FEEDBACK VOCABULARY

Phrases to support and substantiate evaluative commentary

- Because . . . occurred . . . students . . .
- The way that . . . was conducted . . . led to students . . .
- [The teacher's] strong . . . led students to . . .
- Effective (questioning, preparation, management, etc.) helped students to . . .
- Students responded very well to . . . as evidenced by . . .
- The lesson included . . . which resulted in . . .
- Students learned rapidly as a result of . . .
- Students engaged with . . . and so learning was . . .
- It was observed . . . which resulted in . . . because . . .

Guide to Proportions

Numerical proportions for groups of students expressed in words to aid consistency

Proportion	Description
91-100%	Vast/overwhelming majority or almost all
80-65%	Large majority, most
51-64%	Majority
35-50%	Minority
20-34%	Small minority
6-19%	Very small minority, few
0-5%	Almost none/very few

Evaluative words to promote inter-rater reliability and consistency

Unsatisfactory	Needs Improvement	Effective	Highly Effective
Poor	Some	Fruitful	Excellent
Very poor	Moderate	Solid	Superb
Failure	Partial	Suitable	Brilliant
Impoverished	Sound	Fully aware	Outstanding
Little	Modest	Clear	Faultless
No . . .	Occasionally	Well	Almost perfect
Low	Weak	Significant	Extensive
Does not	Adequate	Appropriate	Ambitious
Inappropriate	At times mundane	Competent	Fully
Inefficient	Ordinary	Just right	Very high
Inadequate	Reasonable	Effective	Seamless
Never	Fair	Regularly	Dynamic
Not . . .	Infrequent	Efficient	Highly effective
Inefficient	Occasionally	Accomplished	Very often

Lesson Self-Reflection Guide

The questions below are intended to generate the reflection process. Use them as a guide to reflect on the lesson and its outcomes in order to prepare for the post-observation conference.

1. Did the students successfully achieve the lesson objective(s)? Why or why not?

2. What data support your answer to the previous question?

3. What do you feel worked well in the lesson?

4. What would you refine/change/add/delete if you were to teach this lesson again to the same class?

5. Based on student learning of your objectives, what are your next steps?

6. As you reflect over this observation cycle, what ideas or insights are you discovering about your teaching? What will you do in response to these insights?

Hillsborough County PUBLIC SCHOOLS *Excellence in Education*

CLASSROOM TEACHER EVALUATION INSTRUMENT: CLASSROOM OBSERVATION SUMMARY

Classroom Teacher: Lawson #:

Observer Name/Position: Lawson #:

School Site: Date:

Subject Area Observed: Grade Level:

Areas of Strength
Areas of Focus
Suggested Next Steps

Distribution: Information Services, Empowering Effective Teachers

SB 34902 (Updated 8/12/11)

SAMPLE OBSERVATION SUMMARIES

Sample 1:

Strengths of the Lesson
2b Establishing a Culture for Learning: High levels of energy from both the teacher and students created a culture for learning among all members of the class. The teacher presented learning to students as an exciting "challenge" and students eagerly participated in learning activities, genuinely problem solving and seeking understanding. **3a Communicating with Students:** The teacher's communication of lesson objective was thorough and included input from students in developing a foundation of what they had learned to build into what was to be discovered during the day's lesson. During the lesson, students contributed to the explanation of content by sharing with the class how they solved their problems and understood content. At one point, a student made a discovery of a misconception and the teacher prompted him to share and explain his reasoning with the class, which he did, increasing understanding among the class. **3c Engaging Students in Learning:** Virtually all students were engaged in learning tasks designed to challenge their thinking and allow them to construct understanding through self-discovery and exploration of abstract concepts with manipulatives. The teacher promoted the use of problem solving strategies by students by providing them with problems and guiding them to figure out the solution through experimentation, in line with the constructivist approach to learning. Students were given a choice in how they solved the problems and were able to reach their solutions by their own means. Students worked collaboratively with partners and shared out with the whole class to construct their understanding, express their findings, and consolidate their understanding.
Areas of Focus
3b Using Questioning & Discussion Techniques: The teacher's questions were of a high level that promoted deeper thinking, and student discussion was effective in ensuring that most students were engaged and heard. This area could be further developed to enhance student learning by promoting high-level discourse among students as a whole class in which students respond to each other, creating a meaningful discussion among the entire classroom community.
Suggested Next Steps
3b Using Questioning & Discussion Techniques: During whole class instruction, encourage students/groups to respond to other students'/groups' answers and shared thoughts with their own opinions and/or questions. This will facilitate a meaningful group discussion among the class as a whole, student-to-student, instead of many individual teacher-student conversations.

