

Marshall Public Schools Teacher Observation Rubric



1a Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy—

In order to guide student learning, accomplished teachers have command of the subjects they teach. They must know which concepts and skills are central to a discipline, and which are peripheral; they must know how the discipline has evolved into the 21st century, incorporating such issues as global awareness and cultural diversity, as appropriate. Accomplished teachers understand the internal relationships within the disciplines they teach, knowing which concepts and skills are prerequisite to the understanding of others. They are also aware of typical student misconceptions in the discipline and work to dispel them. But knowledge of the content is not sufficient; in advancing student understanding, teachers are familiar with the particularly pedagogical approaches best suited to each discipline.

Indicators: • Lesson and unit plans that reflect important concepts in the discipline • Lesson and unit plans that accommodate prerequisite relationships among concepts and skills • Clear and accurate classroom explanations • Accurate answers to student questions • Feedback to students that furthers learning • Interdisciplinary connections in plans and practice

Possible Examples

Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>The teacher says, “The official language of Brazil is Spanish, just like other South American countries.”</p> <p>The teacher says, “I don’t understand why the math book has decimals in the same unit as fractions.”</p> <p>The teacher has students copy dictionary definitions each week to help his students learn to spell difficult words.</p>	<p>The teacher plans lessons on area and perimeter independently of one another, without linking the concepts together.</p> <p>The teacher plans to forge ahead with a lesson on addition with regrouping, even though some students have not fully grasped place value.</p> <p>The teacher always plans the same routine to study spelling: pretest on Monday, copy the words 5 times each on Tuesday and Wednesday, test on Friday.</p>	<p>The teacher’s plan for area and perimeter invites students to determine the shape that will yield the largest area for a given perimeter.</p> <p>The teacher realized her students are not sure how to use a compass, so she plans to practice that before introducing the activity on angle measurement.</p> <p>The teacher plans to expand a unit on civics by having students simulate a court trial.</p>	<p>In a unit on 19th century literature, the teacher incorporates information about the history of the same period.</p> <p>Before beginning a unit on the solar system, the teacher surveys the class on their beliefs about why it is hotter in the summer than in the winter.</p>

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1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students—

Teachers don't teach content in the abstract; they teach it to students. In order to ensure student learning, therefore, teachers must know not only their subject content and its related pedagogy but the students to whom they wish to teach that content. In ensuring student learning, teachers must appreciate what recent research in cognitive psychology has confirmed: namely, that students learn through active intellectual engagement with content. While there are patterns in cognitive, social, and emotional developmental stages typical of different age groups, students learn in their individual ways and may come with gaps or misconceptions that the teacher needs to uncover in order to plan appropriate learning activities. In addition, students have lives beyond school, lives that include athletic and musical pursuits, activities in their neighborhoods, and family and cultural traditions. Students whose first language is not English, as well as students with other special needs, must be considered when planning lessons and identifying resources that will ensure their understanding.

Indicators: • Formal and informal information about students gathered by teacher for use in planning instruction • Student interests and needs learned and used by teacher in planning • Teacher participation in community cultural events • Teacher-designed opportunities for families to share heritage • Teacher-created database of students with special needs available for teacher use

Possible Examples

Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
The lesson plan includes a teacher presentation for an entire 30-minute period to a group of 7-year-olds.	The teacher's lesson plan has the same assignment for the entire class, in spite of the fact that one activity is beyond the reach of some students.	The teacher creates an assessment of students' levels of cognitive development.	The teacher plans his lesson with three different follow-up activities, designed to meet the varied ability levels of his students.
The teacher plans to give her ELL students the same writing assignment she gives the rest of the class.	In the unit on Mexico, the teacher has not incorporated perspectives from the three Mexican-American children in the class.	The teacher examines previous year's cumulative folders to ascertain the proficiency levels of groups of students in the class.	The teacher plans to provide multiple project options; students will self-select the project that best meets their individual approach to learning.
The teacher plans to teach his class Christmas carols, despite the fact that he has four religions represented among his students.	Lesson plans make only peripheral reference to students' interests.	The teacher administers a student interest survey at the beginning of the school year.	The teacher encourages students to be aware of their individual reading levels and make independent reading choices that will be
	The teacher knows that some of her students	The teacher plans activities based on student-interest.	



