

ACTIVITY: LOOKING AT STUDENTS' CURRENT THINKING AND SURFACING GAPS (90 MINUTES, OR 1-3 TEACHER TEAM MEETINGS)

OUTCOME:

Teachers will be able to analyze current student work produced by existing strong tasks/assignments; will examine the Common Core Standards to identify points of alignment and surface gaps between current and desired states of student thinking; and will discuss implications for teacher planning and preparation.

GUIDING QUESTIONS:

- How are the expectations for implementation of a Common Core-aligned, curriculum-embedded task in literacy, and one in math, different from the high-quality, rigorous curriculum-embedded tasks we currently use?
- What are the gaps between the current state of student work and thinking and the desired state articulated by the standards required in the Citywide Instructional Expectations?

MATERIALS:

- Sample literacy or math task and accompanying student work samples (three samples preferred: strong, average and weak)
- Selected Common Core Standards in Literacy or Math
- Citywide Instructional Expectations

FACILITATION NOTES:

1. Introduce the Activity (5 minutes)

To meet the minimum expectations for spring/fall 2011 outlined in the Citywide Instructional Expectations document, teacher teams should review current academic tasks and student work that represent movement toward alignment with the Common Core standards selected for focus in 2011-12.

In this activity, the collaborative inquiry team will bring a variety of student work and use the adapted *Looking at Students' Thinking* protocol to examine what the student work reveals about student thinking. Then, the team will examine the relevant Common Core standards to identify areas of alignment and to surface gaps. Finally, the team will discuss the implications for teacher planning and preparation.

2. Review and engage in the protocol: *Looking at Students' Thinking* (40 minutes)

Step 1: Presenting teacher describes the task to team and distributes a copy of the assignment as well as samples of student work. (5 minutes)

Step 2: Teachers review the task and student work. (10 minutes)

Step 3: Describe the work, recording low inference observations, and then discuss. (10 minutes)

Step 4: Speculate about students' thinking. Consider questions like: *What did the academic task and student work reveal about student thinking? Where in the work do you see insights into students' thinking? How are they making sense of ideas, putting information together, organizing thoughts, and reasoning?*

(15 minutes)

Consider recording current student thinking in the first column of a chart that looks like this:

Current Student Thinking	Desired Student Thinking <i>or</i> Gaps b/t Current and Desired	Implications for Teacher Planning and Preparation
This work reveals that the student(s)...		

3. Surface Gaps (15 minutes)

Explain the rationale for highlighting selected standards in the citywide instructional expectations:

- *Literacy* – The authors of the Common Core have identified text complexity in informational text and making an argument based on those texts as the key challenges for students in the Common Core. Our students must be exposed to this type of tasks, and we must support them as they become more familiar.
- *Math* - Modeling is what real mathematicians do: using mathematics to represent and solve authentic problems in our world. Important in this process of problem solving is the ability to clearly construct and analyze mathematical arguments, evaluating and articulating the reasoning behind claims. Facility with these two practices and solid knowledge of key concepts will enable students to use mathematics to successfully analyze authentic problems and construct and defend logical solutions paths to problems, demonstrating their mathematical thinking.

Examine the relevant Common core Standards in Literacy or Math in order to surface the gaps between the current and desired student thinking. Questions to consider while reviewing the standards:

- *Literacy*
 - What do these standards require students to know and be able to do?
 - How do the demands change from grade to grade?
- *Math*
 - What does “Model with Mathematics” require students to know and be able to do?
 - What does “Construct Viable Arguments and Critique the Reasoning of Others” require students to know and be able to do?

Consider recording teachers’ responses under “desired student thinking” on the chart. Ask: *What are the gaps between current student thinking and desired student thinking?* Teachers discuss. If using “gaps between current and desired thinking” version of chart, record gaps in middle column.

4. Discuss implications for Teacher Planning and Preparation. (15 minutes)

Considering the gaps surfaced above, teachers discuss the implications for teacher planning and preparation in designing instruction and assessments). Consider recording responses under “Implications...” on the chart.

5. Reflect (15 minutes)

Teachers reflect on *Looking at Students’ Thinking* protocol and process of looking at current versus desired student thinking as a way to surface gaps and identify implications for teacher planning and preparation.

Ask: *How are the expectations for implementation of a Common Core-aligned, curriculum-embedded task in literacy, and one in math, different from the high-quality, rigorous curriculum-embedded tasks we currently use?* Teachers discuss.

INTRODUCTION TO THE FINAL DRAFT OF THE CITYWIDE INSTRUCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS FOR 2011-12

To successfully prepare all students—including students with disabilities and English language learners—for life after high school, teachers need to create cognitively demanding learning experiences in their classrooms every day. To this end, we have developed a collective focus for the next school year that has been shaped by extensive consultation with both local and national experts, including more than 1,400 New York City principals—who participated in over 50 feedback sessions across the City this spring—and the writers of the Common Core State Standards.

As a result of these conversations, we have adjusted the instructional expectations:

- By broadening the standards of practice in math to include constructing a viable argument and mathematical modeling, and shifting the selected domains for kindergarten and grade 3 to allow a broader focus as we build a path to algebra; and
- By explaining the role of clusters and networks.

