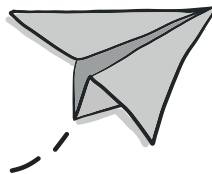


INTRODUCTION



◀ INTRODUCTION VIDEO

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To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Think about the last time you were engaged in learning something. Perhaps it was for work, perhaps not. When you think about all of the things that helped you learn, what stands out? Was it the intentional actions of a teacher and the opportunity to learn from other

students? Was it the design of learning experiences? Was it the flow of those experiences? In reality, it was probably all of the above.

When Doug wanted to learn to use Final Cut Pro to edit videos, he didn't just practice with the software by himself, hoping he would get better. Instead, he attended seminars at the Apple store, engaged in online learning through Lynda.com, and joined a user's group to problem solve with others. In each case, there was a clear set of learning expectations and experiences that were designed to increase his understanding and ability to actually use the program. In each case, there was a clear path toward proficiency, with milestones identified along the way.

When learning is organized and intentional, and when the learner knows what he or she is learning, great things can happen. When students don't know what they are learning, don't care about their learning, and have no idea if they are learning, great things are unlikely to happen.

Enter *teacher clarity*. When teachers are clear in the expectations and instruction, students learn more. Fendick (1990) defined *teacher clarity* as "a measure of the clarity of communication between teachers and students in both directions" (p. 10) and further described it across four dimensions:

1. **Clarity of organization**, such that lesson tasks, assignments, and activities include links to the objectives and outcomes of learning.
2. **Clarity of explanation**, such that information is relevant, accurate, and comprehensible to students.
3. **Clarity of examples and guided practice**, such that the lesson includes information that is illustrative and illuminating as students gradually move to independence, making progress with less support from the teacher.
4. **Clarity of assessment of student learning**, such that the teacher is regularly seeking out and acting upon the feedback he or she receives from students, especially through their verbal and written responses.

As we noted earlier, when students know what they are learning and the lesson flows well, students learn more. Teacher clarity has an effect size of 0.75 (Hattie, 2009). Effect sizes are statistical measures that allow readers to determine how powerful a specific influence is on learning. John Hattie has assembled the largest educational research database in history and has calculated effect sizes on over 200 influences on learning. The average effect size in his database is 0.40. At 0.40, an effect is equal to approximately one year of learning for one year spent in school. Teacher clarity, with an effect size of 0.75, is likely to ensure that the impact on students is significantly greater than average. Of course, some students need to learn more than a year's worth of content to catch up. But at the minimum, students need to gain a year for a year. And teacher clarity can help.

A major part of teacher clarity is understanding what students need to learn and identifying how they will know that they learned it. To get there, teachers have to analyze standards and plan meaningful instruction and assessments. But planning should be focused on impact, not on instruction. Yes, teams of teachers can talk about how they will engage students in meaningful learning, but they must focus on the impact of those activities on learning. In doing so, they clarify their expectations. And expectations also have a powerful impact on students' learning.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Teacher expectations have a powerful influence on student achievement, with an effect size of 0.43 (Hattie, 2009). In large part, teachers get what they expect; teachers with low expectations are particularly successful at getting what they expect. Teacher expectations for students vary by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. However, these can be disrupted by focusing on specific strategies for resetting expectations. These strategies include linking teaching goals to uniformly high standards, flexible and responsive teaching, and assessment that informs both students and teachers (Rubie-Davies & Rosenthal, 2016).

Establishing and communicating learning intentions is an important way that teachers share their expectations with students. When these learning intentions are compared with grade-level expectations or expectations in other schools and districts, educators can get a sense of their appropriateness (and the expectations they have for students). Analyzing the success criteria is another way of determining the expectations a teacher has for students. A given learning intention could have multiple success criteria, some of which may be at the surface level of learning and others of which may be at deeper levels of learning. The success criteria communicate the level of performance that students are expected to meet and allow teams of teachers to talk about the learning expected of students.