Sample 2:

Strengths of the Lesson
2e Organizing Physical Space: The classroom environment is safe and learning was accessible to all students. Students were seated facing the front of the room, where they were able to see the answers the teacher wrote under the ELMO and projected on the screen. Student desks were arranged in groups that allowed for them to work together on learning activities. **3a Communicating with Students:** The teacher's explanation of the goals communicated to students that the purpose of the lesson was to learn how to divide by five. Students were able to express that they were participating in learning activities to learn division when asked by the observer. Students were able to explain the directions for the work they were doing, as well.
Areas of Focus
1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content/3c Engaging Students in Learning: Learning tasks and activities required only rote responses (filling in blanks on a worksheet or basic computation), with the teacher often telling students specifically what to write or how to respond to tasks. Students demonstrated varying abilities within the lesson, some completing problems and answering questions correctly, some partially correct, and some demonstrated no understanding of concepts. All students were assigned the same tasks with no differentiation based on their specific levels. After engaging in 45 minutes of instruction, the majority of the class demonstrated misunderstanding (students did not complete assigned worksheet problems correctly). Increase student learning by differentiating instructional activities so that they are appropriate for all students and allow them to be engaged in rigorous and active learning. The use of instructional strategies that promote problem solving and encourage students to build knowledge through exploration in line with the constructivist theory of learning would also improve student understanding. **3d Using Assessment in Instruction/3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness:** Students were directed to work on and solve several problems out of the mathematics textbook independently after the teacher demonstrated how to solve the problems herself. Most students demonstrated misunderstanding by solving problems incorrectly or not solving problems at all. After ten minutes of independent work time, the teacher directed students to put away their books (most still had incorrect answers or had not solved a large majority of the problems) and moved on to the next activity, telling students that they will come back to the work page when they had free time. Students were unsuccessful in the subsequent activity. Using assessment data collected on individual students' progress in the lesson to adjust instruction appropriately would increase student learning, re-teaching when students demonstrate a need.

Suggested Next Steps

1a Demonstrating Knowledge of Content/3c Engaging Students in Learning:

- Provide students with learning activities that are differentiated to meet their needs and allow them to be engaged in work that challenges them to build knowledge. Utilize focused pre-assessments on specific content to group students accordingly and provide them with appropriately challenging material.
- Review *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching b*y Charlotte Danielson (2007, p. 15-17) for more information on high intellectual engagement and constructivist-based teaching.
- During instructional activities, promote building of new knowledge in line with the constructivist theory of learning by utilizing inquiry-based approaches that allow for student choice and self-discovery and, as the teacher, act as a facilitator for that information (as opposed to the "I do-we do-you do" approach which is teacher-centered).
- Attend district trainings on problem solving in mathematics, such as *Problem Solving, Problem Solved*.

3d Using Assessment in Instruction/3e Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness:

- To assess student learning, check for understanding of individual students by evaluating student responses and work.
- Utilize data collected on student progress to adjust the lesson and inform instruction.
- When students struggle to complete activities or demonstrate incorrect answers, clarify and correct misunderstandings by stopping ongoing instruction to take advantage of the teachable moment and re-teach the correct content.
- When planning, develop alternative lesson activities that can be used if the primary lesson does not engage students or produce learning (a "Plan B"). If it is evident that students are not engaged in active learning or making progress, modify instructional plans to allow for student engagement (go to "plan B").

Sample 3:

Strengths of the Lesson
2c Managing Classroom Procedures: Well-established classroom procedures and good preparation of physical materials resulted in very little loss of instructional time and little negative impact on student learning. Transitions to and from the rug were efficient, and students were knowledgeable about how to move and where to sit. Materials for the lesson were prepared ahead of time, with manipulatives counted out and prepared for each individual students in bags and textbook worksheets already torn out of the text book ready for students. **3b Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques:** The use of probing student answers for deeper understanding promoted greater student understanding of the content and allowed the teacher to gain an accurate pulse of the class's understanding ("How did you know?" "How did you get that?" "Did anyone solve another way?"). The use of specific procedures for student discussion activities allowed students to be meaningfully engaged in accountable talk with their peers during "turn and talk" time. **2a Creating an Environment of Respect and Rapport:** The teacher's interactions with students are polite and respectful, which aid in creating a warm atmosphere within the classroom. Students feel welcome and comfortable with the teacher, as evidenced by their open interactions with her. Teacher responses to students were energetic and positive, such as "Yes! He already circled and underlined!" and "Excellent strategy!" The teacher utilized positive reinforcement, including giving students high fives and compliments throughout the lesson to further promote positive rapport.
Areas of Focus
3c Engaging Students in Learning: Enhance student engagement and learning by elevating the rigor of lesson activities appropriate to individual students' levels and differentiating for their needs so that all students are intellectually engaged in activities that challenge their thinking throughout the entire instructional time. During instructional activities, promote building of new knowledge in line with the constructivist theory of learning by utilizing inquiry-based approaches that allow for student choice and self-discovery. As the teacher, act as a facilitator for the uncovering of that information and new learning. The lesson observed was teacher-directed and promoted a single path of thinking. Learning would have been greater if students were promoted to discover new knowledge through exploration and problem solving on their own. Additionally, all students were assigned the same learning tasks. As a result, some students finished earlier than others and communicated that the tasks were "easy", while some solved problems incorrectly and struggled to complete tasks. **1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students:** Increase use of data and knowledge of students' present level of performance to improve planning efficiency and provide

differentiation within the lesson to accommodate student needs along the spectrum of ability levels.

