Louisiana Department of Education Mentor Teacher Training

Module 7:
Selecting & Adapting High-Quality Instructional Materials
to Meet Student Needs
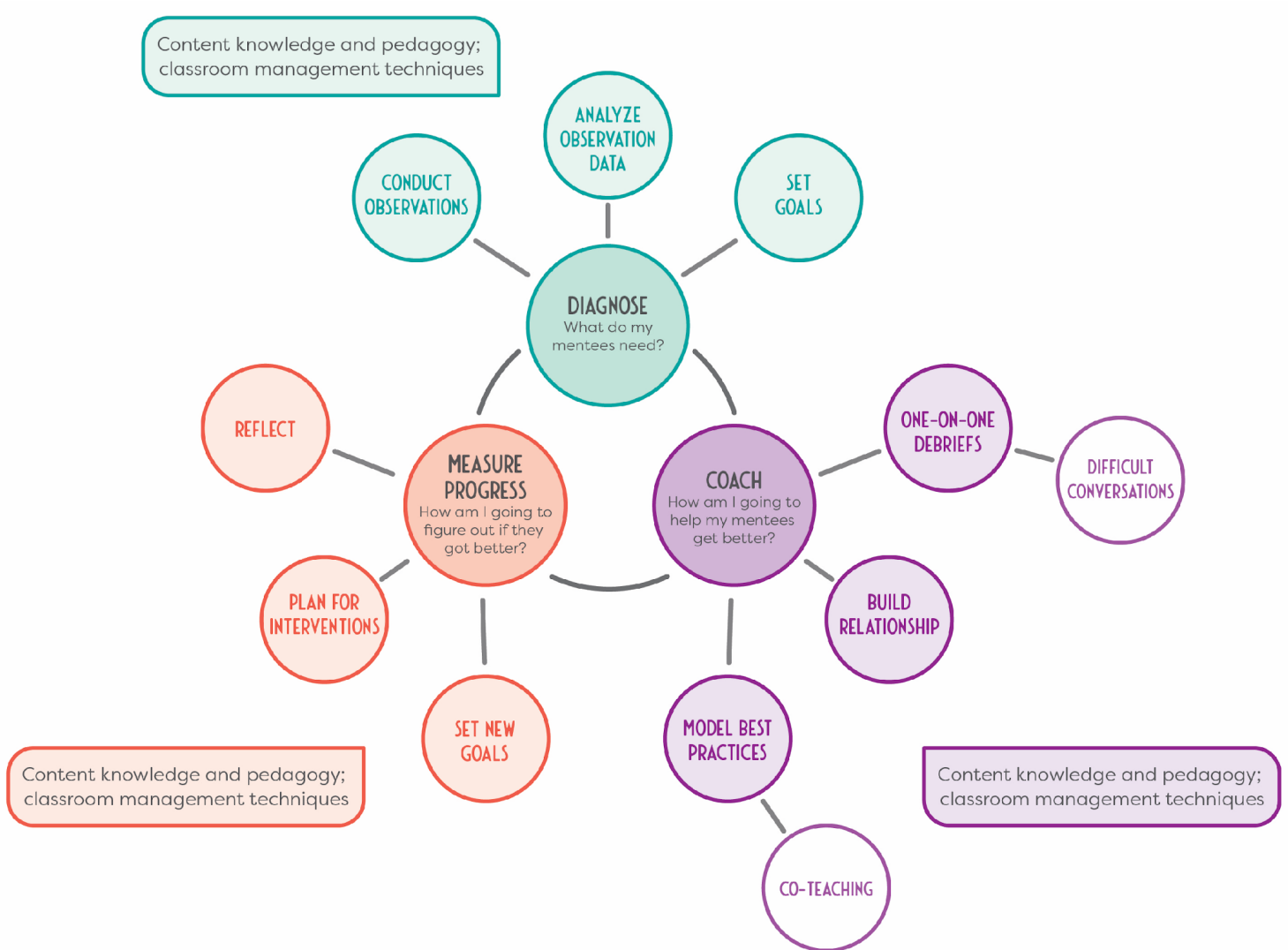
Secondary Universal Cohort

October, 2019

Facilitated by Learning Forward

The Mentoring Cycle

Content knowledge and pedagogy; classroom management techniques

ANALYZE OBSERVATION DATA

CONDUCT OBSERVATIONS

SET GOALS

DIAGNOSE
What do my mentees need?

REFLECT

MEASURE PROGRESS
How am I going to figure out if they got better?

COACH
How am I going to help my mentees get better?

ONE-ON-ONE DEBRIEFS

DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

PLAN FOR INTERVENTIONS

BUILD RELATIONSHIP

SET NEW GOALS

MODEL BEST PRACTICES

Content knowledge and pedagogy; classroom management techniques

Content knowledge and pedagogy; classroom management techniques

CO-TEACHING

Mentor Training Course Goals

Mentors will:

- Build **strong relationships** with mentees.
- **Diagnose and prioritize** mentee's strengths and areas for growth.
- Design and implement a **mentoring support plan**.
- Assess and deepen **mentor content knowledge and content-specific pedagogy**.

Module 7 Outcomes

- Analyze pre-existing instructional resources using LDOE criteria for high-quality instructional materials.
- Develop a plan for adapting high-quality resources to meet the needs of diverse learners.
- Engage mentee in reflection on practice.
- Facilitate difficult conversations using the "Opportunity Conversation" protocol.

Module 7 Agenda

Morning (8:30-11:45 a.m.)	**Afternoon**
Welcome and outcomes	Reflection on practice
Use criteria to select HQ instructional materials	Opportunity conversations
Adapt HQ materials to meet student needs	Connection to assessments
Connect to Competencies	Wrap-up

Agreements

Make the learning meaningful

Engage mentally and physically

Notice opportunities to support the learning of others

Take responsibility for your own learning

Own the outcomes

Respect the learning environment of self and others

Building on Our Learning So Far

Three big ideas standing out to me about mentoring for ELA instruction:

1.

2.

3.

Two questions I have about mentoring for ELA instruction:

1.

2.

One takeaway from our mentoring practice so far:

1.

Selecting High-Quality, Classroom-Based Instructional Materials

Guiding questions:
- How does the quality of classroom-based instructional materials influence teaching and student success?
- What criteria do teachers use to select high-quality classroom-based instructional materials?
- How do teachers apply criteria to the review and selection of classroom-based instructional materials?
- How do mentors help mentees learn to apply criteria to the selection of classroom-based instructional materials?

Why high-quality, classroom-based instructional materials?

1. Divide into three groups. You will be each have a different, brief reading to inform your discussion. The articles are on p. 8-15.

   a. *How to Sort the Good from the Bad in OER,* is accessible online at https://tinyurl.com/sort-good-from-bad

   b. *Failing by Design: How We Make Teaching Too Hard for Mere Mortals,* is accessible at https://tinyurl.com/failing-by-design

   c. *Louisiana Threads the Needle: Curriculum Reform in a Local-Control State*, is accessible at https://tinyurl.com/threading-the-needle

2. Decide which one of you will read which of the readings.

3. Use the four-box protocol on the following page to identify key ideas, information that was new to you, questions your article raised for you, and actions you want to take based on what you read.

4. After you each read your individual text, take a few minutes to discuss your article focusing on each area of the box.

5. Write a collective summary statement that synthesizes what you are taking away from each of the texts and your discussion.

Key Ideas	New Information

Questions Raised	Actions to Take

Summary statement:

H

Online resources are overflowing, but reliable means to evaluate them and help teachers use them are rare

by Lawrie Mifflin

Source: The Hechinger Report website: https://hechingerreport.org/how-to-sort-the-good-from-the-bad-in-oer/

March 14, 2018

Teachers often spend many hours at night or on weekends searching the internet for good instructional materials – or just good ideas about how to meld online learning into their classrooms. Sometimes, they consult curation sites that have evaluated these materials; sometimes they just consult other teachers on what they use.

The need for reliable evaluation has become more urgent with the flood of new, often free, online materials. These OER – open educational resources – may be good, bad or indifferent. How can school districts or teachers know?

"There's more bad OER out there than good; that's a fact," said Rebecca Kockler, assistant superintendent of academic instruction for the state of Louisiana, at the annual SXSWedu conference last week in Austin, Texas. "We need to find the quality stuff and elevate it, for everyone."

Along with quality classroom materials, there's an urgent need for quality curricula, Kockler said. The idea of teachers searching the web for individual units of study, or even individual lessons, strikes her as a huge waste of time. When it happens, she said, "we try to weed that out of our districts."

Instead, Louisiana's Department of Education promotes an integrated curriculum and makes all parts of it available on the department's website. When they have a whole curriculum, aligned to the state's common core standards and flexible enough to be adapted for the schools' own particular students' needs, she said, teachers can spend the bulk of their time teaching. But she said professional development and support are essential, too. And they're lacking.

There are few high-quality purveyors of whole curricula to begin with, she said, and "most curriculum developers don't embed professional development and support" in their programs. Even fewer provide resources for teaching special education students or English language learners.

She and her fellow panelists mentioned a few OER sources that do provide teacher support (aka professional development) in their offerings. Among them: UnboundEd, a nonprofit created to continue the work of the Engage NY curriculum developers; Open Up Resources, a nonprofit whose K-5 English Language Arts curriculum and middle-school math curriculum have both received top ratings from EdReports, an evaluator; Great Minds, which makes the highly popular

Eureka Math curriculum, and IBM Watson's Teacher Advisor, which offers content recommendations and individualized help with lesson-planning for K-5 math teachers.

And on Tuesday, The Learning Accelerator and Yet Analytics announced the Learning Commons, a new, free website that will gather curated professional development resources for those who are working to implement blended or personalized learning in their classrooms.

The SXSWedu conference featured dozens of panels with variations on the theme of how to find accurate assessments of the quality of different course and curriculum options (at the college level as well as in K-12, and not just OER). Some speakers said the rush to embrace new technological tools, apps and other learning materials often sweeps aside high-quality evaluation – which by definition cannot be rushed.

MaryEllen Elia, the New York State commissioner of education, told one panel's audience, "We need to slow down and give our teachers the time to implement [new technology], and to use it for long enough to see if it works well or not."

Both the federal Department of Education and ISTE (International Society for Technology in Education) also offer information about quality resources on their respective websites.

"Technology is an accelerator," said Richard Culatta, a former federal education technology official who now heads ISTE. "If you apply it to bad teaching practices, you'll get faster bad teaching practices; if you apply it to high-quality teaching practices, you'll get faster high-quality teaching practices."

In Louisiana, at least, the integrated approach to sharing best practices and best curricula, while supporting teachers with clear and frequent professional development help, seems to be paying dividends in students' learning. According to a RAND study released in January 2017, the state has seen record growth in the number of students taking Advanced Placement courses, as well as in its high school graduation rate and its rate of college attendance. Louisiana's fourth graders also had the highest learning gains in the nation in the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress reading test.

Using open educational resources has become a key part of this progress, even if it wasn't the starting point.

"Using OER wasn't our goal," Kockler said. "Quality was our goal."

This story was produced by The Hechinger Report, a nonprofit, independent news organization focused on inequality and innovation in education. Sign up for our newsletter.

Failing by design: How we make teaching too hard for mere mortals

Getty Images/ALLVISIONN

Robert Pondiscio

Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute website: https://edexcellence.net/articles/failing-by-design-how-we-make-teaching-too-hard-for-mere-mortals

May 10, 2016

If you caught your pediatrician Googling "upset stomach remedies" before deciding how to treat your child and home-brewing medications over an office sink, you might start looking for a new pediatrician. So how would you feel if you learned that Google and Pinterest are where your child's teacher goes to look for instructional materials?

Well, brace yourself, because that's exactly what's happening. And no, your child's teacher is not an exception. A new study from the RAND Corporation finds that nearly every teacher in America—99 percent of elementary teachers, 96 percent of secondary school teachers—draws upon "materials I developed and/or selected myself" in teaching English language arts. And where do they find materials? The most common answer among elementary school teachers is Google (94 percent), followed by Pinterest (87 percent). The numbers are virtually the same for math.

But don't blame teachers. These data, for reasons both good and bad, reveal a dirty little secret about American education. In many districts and schools—maybe even most—the efficacy of the instructional materials put in front of children is an afterthought. For teachers, it makes an already hard job nearly impossible to do well.

Expecting teachers to be expert pedagogues and instructional designers is one of the ways in which we push the job far beyond the abilities of mere mortals. Add the expectation that teachers should differentiate every lesson to meet the needs of each individual student, and the job falls well outside the capacity of nearly all of America's 3.7 million classroom teachers (myself included).

If you're looking for the root causes of America's educational mediocrity, start with how poorly we prepare teachers for one of the most important parts of the job. "Few teachers ever take coursework on instructional design and, therefore, have little knowledge of the role it plays in student learning," notes Marcy Stein, an education professor with expertise in evaluating instructional design at the University of Washington Tacoma. It's like expecting the waiter at your favorite restaurant to serve your meal attentively while simultaneously cooking for twenty-five other people—and doing all the shopping and prepping the night before. You'd be exhausted too.

"Even if teachers were taught about instructional design, they would likely not have the time to prepare instructional materials, field test those materials to determine if they are effective, and modify the materials before using them to teach students. An iterative process is crucial for the development of effective materials," Stein points out.

There is good evidence to suggest that we are making a serious mistake by not paying more attention to curriculum, classroom materials, and instructional design. A 2012 Brookings study by Russ Whitehurst and Matt Chingos demonstrated that the "effect size" of choosing a better second-grade math curriculum was larger than replacing a fiftieth-percentile teacher with a seventy-fifth-percentile teacher. This is a powerful result, especially considering that it's relatively easy to give all children a better curriculum but extremely difficult to dramatically increase the effectiveness of their teachers. It's cost-neutral too: A Center for American Progress report by Ulrich Boser and Chingos showed virtually no difference in price between effective and ineffective curricula.

To be clear, there are perfectly good reasons why even the best teachers would be hitting the Internet for lesson planning—to find supplemental materials for individual students, for example, or adaptations for special needs kids. And teachers report using books and materials from myriad sources, including those selected by their schools and districts. But the RAND study offers a window into a phenomenon that is rarely discussed in American education: What children learn in school varies wildly from state to state, within districts, and even within grades in the same school.

If we're serious about raising the output of our K–12 system at large—not by a little, but a lot—here are some of the questions we should be asking: What exactly is the teacher's job, and what is the best use of her limited time? Is it deciding what to teach, or how to teach it? Is the soul of the work instructional design or instructional delivery? Do you want your child's teacher to have the time to analyze student work and develop a keen eye for diagnosing mistakes and misunderstandings? Do you want her to give your child rich and meaningful feedback on assignments and homework? How about developing warm and productive relationships with your child and your family?

Now ask how you expect her to do all those things at a high level while spending precious hours every week creating curricula from scratch. Nearly half of teachers in the RAND study reported spending more than four hours per week developing or selecting their own instructional materials. Newer teachers almost certainly spend the most, hampering their ability to develop their craft.

To be sure, there are master teachers to whom we should eagerly grant nearly complete classroom autonomy, including over curriculum. You wouldn't tell Prince, "Just work on your guitar playing. Someone else will write the songs." But it's simply unrealistic to assume that every teacher is a Prince-level virtuoso and polymath—let alone to base the job description on

that assumption. No one would accuse Yo-Yo Ma of being a second-rate talent because he merely plays notes written by Bach.

Without question, we want our best teachers to play a significant role in instructional design so that more children and teachers can benefit from their expertise. But it is equally certain that twelve-plus years of a well-designed and sequenced curriculum would lead to better outcomes for children than the occasional year with a great yet isolated teacher. It would also let teachers focus more time on the art of teaching—that is, more time with student work and less time on Pinterest on Sunday night with an empty plan book at their elbow.

Great teachers need great instructional materials. It's time we got serious about providing them.

Louisiana threads the needle: Curriculum reform in a local-control state

Robert Pondiscio

Source: Thomas B. Fordham Institute website: https://edexcellence.net/articles/louisiana-threads-the-needle-curriculum-reform-in-a-local-control-state

July 26, 2017

"It was one of the most powerful visits I've ever taken," said Sheila Briggs, an assistant state superintendent with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. She was describing a visit last fall to Lake Pontchartrain Elementary School, a low-income school in St. John the Baptist Parish, Louisiana, about thirty miles northwest of New Orleans. "The ability to hear what the state education agency was doing and then go into classrooms and see direct evidence was phenomenal," Briggs gushed. "I've never seen anything like it anywhere else."

Officials of state education agencies are not known for hyperbole. Maintaining data systems, drafting rules and regulations, and monitoring compliance are not the stuff of breathless raves—especially in Louisiana, whose education system has long ranked near the bottom nationwide on

measures of student achievement and high-school graduation rates. Yet in the last year, education leaders from across the country have beaten a path to the Pelican State to see what they might learn from education superintendent John White, assistant superintendent of academics Rebecca Kockler, and their colleagues. Together, this team has quietly engineered a system of curriculum-driven reforms that have prompted Louisiana's public school teachers to change the quality of their instruction in measurable and observable ways unmatched in other states, including jurisdictions that, like Louisiana, adopted the Common Core or similar academic standards.

The linchpin of the state's work has been providing incentives for districts and schools statewide to adopt and implement a coherent, high-quality curriculum, particularly in English language arts (ELA) and mathematics, and to use that curriculum as the hook on which everything else hangs: assessment, professional development, and teacher training. Most notably, White and Kockler have pulled off these reforms in the face of strident political resistance to Common Core and without running afoul of districts and teachers in this staunch local-control state.

In 2016, when RAND researchers set out to study Common Core implementation at the state level, they found something unexpected. Using data from the organization's American Teacher Panel, a standing nationwide sample of about 2,700 teachers, the researchers noticed "large and intriguing differences" between Louisiana teachers and those in other states. The former were far more likely to be using instructional materials aligned with Common Core standards. They also demonstrated better understanding of the standards and taught their students in ways that the standards were meant to encourage. "We saw consistently higher results in Louisiana," says Julia Kaufman, a RAND analyst. "There were occasional high points in other states, but we kept seeing this difference between Louisiana [teachers] and other teachers....We just thought there was a story there."

There is a story, and it's about curriculum—perhaps the last, best, yet almost entirely un-pulled education-reform lever. Despite persuasive evidence suggesting that a high-quality curriculum is a more cost-effective means of improving student outcomes than many more-popular measures, such as merit pay for teachers or reducing class size, states have largely ignored curriculum reform.

Louisiana began publishing free, annotated reviews of K–12 textbooks and curriculum programs in ELA and math, sorting the materials into three "tiers." If a curriculum was judged to "exemplify quality," it earned the Tier 1 designation; programs judged to be "approaching quality" were labeled Tier 2; and those seen as "not representing quality" went into Tier 3. Significantly, the quality reviews were not conducted by bureaucrats in Baton Rouge, but by a network of "teacher leaders," handpicked by the Louisiana Department of Education for their demonstrated teaching and leadership prowess and drawn from every region of the state and every grade level. While the state created the rubrics for the curriculum, it was the teachers who did the evaluations—a feature that draws praise from the state's largest teachers union. "We had lots of buy-in," says Larry Carter, president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers. "There's some sense of stability to how education is being delivered to students."

State leaders sweetened the adoption pot by giving all Tier 1 vendors statewide contracts. Typically, this enabled districts to use the products of those vendors at discounted prices and without having to undergo separate procurement processes. "Districts are going to do what they believe is best, and we want to help them be positioned to do so," says Kockler. The key was offering incentives for districts to make good decisions, a process she describes as making the best choice the easy choice.

"American policymakers seldom view curriculum as a serious lever for change," observes Ashley Berner, deputy director of the Johns Hopkins Institute for Education Policy. Requiring children to learn anything in particular, she notes, is considered "pedagogically suspect." Pitched and passionate battles over course content have made curriculum resemble a third rail in many states. But the failure of states to exert influence or offer expertise on curriculum leaves these decisions to districts, schools, even individual teachers, which risks robbing students of coherence and consistency. Local control is a central feature of American public education, but Louisiana's reforms offer a glimpse of how to thread the needle, honoring community control while encouraging high-quality curriculum statewide. The state's children and schools are showing the positive effects of that strategy—and other states are beginning to take notice.

Editor's note: This article was adapted from "Louisiana Threads the Needle on Ed Reform" in the Fall 2017 issue of Education Next, *where portions of it will appear.*

LDOE Criteria for High-Quality, Classroom-Based Instructional Materials

1. The instructional materials **align to the letter and spirit of the course standards.**

2. The instructional materials include **clear and sufficient guidance for teachers** to support teaching and learning of the course standards.

3. The instructional materials provide appropriate level and type of **scaffolding differentiation, intervention, and support for a broad range of learners.**

How will you develop a mentee's capacity to select high-quality, classroom-based instructional materials?

Resources to consider:
https://www.louisianabelieves.com/resources/library/teacher-support-toolbox-library
https://learnzillion.com/p/
https://www.pbslearningmedia.org
https://sharemylesson.com
http://ngss.nsta.org/Classroom-Resources.aspx
https://www.socialstudies.org/c3/resources
https://sparkpe.org/physical-education/lesson-plans/
https://www.oercommons.org

What are other sites you have used to search for instructional materials? Write below.

Connect the Learning	
Question	**Response**
How will you apply your understanding of selecting and adapting high-quality instructional resources to your role as a teacher?	
How will you apply your understanding of selecting and adapting high-quality instructional resources to your role as a mentor?	
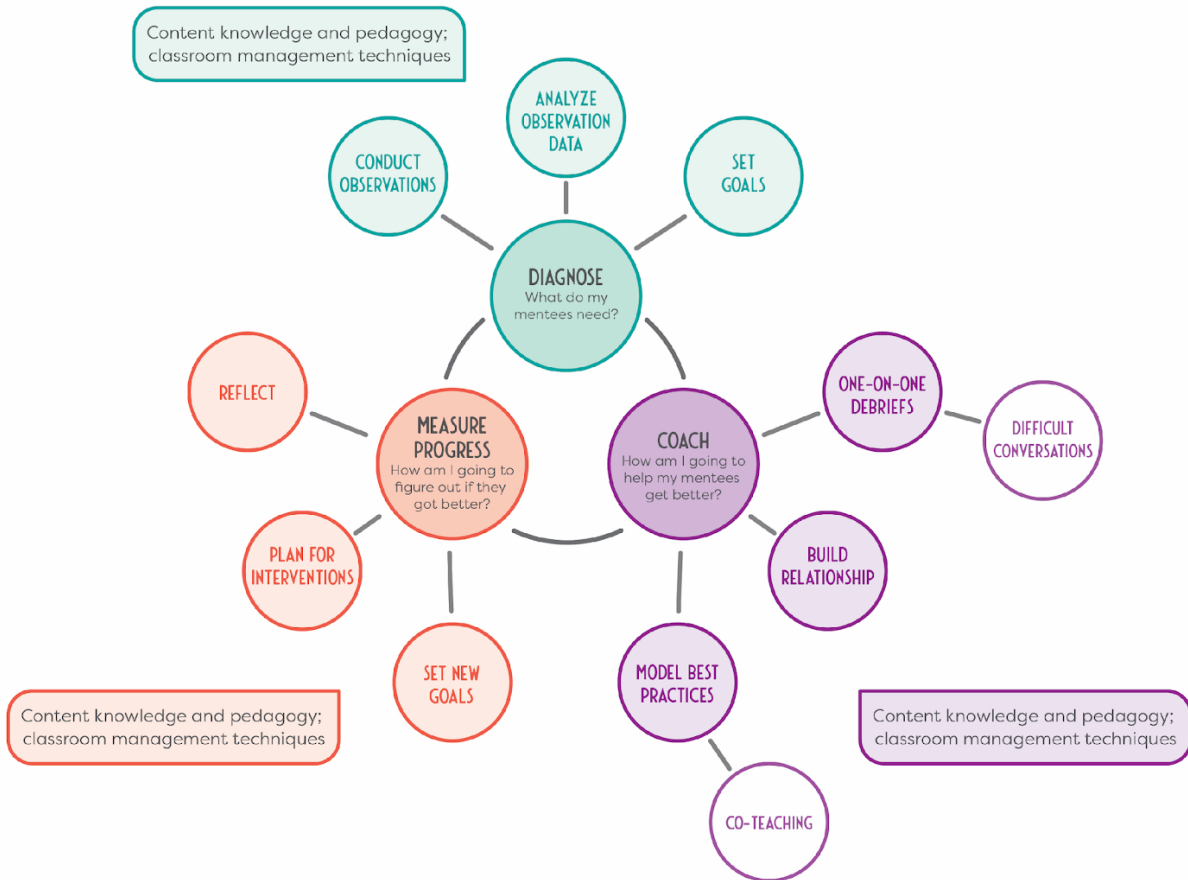
Reflect

- Facilitate reflective conversation
- Engage in self-reflection
- Celebrate wins and determine areas of growth

Three Levels of Text Protocol

1. Get together in a group of three (2 minutes)
2. Assign one person to be the timekeeper (1 minute)
3. Independently read the pieces on reflection and identify several passages that stand out to you because they have implications for your mentor practice (10 minutes)
4. One person shares the following three levels of thought about the text (3 minutes)
   a. LEVEL 1: Read aloud a passage you have selected
   b. LEVEL 2: Say what you think about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
   c. LEVEL 3: Say what you see as the implications for your work
5. The group responds to what has been said (2 minutes)
6. Repeat steps 4 and 5 for the remaining group members, not duplicating a passage that has already been shared (10 minutes)
7. Summarize the implications for your work (2 minutes)

Reflecting on Work Improves Job Performance

Published May 5, 2014 by Harvard Business School. Retrieved from HBS website at: https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/reflecting-on-work-improves-job-performance

by Carmen Nobel

New research by Francesca Gino, Gary Pisano, and colleagues shows that taking time to reflect on our work improves job performance in the long run.

Many of us are familiar with the gentle punishment known as "time-out," in which misbehaving children must sit quietly for a few minutes, calm down, and reflect on their actions.

New research suggests that grown-ups ought to take routine time-outs of their own, not as a punishment, but in order to improve their job performance.

In the working paper Learning by Thinking: How Reflection Aids Performance, the authors show how reflecting on what we've done teaches us to do it more effectively the next time around.

"Now more than ever we seem to be living lives where we're busy and overworked, and our research shows that if we'd take some time out for reflection, we might be better off," says Harvard Business School Professor Francesca Gino, who cowrote the paper with Gary Pisano, the Harry E. Figgie Professor of Business Administration at HBS; Giada Di Stefano, an assistant professor at HEC Paris; and Bradley Staats, an associate professor at the University of North Carolina's Kenan-Flagler Business School.

The research team conducted a series of three studies based on the dual-process theory of thought, which maintains that people think and learn using two distinct types of processes. Type 1 processes are heuristic—automatically learning by doing, such that

the more people do something, the better they know how to do it. Type 2 processes, on the other hand, are consciously reflective, and are often associated with decision making.

Essentially, the researchers hypothesized that learning by doing would be more effective if deliberately coupled with learning by thinking. They also hypothesized that sharing information with others would improve the learning process.