In addition, the experiences that teachers plan and the assessments they use also communicate the expectations that they have for students. Teachers with low expectations tend to talk a lot to students (averaging about 80% of the minutes each week) and assess students at the basic skill level. Teachers with higher expectations tend to talk less (averaging about 50% of the minutes each week) and assess students at deeper levels of understanding.

Each of these (learning intentions, success criteria, meaningful experiences, and assessments) are components of teacher clarity, and each can be used to foster students learning.

LEARNING INTENTIONS AND SUCCESS CRITERIA CONTRIBUTE TO TEACHER CLARITY

A major aspect of teacher clarity consists of learning intentions and success criteria. The evidence on the effectiveness of learning intentions and success criteria is impressive. Hattie and Donoghue (2016) examined 31 meta-analyses of more than 3,300 studies related to success criteria and reported an overall effect size of 0.54. When students know what success looks like, they are more likely to plan and predict, set goals, and acquire a stronger sense of how to judge their own progress. In other words, they recognize that they have something to learn and what it looks like when they have learned it.

The content standards for a grade level and discipline shape the expectations held in common for a state's or territory's students. Careful analysis of content standards benefits those who need to teach them—the educators themselves. Through the process of discussion and debate, colleagues identify what students should know and be able to do, and thus prevent the inevitable “creep” that occurs when textbooks and activities, not the standards, begin to drive instruction. Keep in mind that publisher- and teacher-created curricula are not the standards themselves, but rather are materials that (hopefully) facilitate progress toward standards. But when discussions at a grade-level meeting are focused more on covering a chapter in a textbook rather than the learning outcomes, it is a telltale sign that the standard has been lost.

TEACHER COLLABORATION IS VITAL FOR RAISING EXPECTATIONS

The best way to improve teacher clarity is to do so in the company of others. You may be using this playbook as a team. In that case, you probably have collaboration baked into your professional learning processes. One common structure for fostering teacher collaboration to improve the quality of learning has been the formation of professional learning communities (PLCs). PLCs usually involve small groups of educators who have come together to support each other's learning for the purpose of improving student achievement. These are not book clubs or professional learning sessions. The use of these four PLC questions keeps the focus relentlessly on the learning outcomes of students, and explains why the impact of PLCs is powerful (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010):

- What is it we expect our students to learn?
- How will we know when they have learned it?

- How will we respond when some students do not learn?
- How will we respond when some students already know it? (p. 119)

These discussions can result in improved instruction as well as better outcomes for students (e.g., Lai, Wilson, McNaughton, & Hsiao, 2014). In collaborative teams, teachers identify learning intentions and discuss ideas for instruction. They meet to review student work and figure out if their efforts have been fruitful. They also talk about students who need additional instruction or intervention to be successful.

Each of these four questions is answered as teams engage in teacher clarity work. Figure 1 provides an overview of the modules of teacher clarity linked with the PLC

FIGURE 1 PLC Questions and Teacher Clarity

PLC Question	Teacher Clarity Module	Description
What is it we expect our students to learn?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 1: Identifying Concepts and Skills • Module 2: Sequencing Learning Progressions • Module 3: Elaborating Learning Intentions • Module 5: Modifying Learning Intentions to Include Language Expectations • Module 6: Determining the Relevance of the Learning 	In these modules, teachers or teams of teachers are analyzing the standards to determine what students need to know. They are sequencing learning such that it is logical and allows for both content and language to develop. In addition, teachers identify the relevance of the learning expectations to ensure that students are engaged and motivated.
How will we know if they have learned it?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 4: Crafting Success Criteria • Module 9: Establishing Mastery of Standards 	In these modules, teachers or teams of teachers are focused on how they will know if students are successful in learning. This requires that they first identify what it would mean to learn the content and express that in terms of success. In addition, this requires that teachers identify summative assessment tools that can be used to determine mastery of the standards.
<p>How will we respond when some students do not learn?</p> <p>How will we respond when some students already know it?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Module 7: Designing Assessment Opportunities • Module 8: Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences 	To answer questions 3 and 4, teachers or teams of teachers need to identify progress-monitoring tools that they can use to adjust the instruction and supplemental support student receive. In addition, teachers have to create meaningful learning experiences for students and monitor their response to the instruction. Further, teachers will need to implement response to intervention efforts if students do not learn, and that requires the same process outlined in this playbook.