The teacher indicated the use of pre-assessments to collect data on student learning ("beginning of the year pre-test data, chapter 5 Understand Division Show What You Know informal assessment, and Chapter 5 Mid-Chapter Checkpoint informal assessment"); however, there was no indication of how that data was used to inform instruction for groups of or individual students based on their levels of understanding. There was no observed differentiation within the lesson based on student needs and levels.

1f Designing Student Assessments: With an understanding of individual student needs, plan assessment that is adapted for groups of or individual students and targets learning at their specific learning levels. Utilize those assessment results collected from individuals/groups of students to then plan differentiated future instruction for individuals/groups.

The assessment planned and utilized in instruction was the same for all students with no clearly communicated criteria for mastery or learning levels. The observed results of student work on the assessment were varied; some students were able to complete the task easily, some struggled (needed guidance from the teacher), and some did so incorrectly.

Suggested Next Steps

3c Engaging Students in Learning

- Review *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching* by Charlotte Danielson (2007, p. 15-17) for more information on high intellectual engagement and constructivist-based teaching.
- Utilize problem solving and inquiry-based instruction. For example, instead of telling students that step-by-step how to solve a problem, present students with that problem and allow them to discover how to solve that problem.
- Attend district mathematics trainings on the newly adopted instructional model that focuses on problem solving and guided inquiry, as opposed to "I do, you do, we do" lesson formats that are more teacher-directed.
- Consider utilizing "guided math" groups to further differentiate instruction and target learning activities to specific groups of students at their needed level.

1b Demonstrating Knowledge of Students

- Utilize focused pre-assessments on the specific objective to be taught to determine students' present level of understanding prior to lessons.
- In prior lessons, include formative assessment elements that can be used to plan for future lessons.

1f Designing Student Assessments

- Plan different or altered forms of assessments that are tailored to specific students' or groups' needs and differentiated to allow them to be challenged on their level.

THE LEARNING
System

EVERY EDUCATOR ENGAGES IN EFFECTIVE PROFESSIONAL LEARNING EVERY DAY SO EVERY STUDENT ACHIEVES

Inside

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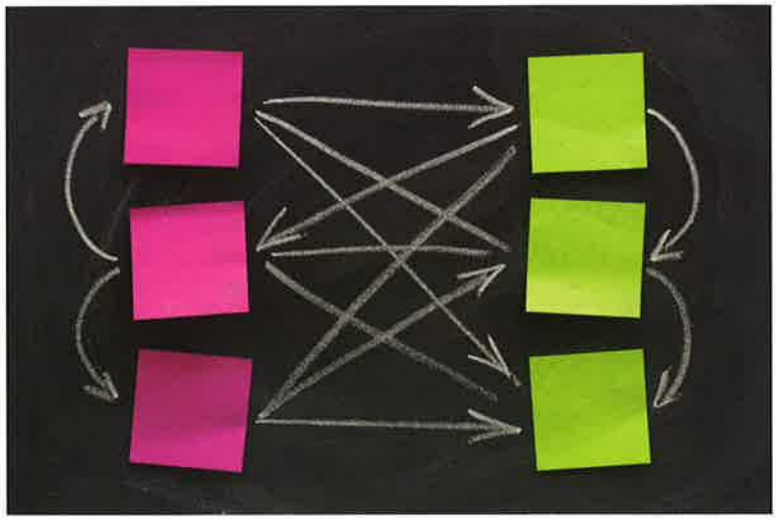
THE ART OF FEEDBACK

Support observers with a system that ensures learning-focused conversations

By Anthony Armstrong



When Jeffery Pestrak, chief academic officer for Mastery Charter Schools in Philadelphia, Pa., was assigned as a principal at a struggling school in need of turnaround, he quickly discovered that providing observational feedback to teachers was more complicated than he first imagined. "I would give the teachers feedback about their practice, and they might value it or they might not. Sometimes they would flatly disagree with what were best practices or what was getting results with students. I realized at that time that I was observing and giving feedback without conveying what I would be valuing."

This type of disconnect about how to define quality instruction is just one of many complex considerations for feedback that Pestrak has addressed over the years. Now, in his role as chief academic officer, