The Framework for Teaching Reflecting Teaching to Support CCSS Learning: The Six Clusters

The Six Clusters is a description of the skills demonstrated by accomplished teachers in promoting high levels of student performance—skills based on foundational knowledge and dispositions and grounded in a deep understanding of the nature of human learning. The clusters are an outgrowth of *The Framework for Teaching* (the FfT), which has been validated through empirical studies as predictive of student learning as measured by state assessments. But while the FfT has enjoyed wide acceptance among members of the professional community of educators, its level of detail also makes it cumbersome for everyday use. The clusters are an attempt to distill the "big ideas" of the FfT's four domains and 22 components into an efficient tool (composed of six large concepts) that can serve as the focus not only for evaluation, but for professional growth by teachers through not only their own reflection on practice but also their conversations with colleagues, mentors and coaches, and supervisors.

The clusters—like the full framework—are themselves generic in nature; that is, they apply to all teaching situations, in all disciplines and at different ages and levels. Furthermore, they reflect teaching to high standards of student learning, as reflected in the Common Core State Standards and other high-level standards. Some of these principles of teaching for CCSS learning are, indeed, generic. For example, teaching for deep conceptual understanding, the use of precise academic language, and the skills of argumentation are evident in all disciplines. Similarly, student skill in questioning the reasoning of classmates, and persevering in challenging content, occur in all settings.

On the other hand, teaching occurs in real settings, with real students, and about specific content. Therefore, while there is a generic skill of argumentation, for example, it plays out differently in mathematics from in literacy. Hence. the clusters document is offered in several versions: a generic version, a literacy version, and a mathematics version. Furthermore, literacy skills are evident not only in English classrooms for literary analysis, but also for reading for meaning in other disciplines, such as social studies and science. These versions translate the generic language of the narratives and critical attributes, where appropriate, into content-specific language to guide both teachers and leaders.

Furthermore, while the clusters – like the full Framework for Teaching – reflects teaching practices that are common across all settings, actual teaching occurs with students in all their diversity – cultural, linguistic, and developmental. Hence, accomplished teachers must be familiar with their students' individual characteristics and needs, and create their plans and provide instruction accordingly. Therefore, when the language of the Framework refers to attending to individual students, it is to this full range of learners that it applies. These are the "common themes" of the Framework for Teaching, which are infused in all of the components, and elements, and ensure an inclusive environment for learning.

The generic version of the revised FfT, reflecting those instructional practices that are common across disciplines, comprises the remainder of this document. The literacy and mathematics versions are currently in development, and will be available for use in early, 2015.

For those familiar with *The Framework for Teaching*, the following table summarizes the relationship between the clusters and the full FfT, together with the ways in which teachers demonstrate their skill for each one.

The Link between the Six Large Component Clusters and the Full Framework for Teaching

Cluster	FfT Components/Elements	Sources of Evidence
1. Clarity of Instructional Purpose and Accuracy of Content • *To what extent does the teacher demonstrate depth of important content knowledge and conduct the class with a clear and ambitious purpose, reflective of the standards for the discipline and appropriate to the students' levels of knowledge and skill?* • *To what degree are the elements of a lesson (the sequence of topics, instructional strategies, and materials and resources) well designed and executed and aligned with the purposes of the lesson? To what extent are they designed to engage students in high-level learning in the discipline?*	• 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d: Knowledge of content, clarity, and appropriateness for students of instructional outcomes; resources for classroom use • 1e: Planned activities aligned to instructional purpose • 3a: Expectations for learning, accuracy of content, clarity of explanations, use of academic language • 3b, 3c: Questions, activities, and assignments aligned to instructional purpose	• Instructional purpose, planned instructional activities on written document • Observation: o Statements to students about purpose, conversation with students o Accuracy of content o Alignment of questions, activities, and assignments to purpose • Reflection: success in achieving the lesson objectives?
2. Safe, Respectful, Supportive, and Challenging Learning Environment • *To what extent do the interactions between teacher and students, and among students, demonstrate genuine caring and a safe, respectful, supportive, and also challenging learning environment? Do teachers convey high expectations for student learning and encourage hard work and perseverance? Is the environment safe for risk taking? Do students take pride in their work and demonstrate a commitment to mastering challenging content?*	• 2a: All • 2b: Expectations for learning and achievement, student perseverance in challenging work, and pride in that work	• Observation: o Interactions of students and teacher o Student perseverance and pride • Student surveys?
3. Classroom Management • *Is the classroom well run and organized? Are classroom routines and procedures clear and carried out efficiently by both teacher and students with little loss of instructional time? To what extent do students themselves take an active role in their smooth operation? Are directions for activities clearly explained so that there is no confusion? Do students not only understand and comply with standards of conduct but also play an active part in setting the tone for maintaining those standards? How does the physical environment support the learning activities?*	• 2c: All • 2d: All • 2e: All	• Observation: routines, student conduct, physical environment, etc.

4. Student Intellectual Engagement • *To what extent are students intellectually engaged in a classroom of high intellectual energy? What is the nature of what students are doing? Are they being challenged to think and make connections through both the instructional activities and the questions explored? Do the teacher's explanations of content correctly model academic language and invite intellectual work by students? Are students asked to explain their thinking, constructing logical arguments citing evidence, and to question the thinking of others? Are the instructional strategies used by the teacher suitable to the discipline, and to what extent do they promote student agency in the learning of challenging content?*	• 1c: Design of instruction • 2b: Importance of the content • 3a: Explanations of content: their rigor and invitations for thinking • 3b: Quality of questions/discussions, student discourse • 3c: Intellectual challenge	• Planning documents • Observation: o The nature of the work students are doing o The quality of teacher presentation of content o The nature of student discourse and class discussion • (If available) the worksheet or activity students are doing • (If available) samples of student work
5. Successful Learning by All Students • *To what extent does the teacher ensure the learning by all students? Does the teacher monitor student understanding through specifically designed questions or instructional techniques (such as exit tickets)? To what extent do students monitor their own learning and provide respectful feedback to classmates? Does the teacher make modifications in presentations or learning activities where necessary, taking into account the degree of student learning? Has he or she sought out other resources (including parents) to support students' learning? In reflection, is the teacher aware of the success of the lesson in reaching students?*	• 1b: Knowledge of students • 1d: Resources for students • 1f: Design of summative and formative assessments aligned to outcomes • 3d: Monitoring of student learning, feedback to students, student self-assessment • 3e: Persistence, lesson adjustment • 4a: All • 4b: All • 4c: All	• Planning documents for formative and summative assessments • Observation: monitoring, feedback, adjustment • Reflection: comments on learning of individuals • Artifacts documenting both record keeping and communication with families
6. Professionalism • *To what extent does the teacher engage with the professional community (within the school and beyond) and demonstrate a commitment to ongoing professional learning? Does the teacher collaborate productively with colleagues and contribute to the life of the school? Does the teacher engage in professional learning, and take a leadership role in the school to promote the welfare of students?*	• 1d: Resources to extend professional knowledge • 4d: All • 4e: All • 4f: All	• Artifacts documenting contributions to a professional culture, to professional learning, and to other professional activities