a US map for visual reference, with no mention of the learning objectives.

Mr. J asks his first grade class:
“Who can give me an example of a mammal?” 20 or 22 hands go up. One student is called on and says “dog.” “Who can give me an example of a reptile?” Same 20 students volunteer. A different student is called on and says, “snake.” Finally, Mr. J asks, “What are some differences between mammals and reptiles?” Four hands go up.

Dr. W demonstrated a chemical reaction. Lab partners are completing a short answer worksheet. Some examples include: “What materials were used?” “What was the evidence of reaction?” “What conclusions are you drawing?”

Mr. N is moving about the classroom while students write responses to the prompt on the board based on a reading assignment. He is occasionally praising (‘good job, nice work’), occasionally correcting (‘this needs a capital’, ‘this is an incomplete sentence’) and occasionally suggesting (‘you need a transition word’, use more vivid language’) as he circulates.

Ms. Z’s second graders are reading about a text on weather. She asks for a thumbs-up signal to the question “What is one type of weather?” 17 of the 21 students show a thumbs-up, but her sampling reveals only 2 correct examples. She directs them all to re-read the text more carefully.
Exploring Student Work Products

Directions: Ask teachers to collect samples of student work (in a given content, over a specified period of time works well). Ask processing questions such as those below to stimulate thinking.

MATERIAL COLLECTED (Work Sample(s):

Cognition: Identification
What are some things you’re noticing about ____________________________?

What are some examples of ____________________________you see in this work?

Cognition: Cause-Effect
What’s your hunch about student readiness/ preparation and the quality of this work?

What are some choices you made that led to the success of this product?

Cognition: Analysis
How does this student’s work compare to what you might have predicted?

What are some patterns you’re discovering across these student work samples?

How do these work samples compare to standards (internal and external)?
### Reflections, Connections, Directions

<table>
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<th>Reflections</th>
<th>Connections</th>
<th>Directions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What I remember</td>
<td>For me/my work</td>
<td>Action/steps I will take</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on your experiences today, what might you:

- Stop doing

- Continue doing

- Start doing
Learning Partners

Make an appointment with 4 different people—one for each icon. Be sure you each record the appointment on your page. Only make the appointment if there is an open slot at that spot on each of your forms.

- Planning
- Professional Responsibilities
- Classroom Environment
- Instruction