In addition, we have added to the FAQ, which now includes an explanation of the connection to collaborative inquiry, resources to help schools get started, suggestions for making time to do this work, further explanation of the selected literacy standards for grades 3-8, and an updated explanation of the selected math standards.

At the feedback sessions in May, principals were clear about their needs and concerns, particularly around limited time, budget cuts, and potential teacher layoffs. There are no simple ways to allay these concerns. The central office, networks, clusters, and schools will need to work together during these challenging times. Throughout the year, we will provide examples of this work in practice, including Common Core-aligned curriculum and assessments and teacher supports. We will also provide guidance to schools around long-term implementation that will take us through the 2014-15 school year.

Educators throughout our school system are embracing this important instructional work and understand how critical it is for our students. The work of transitioning to these new, higher standards will not be easy. But we have a tremendous opportunity to lead the way, and the bottom line is that our children are counting on us.

CITYWIDE INSTRUCTIONAL EXPECTATIONS FOR 2011-12

As we continue to work toward graduating students who are college and career ready, we are setting specific instructional expectations for the 2011-12 school year. These expectations build on the inquiry work of the last several years:

- **Strengthening student work** by examining and refining curriculum, assessment, and classroom instruction; and
- **Strengthening teacher practice** by examining and refining the feedback teachers receive.

As school leaders engage students and teachers in strengthening the instructional core, networks and clusters will play a crucial role in supporting schools as well as coordinating learning across schools. Engaging our school communities in conversations about how we are preparing students to be college and career ready will also be an important part of this work.

Rigorous Curriculum and Tasks for All Students

This year, we have gotten to know the Common Core standards and practiced revising curriculum, assessment, and instruction. Next year, as we deepen our efforts, we will engage teachers in the next stages of aligning curriculum and assessment to the Common Core. Teachers will work together to engage all students in rigorous tasks, embedded in well-crafted instructional units and with appropriate supports.

At a minimum, teachers will be expected to:

- **In teams, look closely at current student work** to understand the steps needed to reach the level of performance that the Common Core demands (spring/fall 2011).
- **Engage all students in at least one literacy task and one math task aligned to strategically selected Common Core standards.** These tasks should be embedded in Common Core-aligned curricula and include multiple entry points for all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners (winter 2011-12).
 - In literacy, students will complete a task that asks them to read and analyze informational texts and write opinions and arguments in response.
 - In math, students will engage in a cognitively demanding mathematics task that requires them to demonstrate their ability to model with mathematics and/or construct and explore the reasoning behind arguments to arrive at a viable solution.
- **In teams, look closely at resulting student work** to continue the cycle of inquiry, making future instructional adjustments and communicating lessons learned to other school staff (spring 2012).

We ask that educators engaging in this work use rich performance tasks as a vehicle for examining student work, developing a shared understanding of success as defined by the new standards, and determining how to adjust teacher practice to support student development along the continuum of college and career readiness. Our goal is that, through the work of implementing a task, teachers will begin to adjust their curriculum and instruction to help all students move toward the higher expectations of the Common Core.

Schools will have the flexibility to select the teachers who engage in this work, the types of tasks they teach, and the curriculum they develop. Excerpted student work and diagnostic tasks aligned to the selected Common Core literacy standards are available on the Common Core Library now:

<http://schools.nyc.gov/Academics/CommonCoreLibrary>. For samples of NYC homegrown Common Core-aligned tasks, annotated student work, and related instructional supports in both literacy and math, as well as a variety of professional learning resources, please check back at the end of June and throughout the summer to see our growing collection.

Effective Feedback for All Teachers

School leaders who improve the instructional core across classrooms take certain actions: they utilize a common lens for instruction and curriculum, set clear expectations, and provide evidence-based, applicable feedback from frequent classroom observations. When they do so, their teachers know what effective teaching looks like, have a shared language to discuss what's working and what needs to be improved, and know which actions to take to improve their practice.

Principals and other school leaders are encouraged to:

- **Use sections of Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching***, or continue to use a teaching rubric that is already in place, to articulate clear expectations for teacher practice and serve as the focus for teacher development (by summer 2011).
- **Engage in short, frequent cycles of classroom observation,¹ collaborative examination of student work, and timely, specific, evidence-based feedback teachers can act on** to increase the rigor and effectiveness of their instruction (throughout 2011-12). Teachers should receive feedback on student work on Common Core-aligned tasks and on successes and challenges related to reaching all students, including students with disabilities and English language learners.
- **Strengthen their own capacity to provide high-quality feedback to teachers** through professional development and support from network teams (throughout 2011-12).

Schools can learn about Charlotte Danielson's *Framework for Teaching*, read profiles of NYC DOE principals who are using Danielson and providing frequent feedback to their teachers, find online professional development, and explore observation templates and feedback protocols in ARIS Learn (www.arisnyc.org).

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Schools can choose how to implement these expectations to integrate them effectively with other priorities. But all schools will share a common goal: achieving excellence in student work through highly effective teaching.

The Common Core standards outline a new definition of and trajectory toward college and career readiness that reflect the demands of the 21st century. These instructional expectations are intended to support schools as we begin to adjust what and how we teach in order to help all students succeed on cognitively demanding tasks and develop along the continuum toward college and career readiness.

For more information, please see our evolving FAQ document on the Principals' Portal:

<http://intranet.nycboe.net/DOEPortal/Principals/SchoolSupport/AcademicServices/>.

¹ The short observation and feedback cycle does not take the place of formal evaluations. The difference between an informal and formal observation as stated in the current collective bargaining agreement is that formal observations require a pre-observation conference. For probationary and tenured teachers, evaluators may conduct as many informal observations as deemed necessary and do not require a pre-observation conference. There is no minimum amount of observation time required for a formal observation. Engaging in informal observations with teachers is complementary to the formal observation process.

ROLE OF NETWORKS AND CLUSTERS

Networks and clusters play a crucial role in supporting schools with the implementation of the 2011-2012 instructional expectations. Assessing the current state of teaching and learning in each school is a critical starting point. As part of a cluster- and network-level inquiry cycle, clusters and networks will analyze student work, teacher work (curriculum and assessments), and school leader work (samples of feedback to teachers) to help schools understand both where this work meets expectations and where educators need additional supports.

Networks

By offering clear guidance and structured support around content and pedagogy, network teams can help educators develop the skills they need to increase the rigor of instruction for all students as we move toward full implementation of the Common Core standards.

Next year, each network will have an instructional team of at least four achievement coaches, whose roles and assigned schools will vary according to the needs of the schools within the network. Additionally, each team will have one achievement coach who will focus on supporting schools' implementation of Universal Design for Learning and other instructional work related to the teaching of students with disabilities. These achievement coaches will support instructional leaders (administrators and key teachers) in:

- Analyzing teacher and student work to develop and implement plans to support teachers toward success with all students
- Providing content area support in all subjects
- Facilitating discussions and using protocols
- Developing systems and structures for implementation of short cycles of classroom observation
- Providing clear and concrete feedback to support teachers' professional growth and development.

Network teams will collect a portfolio of artifacts across their schools to analyze during monthly Children First Intensive Institutes. Although we will not track student work on the 2011 spring/fall tasks or the 2011-12 winter tasks centrally, schools should make student, teacher, and school leader work accessible for professional learning across the system.

Clusters

Clusters are expected to strengthen network teams' capacity to provide the instructional support described above. In partnership with the Academics Office and the Office of School Support, clusters will develop and implement regular professional learning experiences for network teams and engage in a performance management process to support the professional growth of all network team members.

SELECTED COMMON CORE STANDARDS

To focus our efforts on critical college and career ready skills, we have strategically selected standards at every grade level. The authors of the Common Core helped guide our selection. To view the full Common Core Learning Standards, visit: http://www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/.

Selected Common Core Standards in Literacy

Grade Band	Literacy Focus
Pre-K-2	Written response to informational texts through group activities and with prompting and support (Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10; Writing Standard 2)
3-8	Written analysis of informational texts (Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10) OR Written opinion or argument based on an analysis of informational texts (Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10; Writing Standard 1)
9-12	Written opinion or argument based on an analysis of informational texts (Reading Informational Text Standards 1 and 10; Writing Standard 1)

Rationale

The authors of the Common Core standards have pointed to the issues of text complexity in informational text and making an argument based on those texts as the key challenges in the Common Core. We need to begin exposing our students to this type of task, and supporting them accordingly, in a staircase fashion moving up through the grade levels. (For more information about how these specific Common Core standards were selected, please see the FAQ document on the Principals’ Portal: <http://intranet.nycboe.net/DOEPortal/Principals/SchoolSupport/AcademicServices/>.)

Selected Common Core Standards in Mathematics

Grade Band	Standard of Practice	AND	Domain of Focus
Pre-K-K	Model with Mathematics and/or Construct Viable Arguments and Critique the Reasoning of Others	AND	Operations and Algebraic Thinking
1-2			Number and Operations in Base Ten
3			Operations and Algebraic Thinking
4-5			Number and Operations—Fractions
6-7			Ratios and Proportional Relationships
8			Expressions and Equations
Algebra			Reasoning with Equations and Inequalities
Geometry			Congruence

Rationale

The Standards for Mathematical Practices are one of the most distinct portions of the Common Core standards. Taken together, these standards paint a picture of a mathematically proficient student. We understand that the Standards for Mathematical Practice are interconnected and that a rich task may require students to demonstrate many of the practices. However, for the winter task, we ask that schools focus on one or both of the high-leverage practices we’ve selected—Model with Mathematics (#4) and Construct Viable Arguments and Critique the Reasoning of Others (#3)—and the domains of

focus representing key content in each grade. Modeling is what real mathematicians do: using mathematics to represent and solve authentic problems in our world. Key to this process of problem-solving is the ability to clearly construct and analyze mathematical arguments, evaluating and articulating the reasoning behind claims. Facility with these two practices, and solid knowledge of key concepts, will enable students to demonstrate their mathematical thinking by successfully analyzing authentic problems and constructing and defending logical paths to solving problems.