questions. You'll notice that the modules do not line up in order because planning instruction and assessment opportunities are recursive, and teams typically talk about all four questions in an integrated way.

Meaningful teacher collaboration builds collective teacher efficacy, which is a constellation of attitudes and beliefs about the efforts of a school to affect student learning (Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2000). More to the point, teachers with a high collective efficacy believe that "teachers in this school can get through to the most difficult students" (p. 480). Importantly, perceptions are based on experiences. When teachers experience success collaborating with peers and those collaborations improve teaching and learning, they notice. These accumulated data points become the collective efficacy that researchers note is so powerful. With an effect size of 1.57, collective teacher efficacy is number one on Hattie's list of influences on student achievement, more than tripling the speed of learning.

USING THIS PLAYBOOK

It is great if you are able to use this playbook as part of your collaboration with other educators, but you might be using this playbook on your own. In that case, never fear! We hope that we have been able to create a tool that allows for dialogue to occur between us. In the back of the book and on the companion website for this book (resources.corwin.com/teacherclarityplaybook), you will find *sample* answers for the guided-practice phase of each step in the process. These are not absolutes, but rather are representative of our thinking as we worked with experienced elementary and secondary teachers to develop these examples. You may have answers that differ from the ones we furnished; all we ask is that you are able to justify your responses in ways that are consistent with high expectations for student learning. In turn, we hope that you will remain open to our responses. After all, reading is about engaging in silent dialogue with the author.

THE MODULES

Each of the nine learning modules in this notebook is designed to move you systematically through a process that begins and ends with the standards, from analysis through assessment. Our intent is not to introduce you to a process that you must implement in a lockstep way, but rather to build a habit of mind for how it is that you systematically and efficiently analyze standards, build curriculum, teach, and assess. In other words, this process can mobilize the impact of teacher clarity in your classroom. A flowchart for the nine modules can be found in Figure 2.

THE LEARNING PROCESS

Each module uses a modified version of the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework (Fisher & Frey, 2014). Each begins with an explanation of the core concepts of the module to establish the purpose for learning and provide

FIGURE 2

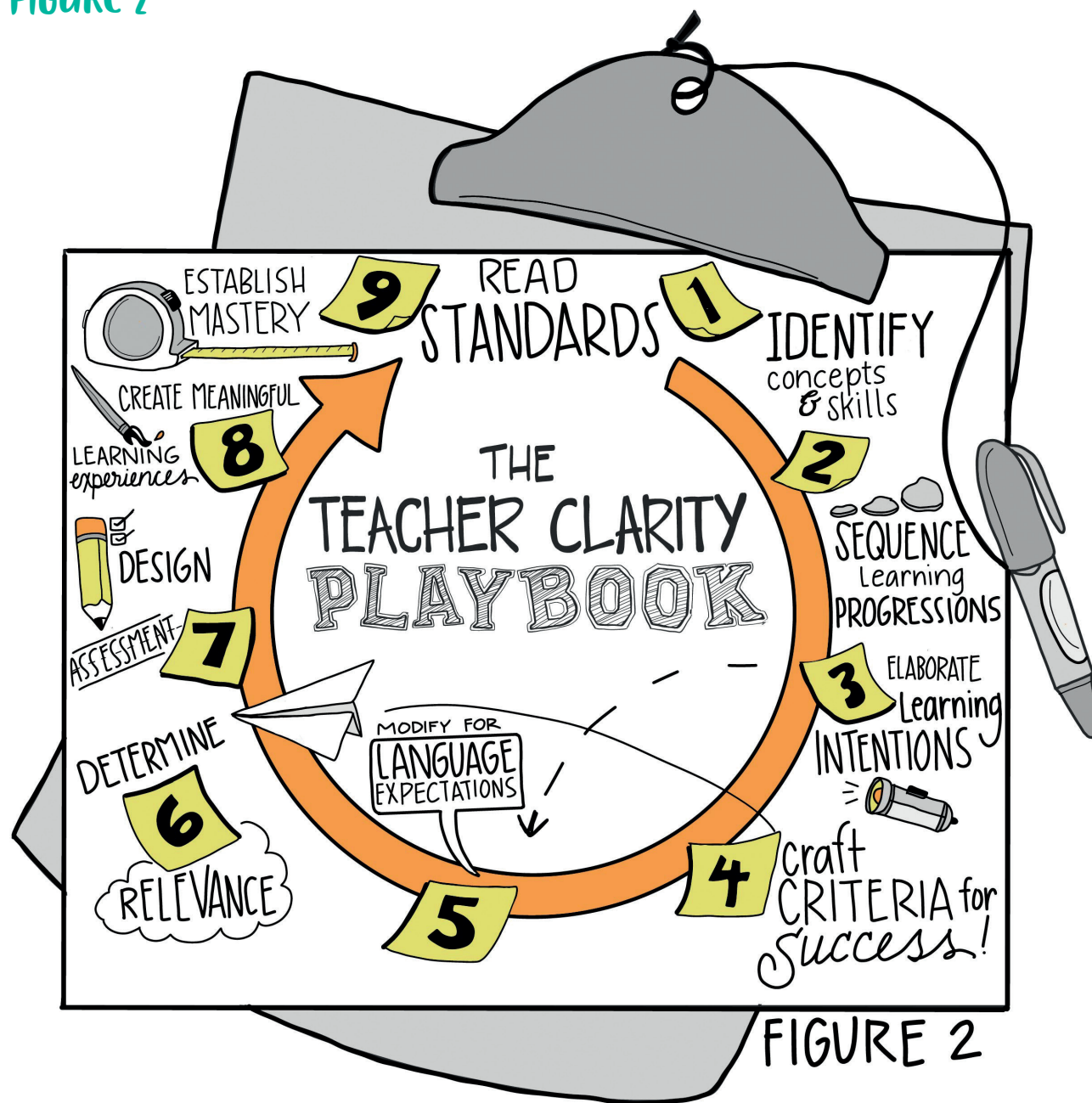


FIGURE 2

direct explanation. The module then continues with modeling how the process is applied through four examples:

- First-grade math
- Fourth-grade English language arts
- Eighth-grade algebra
- Tenth-grade English language arts

We integrate examples from the Next Generation Science Standards and from social studies standards in the Guided Practice sections. We focus on a single standard for ease in explanation, knowing that many teachers plan lessons that address multiple standards at the same time. Thankfully, the process is the same but a little more complicated.

Although some will resonate more with you than others, depending on your own professional interests, we encourage you to engage with all the examples so you can see a pattern across grade and content areas.

Guided practice comes next, and the content and grade levels vary across modules. The Guided Practice section is for you to write on and discuss with your team, if possible. We have suggested answers in the back of the book to help you, but, as noted earlier, they should not be interpreted too narrowly as the *only* correct response. Each module ends with an Independent Practice section in which you apply the same process to a grade level and subject area you have selected. Although it is independent learning, we hope you will be able to continue discussion with colleagues.

OUR HOPE

We really do believe that teacher clarity is important—critical, even. In fact, we believe that it is key to the Visible Learning story (Hattie, 2012). We don't promise that it is easy work or that you will have the time to do this for every lesson, but we do promise that if you see this through to the classroom, you will detect a notable positive change in how you and your students talk about learning. What could be better than that?