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	<p>have IEPs, but they're so long that she hasn't read them yet.</p>	<p>The teacher knows that five of her students are in the Garden Club; she plans to have them discuss horticulture as part of the next biology lesson.</p> <p>The teacher realizes that not all of his students are Christian and so he plans to read a Hanukkah story in December.</p> <p>The teacher plans to ask her Spanish speaking students to discuss their ancestry as part of their social studies unit on South America.</p>	<p>challenging, but not too difficult.</p> <p>The teacher attends the local Mexican heritage day, meeting several of his students' extended families.</p> <p>The teacher regularly creates adapted assessment materials for several students with learning disabilities.</p>
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2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport—

An essential skill of teaching is that of managing relationships with students and ensuring that those among students are positive and supportive. Teachers create an environment of respect and rapport in their classrooms by the ways they interact with students and by the interaction they encourage and cultivate among students. An important aspect of respect and rapport relates to how the teacher responds to students and how students are permitted to treat one another. Patterns of interactions are critical to the overall tone of the class. In a respectful environment, all students feel valued and safe

Indicators: • Respectful talk and turn taking • Respect for students' background and life outside the classroom • Teacher and student body language • Physical proximity • Warmth and caring • Politeness • Encouragement • Active listening • Fairness

Possible Examples

Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>A student slumps in his/her chair following a comment by the teacher.</p> <p>Students roll their eyes at a classmate's idea;</p>	<p>Students attend passively to the teacher, but tend to talk, pass notes, etc. when other students are talking.</p>	<p>Teacher greets students by name as they enter the class or during the lesson.</p> <p>The teacher gets on the same level with students, kneeling, for</p>	<p>Teacher inquires about a student's soccer game last weekend (or extracurricular activities or hobbies).</p> <p>Students hush classmates causing a</p>



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<p>the teacher does not respond.</p> <p>Many students talk when the teacher and other students are talking; the teacher does not correct them.</p> <p>Some students refuse to work with other students.</p> <p>Teacher does not call students by their names.</p>	<p>A few students do not engage with others in the classroom, even when put together in small groups.</p> <p>Students applaud halfheartedly following a classmate's presentation to the class.</p> <p>Teacher says: "Don't talk that way to your classmates," but student shrugs his/her shoulders.</p>	<p>example, beside a student working at a desk.</p> <p>Students attend fully to what the teacher is saying.</p> <p>Students wait for classmates to finish speaking before beginning to talk.</p> <p>Students applaud politely following a classmate's presentation to the class.</p> <p>Students help each other and accept help from each other.</p> <p>Teacher and students use courtesies such as "please," "thank you," "excuse me."</p> <p>Teacher says: "Don't talk that way to your classmates," and the insults stop.</p>	<p>distraction while the teacher or another student is speaking.</p> <p>Students clap enthusiastically after one another's presentations for a job well done.</p> <p>The teacher says: "That's an interesting idea, Josh, but you're forgetting ..."</p>
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2d Managing Student Behavior—

In order for students to be able to engage deeply with content, the classroom environment must be orderly; the atmosphere must feel businesslike and productive, without being authoritarian. In a productive classroom, standards of conduct are clear to students; they know what they are permitted to do and what they can expect of their classmates. Even when their behavior is being corrected, students feel respected; their dignity is not undermined. Skilled teachers regard positive student behavior not as an end in itself, but as a prerequisite to high levels of engagement in content.

Indicators: • Clear standards of conduct, possibly posted, and possibly referred to during a lesson • Absence of acrimony between teacher and students concerning behavior • Teacher awareness of student conduct • Preventive action when needed by the teacher • Fairness • Absence of misbehavior • Reinforcement of positive behavior

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Possible Examples

Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>Students are talking among themselves, with no attempt by the teacher to silence them.</p> <p>An object flies through the air, without teacher notice.</p> <p>Students are running around the room, the result being a chaotic environment.</p> <p>Their phones and other electronics distract students, but the teacher does nothing.</p>	<p>Classroom rules are posted, but neither teacher nor students refer to them.</p> <p>The teacher repeatedly asks students to take their seats; they ignore him/her.</p> <p>Teacher says to one student: "Where's your late pass? Go to the office." To another: "You don't have a late pass? Come in and take your seat; you've missed enough already."</p>	<p>Upon a nonverbal signal from the teacher, students correct their behavior.</p> <p>The teacher moves to every section of the classroom, keeping a close eye on student behavior.</p> <p>The teacher gives a student a hard look, and the student stops talking to his/her neighbor</p>	<p>A student suggests a revision in one of the classroom rules.</p> <p>The teacher notices that some students are talking among themselves and without a word moves nearer to them; the talking stops.</p> <p>The teacher asks to speak to a student privately about misbehavior.</p> <p>A student reminds his/her classmates of the class rule about chewing gum.</p>

3a Communicating with Students

Teachers communicate with students for several independent, but related, purposes. First, they convey that teaching and learning are purposeful activities; they make that purpose clear to students. They also provide clear directions for classroom activities, so that students know what it is that they are to do. When teachers present concepts and information, those presentations are made with accuracy, clarity, and imagination; when expanding upon the topic is appropriate to the lesson, skilled teachers embellish their explanations with analogies or metaphors, linking them to students' interests and prior knowledge. Teachers occasionally withhold information from students (for example in an inquiry-based science lesson) to encourage them to think on their own, but what information they do convey is accurate and reflects deep understanding. And the teacher's use of language is vivid, rich, and error free, affording the opportunity for students to hear language well used and to extend their own vocabularies. Teacher presents complex concepts in ways that provide scaffolding and access to students.

Indicators: • Clarity of the purpose of the lesson • Clear directions and procedures specific to the lesson activities • Absence of content errors and clear explanations of concepts • Students comprehension of content • Correct and imaginative use of language

Possible Examples



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Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>A student asks: "What are we supposed to be doing?" but the teacher ignores the question.</p> <p>The teacher states that to add fractions they must have the same numerator.</p> <p>Students have a quizzical look on their faces; some may withdraw from the lesson.</p> <p>Students become disruptive, or talk among themselves in an effort to follow the lesson.</p> <p>The teacher uses technical terms with an elementary class without explaining their meanings.</p> <p>The teacher tends to say "ain't."</p>	<p>The teacher mispronounces some common words.</p> <p>The teacher says: "And oh, by the way, today we're going to factor polynomials."</p> <p>A student asks: "What are we supposed to be doing?" and the teacher clarifies the task.</p> <p>Students ask, "What do I write here?" in order to complete a task.</p> <p>Having asked students only to listen, the teacher says: "Watch me while I show you how to ..."</p> <p>A number of students do not seem to be following the explanation.</p> <p>Students are inattentive during the teacher's explanation of content.</p>	<p>The teacher says, "By the end of today's lesson, you're all going to be able to factor different types of polynomials."</p> <p>In the course of a presentation of content, the teacher asks students: "Can anyone think of an example of that?"</p> <p>The teacher uses a board or projection device so students can refer to it without requiring the teacher's attention.</p>	<p>The teacher says: "Here's a spot where some students have difficulty ... be sure to read it carefully."</p> <p>The teacher asks a student to explain the task to other students.</p> <p>When help is needed, a student offers clarification about the learning task to classmates.</p> <p>The teacher explains passive solar energy by inviting students to think about the temperature in a closed car on a cold but sunny day or by the water in a hose that has been sitting in the sun.</p> <p>The teacher says: "Who would like to explain this idea to us?"</p> <p>The teacher pauses during an explanation of the civil rights movement to remind students that the prefix "in," as in "inequality," means "not" and that the prefix "un" means the same thing.</p>

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3c Engaging Students in Learning

Student engagement in learning is the centerpiece of the framework for teaching; all other components contribute to it. When students are engaged in learning, they are not merely “busy,” nor are they only “on task.” Rather, they are intellectually active in learning important and challenging content. The critical distinction between a classroom in which students are compliant and busy and one in which they are engaged is that in the latter students are developing their understanding through what they do. That is, they are engaged in discussing, debating, answering “what if?” questions, discovering patterns, and the like. They may be selecting their work from a range of (teacher-arranged) choices and making important contributions to the intellectual life of the class. Such activities don’t typically consume an entire lesson, but they are essential components of engagement. A lesson in which students are engaged usually has a discernible structure: a beginning, a middle, and an end, with scaffolding provided by the teacher or by the activities themselves. The teacher organizes student tasks to provide cognitive challenge and then encourages students to reflect on what they have done and what they have learned. That is, the lesson has closure, in which students derive the important learning from their own actions. A critical question for an observer in determining the degree of student engagement is “What are the students being asked to do?” If the answer to that question is that they are filling in blanks on a worksheet or performing a rote procedure, they are unlikely to be cognitively engaged. In observing a lesson it is essential not only to watch the teacher but also to pay close attention to the students and what they are doing. The best evidence for student engagement is what students are saying and doing as a consequence of what the teacher does, or has done, or has planned.

Indicators: • Activities aligned with the goals of the lesson • Student enthusiasm, interest, thinking, problem-solving, etc. • Learning tasks that require high-level student thinking and are aligned with lesson objectives • Students highly motivated to work on all tasks and persistent even when the tasks are challenging • Students actively “working,” rather than watching while their teacher “works” • Suitable pacing of the lesson: neither dragging nor rushed, with time for closure and student reflection

Possible Examples

Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
Students are able to fill out the lesson worksheet without fully understanding what it’s asking them to do. The lesson drags or feels rushed. Students complete “busy work” activities.	Students are asked to fill in a worksheet, following an established procedure. There is a recognizable beginning, middle, and end to the lesson. Parts of the lesson have a suitable pace; other parts drag or feel rushed.	Students are asked to formulate a hypothesis about what might happen if the American voting system allowed for the direct election of presidents. Students are given a task to do independently, then to discuss with a table group, and then to	Students are asked to write an essay “in the style of Hemingway.” A student asks whether they might remain in their small groups to complete another section of the activity, rather than work independently.

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		<p>report out from each table.</p> <p>There is a clear beginning, middle, and end to the lesson.</p> <p>The lesson neither rushes nor drags.</p>	<p>Students identify or create their own learning materials.</p> <p>Students summarize their learning from the lesson.</p>
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3d Using Assessment in Instruction

Assessment of student learning plays an important role in instruction; no longer does it signal the end of instruction; it is now recognized to be an integral part of instruction. While assessment of learning has always been and will continue to be an important aspect of teaching (it's important for teachers to know whether students have learned what was intended), assessment for learning has increasingly come to play an important role in classroom practice. And in order to assess student learning for the purposes of instruction, teachers must have a "finger on the pulse" of a lesson, monitoring student understanding and, where appropriate, offering feedback to students. Of course, a teacher's monitoring of student learning, though the action may superficially appear to be the same as that of monitoring student behavior, has a fundamentally different purpose in each case. When teachers are monitoring behavior, they are alert to students who may be passing notes, or bothering their neighbors; when teachers are monitoring student learning, they look carefully at what students are writing, or listen carefully to the questions students ask, in order to gauge whether they require additional activity or explanation in order to grasp the content. In each case, the teacher may be circulating in the room, but his/her purpose in doing so is quite different in the two situations. Similarly, on the surface, questions asked of students for the purpose of monitoring learning are fundamentally different from those used to build understanding; in the former, teachers are alert to students' revealed misconceptions, whereas in the latter the questions are designed to explore relationships or deepen understanding. For the purpose of monitoring, many teachers create questions specifically to determine the extent of student understanding and use techniques (such as exit tickets) to ascertain the degree of understanding of every student in the class. Indeed, encouraging students (and actually teaching them the necessary skills) of monitoring their own learning against clear standards is demonstrated by teachers at high levels of performance.

Indicators: • Teacher paying close attention to evidence of student understanding • Teacher posing specifically created questions to elicit evidence of student understanding • Teacher circulating to monitor student learning and to offer feedback • Students assessing their own work against established criteria

Possible Examples



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Unsatisfactory	Basic	Proficient	Distinguished
<p>A student asks, "How is this assignment going to be graded?"</p> <p>A student asks, "Does this quiz count towards my grade?"</p> <p>The teacher forges ahead with a presentation without checking for understanding.</p> <p>The teacher says: "Good job, everyone."</p>	<p>Teacher asks: "Does anyone have a question?"</p> <p>When a student completes a problem on the board, the teacher corrects the student's work without explaining why.</p> <p>The teacher, after receiving a correct response from one student, continues without ascertaining whether all students understand the concept.</p>	<p>The teacher circulates during small group or independent work, offering suggestions to groups of students.</p> <p>The teacher uses a specifically formulated question to elicit evidence of student understanding.</p> <p>The teacher asks students to look over their papers to correct their errors.</p>	<p>The teacher reminds students of the characteristics of high quality work (the assessment criteria), suggesting that the students themselves helped develop them.</p> <p>While students are working, the teacher circulates, providing substantive feedback to individual students.</p> <p>The teacher uses exit tickets to elicit evidence of individual student understanding.</p> <p>Students offer feedback to their classmates on their work.</p> <p>Students evaluate a piece of their writing against the writing rubric and confer with the teacher about how it could be improved.</p>