Reflection, Sharing, And Self-efficacy

For the first study, the team recruited 202 adults for an online experiment in which they completed a series of brain teasers based on a "sum to ten" game. A round of problem solving included five puzzles, and participants earned a dollar for each puzzle they solved in 20 seconds or less.

After recording the results of the first problem-solving round, the researchers divided participants randomly into one of three conditions: control, reflection, and sharing.

In the control condition, participants simply completed another round of brain teasers.

In the reflection condition, participants took a few minutes to reflect on their first round of brain teasers, writing detailed notes about particular strategies they employed. Then they, too, completed a second round of puzzles.

In the sharing condition, participants received the same instructions as those in the reflection group, but with an additional message informing them that their notes would be shared with future participants.

Results showed that the reflection and sharing group performed an average of 18 percent better on the second round of brain teasers than the control group. However, there was no significant performance difference between the reflection and the sharing group. "In this case sharing on top of reflection doesn't seem to have a beneficial effect," Gino says. "But my sense was that if the sharing involved participants actually talking to each other, an effect might exist."

Next, the researchers recruited 178 university students to participate in the same experiment as the first study, but with two key differences: One, they were not paid based on their performance; rather, they all received a flat fee. Two, before starting the second round of brain teasers, they were asked to indicate the extent to which they felt "capable, competent, able to make good judgments, and able to solve difficult problems if they tried hard enough."

As in the first study, those in the sharing and reflection conditions performed better than those in the control group. Those who had reflected on their problem solving reportedly felt more competent and effective than those in the control group.

"When we stop, reflect, and think about learning, we feel a greater sense of self-efficacy," Gino says. "We're more motivated and we perform better afterwards."

A Field Experiment

The final study tested the hypotheses in the real-world setting of Wipro, a business-process outsourcing company based in Bangalore, India. The experiment was conducted at a tech support call center.

The researchers studied several groups of employees in their initial weeks of training for a particular customer account. As with the previous experiments, each group was

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assigned to one of three conditions: control, reflection, and sharing. Each group went through the same technical training, with a couple of key differences.

In the reflection group, on the sixth through the 16th days of training, workers spent the last 15 minutes of each day writing and reflecting on the lessons they had learned that day. Participants in the sharing group did the same, but spent an additional five minutes explaining their notes to a fellow trainee. Those in the control condition just kept working at the end of the day, but did not receive additional training.

Over the course of one month, workers in both the reflection and sharing condition performed significantly better than those in the control group. On average, the reflection group increased its performance on the final training test by 22.8 percent than did the control group. The sharing group performed 25 percent better on the test than the control group, about the same increase as the reflection group.

This was in spite of the fact that the control group had been working 15 minutes longer per day than the other groups, who had spent that time reflecting and sharing instead.

Gino hopes that the research will provide food for thought to overworked managers and employees alike.

"I don't see a lot of organizations that actually encourage employees to reflect—or give them time to do it," Gino says. "When we fall behind even though we're working hard, our response is often just to work harder. But in terms of working smarter, our research suggests that we should take time for reflection."

Win Your life By Harnessing The Power Of Reflection

By Rybo Chen

We are all learners, at any and every stage and role in life. We need to learn as students, learn as parents, learn as employees, learn as managers. The list goes on forever. One important thing is that reflection is the most important part of the learning process, and whatever is not reflected is usually not learned and retained. The only way for us to grow and improve is to take a good look at what's working and what's not for us.

"We do not learn from experience, we learn from reflecting on experience." — John Dewey

At least once a day, and more often several times a day, I reflect and journal on my day, on my life, on what I've been doing right, and what isn't working. I reflect on every aspect of my life, and from this habit of reflection, I am able to continuously improve. Oftentimes, I learn much more about myself unexpectedly. For example, I was reflecting on my fitness habits, and I realized some of my work was affecting my fitness habits, I think reflected on my work as well. I was able to come up with a change than affected both of my fitness and work aspects positively.

Why should we reflect?

Great question to ask. We may all have different answers because every one of us is so unique. However, I believe the fundamental reason is because deep reflections really empowers us to gain self-awareness and to improve and become better humans.

Benefits of reflection

1. It helps you learn from your mistakes.

We are on route to repeat our mistakes and failures, if we don't reflect on our mistakes and failures. We can be smarter and choose to reflect on those mistakes and failures, figure out what went wrong, see how we can prevent them in the future. Mistakes and failures are valuable learning tools because we can use them as stepping stones to get better, instead of something to feel embarrassed or upset about. Reflection is an important way to do that.

2. It gives you great ideas.

Every blog post so far are from my reflections. I reflect on things that I am currently doing or that are going on in my life, and share my learnings and reflections in the articles I write. If I reflect on something that works well for me, I think about the "why" behind it and share that too. Same goes with my failures and mistakes. I look forward to growing together with my readers.

3. It helps you help others.

I realized by reflecting upon myself, I have gained a lot of insights which I find it may be a valuable learning experience for others as well. I can share what I've learned to help others going through the same things. I began the year with the hope that some of the things I've learned in the past couple years can help others. Only two weeks into my blogging career, I have people telling me how little tips, like how to wake up early, or how to start the exercise habit, have changed their lives. It's an amazing feeling. I'm simply humbled that I could help people or/and inspire them.

4. It makes you happier.

When we reflect on the things we did right, the things and relationships that we have, it allows us to celebrate on the little things and little successes in life. It allows us to realize how much we've done right, the good things we've done in our lives and empower us to do even more. Without reflection, it's too easy to forget these things, and focus instead on our failures.

5. It gives you perspective.

Oftentimes we are caught up in the troubles in our busy daily lives. A mistake, a failure, a stressful project or anything similar can seem like it means all the world. It can be extremely overwhelming. However, if we take a minute to step back, and reflect on these problems, and how in the grand scheme of things they don't mean all that much, it can calm us down and lower our stress levels. We gain perspective, and empower us to focus on what's more important to us.

6. It helps you understand yourself better

When we reflect, we are having conversations with ourselves. Those self conversations are a great way to understand ourselves better. We can gain more insights of ourselves to further learn about our strengths, weaknesses, fears, and might even discover something unexpected.

How to do it?

Here comes the fun part. How should we actually reflect? I may have a different method and approach from you, and I'd love to share mine as a guideline. You are more than welcome to follow and/or even build your own reflection method.

I usually set aside some time at night after my bedtime reading, and think over the events that happened that day, think about the people I met that day and the interactions I had with them. I would ask myself one simple question and journal down my answers. "If I were to re-live today again, what 3 things would I change to make today better?" and from that question I may continue onto deeper reflective questions as follows.

1. Did I live up to my core values and personal mission today?
2. Did I act as a person others can respect today?
3. Did I respect my body the way I should today?
4. Did I make a positive impact on the world today?
5. Did I perform at my best today?
6. Did I have negative emotions today? Why?
7. Did I use my time wisely today?

Furthermore, think about the reasons behind the answers to the above questions to explore and gain more insights about yourself. When you're able to learn more and more about yourself, you have harnessed the power of reflection!

Mentee Self-Reflection

What is a specific skill or area that your mentor has helped you improve in? How do you know that you have improved in this skill or area?

Which supports were most critical in meeting your needs as a new or resident teacher?

What are your goals to continue to improve in this area?

Plan: Engage Your Mentee in Reflection

Independent plan: When and how will you engage your mentee in self-reflection?

Table discussion: Share your plan. How will engaging in self-reflection at the end of a coaching cycle help you to be a more effective mentor to your mentee?

Reflect Key Takeaway:

Engaging in self-reflection is an effective strategy for consolidating, understanding, and celebrating learning and for determining where to focus learning next.

Difficult/Opportunity Conversations

- See difficult conversations as important opportunities
- Use the "Opportunity Conversation" protocol to structure difficult conversations
- Plan for engaging in Opportunity Conversations with your mentee

Guiding questions:

1. What is a difficult/opportunity conversation?
2. What kinds of topics might be difficult for mentors to talk about with mentees?
3. How do mentors prepare for a difficult/opportunity conversation?
4. What process can mentors use to structure difficult/opportunity conversations?
5. How are my views about difficult /opportunity conversations changing as I learn more about how to engage in them?

~~Difficult~~ Opportunity conversations are . . .

those you'd rather not have because they are uncomfortable.

Name some example topics related to mentoring.

What difficult conversations have you experienced so far as a mentor?	What other kinds of topics might be difficult for mentors to talk about with mentees?

Why bother?

Difficult conversations are opportunities for:

1. Speaking your truth contributes to an environment of trust
2. Expressing your concerns reduces your level of stress
3. Saying what's on your mind increases your sense of self-efficacy
4. Addressing issues when they arise builds and maintains a productive, trusting relationship
5. Having these conversations models for mentees
6. Tackling issues handles them instead of letting them linger and get more difficult to address

Reflect

How are difficult conversations an opportunity to tackle important issues, build self-efficacy, and maintain trust?

What does this mean to you as a mentor?

"Opportunity" Conversation Protocol 1

Use this protocol when there is a specific, uncomfortable, yet necessary issue to address between individuals.

Step	Sketch a doodle or symbol to help you remember what happens in this step

1. Prepare mentally.
    a. Reframe your thinking.
    b. Consider what your interests are.
    c. Consider the other person's interests.	

2. Identify the issue or situation.
    a. Name the issue.
    b. Consider if it is your issue alone or if you both share responsibility.
    c. Clarify if addressing it is likely to alleviate or prevent future issues.	

3. Provide a specific example that exemplifies what you think is necessary to change.
    a. Give one specific example.
    b. State it neutrally without interpretation, assumptions, or judgment.	

4. Describe your feelings about the issue.
    a. Name your response.
    b. Own that it is yours.	

5. Clarify what is at stake.
    a. State the potential immediate and long-term consequences.
    b. State them neutrally and clearly.	

6. Identify your contribution to this situation.
    a. Own responsibility for contributing to the situation.
    b. Name how you contributed.	

7. Indicate your desire to resolve the issue.
    a. Be truthful.
    b. Name what is at stake for you if the situation is not resolved.	

8. Invite the other person to respond.
    a. Listen fully and without interruption.
    b. Paraphrase to demonstrate understanding.
    c. Probe if necessary, although silence, acceptance, and acknowledgement may be best.	

9. Plan next actions together.
    a. Be clear on the criteria for moving forward.
    b. Generate possible next actions together.
    c. Choose the action(s) that most closely meet the criteria.
    d. Seek agreement and commitment to implement the action(s), even if temporarily.	

10. Set a time to revisit.
    a. Come back to review how things are going.
    b. Listen and assess viability of continuing or if new agreements must be reached.	

Transcript of the Protocol in Action

This mentor and mentee have been working together around teaching writing. They've made plans several times for the mentor to come into the classroom during lessons that focus on the students' writing skills, but each time the mentor has visited the mentee's classroom, the mentee hasn't followed through on the plan and has skipped over and rushed past those parts of the lessons. The mentor wants to figure out why the mentee is doing this. The mentor feels that this is important because she is worried the students' writing skills are going to stagnate. She also wants the mentee to feel like they are partners - not someone who the mentee should just say "yes, yes" to and then ignore. The mentor thinks that maybe the mentee is just telling her what she thinks she wants to hear, but is ready to hear her point of view.

Mentor Hi, ___. Thanks for meeting up with me...I was hoping we could talk some more about what it looks like to teach writing skills in the Guidebooks lessons. Does now still work to talk?

Mentee Yeah, I've got about 20 minutes.

Mentor Got it. So last Wednesday I popped by your classroom like we had planned, and while you focused on the knowledge and understanding the students needed, you skipped over the section of the lesson that focused on writing skills and said you didn't "have time".
I was disappointed that you skipped this part of the lesson because we had talked about that part of the lesson and you said you were ready to teach it.
I take some responsibility because we haven't done any coaching around writing skills instruction. I made an assumption that you were ready to teach those parts of the lessons, and I should have asked if you wanted me to model or co-teach it with you.

The impact of you skipping those parts of the lessons is that your students' writing will stagnate. They may have the knowledge and understanding of the texts, but won't have the skills to express this knowledge and understanding.

I want you to feel like you can let me know that you're not ready or comfortable teaching something when I ask you if you are or when I assume that you are. Being your mentor is important to me and I'd like to make sure I'm supporting you in all the areas you want and need support.

So...I just talked a lot. I really want to hear your perspective on this.

Mentee Wow, yeah, the writing parts of the lessons are uncomfortable for me. I don't think you've noticed this, but even though I enjoy reading, I'm not a strong writer - this was always hard for me in school and I don't find it fun to teach.

Mentor Thank you so much for letting me know this about you. It sounds like writing doesn't come easy to you, and so teaching writing isn't coming easy for you either.

Mentee Yeah, I think so. And then you kept asking me, "You've got that part, right?" and I felt like I had to say yes.

Mentor I am so sorry about that - that is definitely my responsibility to not make assumptions.
Mentee Thanks, yeah. So then, it was kind of easy, you know, to let the first part of the lesson take too long and then I don't have time to teach writing.

Mentor So would you like to work on writing skills together?

Mentee If *t*his is something specific that you can focus on with me, that might help. You mentioned modeling or co-teaching. Could you come model a lesson for me and then maybe if we can co-plan and then co-teach the next few writing skills sections that are coming up, that will help me start to build my comfort.

Mentor That sounds great. Let's do that and after we do that for the next three lessons, let's revisit and see how you're feeling.

Take Notes on the Protocol in Action

What do you notice about each step?

What do you want to keep in mind for when you try the protocol?

Step	Notes
1. Prepare mentally.	
2. Identify the issue or situation.	
3. Provide a specific example that exemplifies what you think is necessary to change.	
4. Describe your feelings about the issue.	
5. Clarify what is at stake.	
6. Identify your contribution to this situation.	
7. Indicate your desire to resolve the issue.	
8. Invite the other person to respond.	
9. Plan next actions together.	
10. Set a time to revisit.	

"Opportunity" Conversation Practice

Use the protocol to practice having an opportunity conversation with the first scenario, with one partner playing the mentor, and one partner playing the mentee. Then switch roles for the second scenario.

Scenario 1:

Your mentee hasn't been wanting to show you their students' writing pieces. You've wanted to help him analyze his students' writing, but he keeps making excuses not to show you, and it's starting to get awkward. You're tempted to just stop asking and avoid the topic of writing all together.

Scenario 2:

You are starting to feel like your mentee sees you as unhelpful to him. When you offered suggestions during your last debrief conversation that were exactly what you would do in your classroom, the mentee gave a lot of reasons why the suggestions wouldn't work in his classroom, which made you feel disrespected as a professional. You don't understand why he's not valuing your experience and agreeing with your teaching practices.

Addressing a Conflicting/Difficult Issue, Protocol 2

Use this open-ended protocol with an individual or within a team when there is are differences in perspectives about, proposed actions for, approaches to, etc. a situation that requires cooperation. It is less structured and leaves the results wide open to the individuals or team to generate. It requires all parties to engage actively in finding an appropriate resolution.

1. What are the core issues about which we have differing views?	
2. How will the final decision to resolve our differences be made?	
3. On a continuum representing student needs at one end and teacher needs at the other, where do our current practices fit?	
4. What assumptions and information are currently influencing our thinking?	
5. What additional information do we need?	
6. What does each of us need in order to feel that our issues have been acknowledged and addressed?	
7. How is our conversation about these issues honoring our feelings, as well as our substantive needs?	

Your Turn: Plan an "Opportunity" Conversation

You will now have a chance to practice your own personal opportunity conversation. Choose an authentic situation so your practice can be beneficial. It might be something you anticipate coming up soon. It might even be a conversation that you have been postponing. You will share your conversation plan with a partner so it is best to choose a situation that is not too personal or confidential. Plan what you would say.

Step	Notes
1. Prepare mentally.	
2. Identify the issue or situation.	
3. Provide a specific example that exemplifies what you think is necessary to change.	
4. Describe your feelings about the issue.	
5. Clarify what is at stake.	
6. Identify your contribution to this situation.	
7. Indicate your desire to resolve the issue.	
8. Invite the other person to respond.	
9. Plan next actions together.	
10. Set a time to revisit.	

Reflection on "Opportunity" Conversations

How are my views about difficult/opportunity conversations changing as I learn more about how to engage in them?

Difficult Conversations: Key Takeaway

The "Opportunity Conversation" protocol is an effective method for facilitating difficult conversations with a mentee.

Please complete the Module 6 & 7 Survey

http://tinyurl.com/y5kyoz9c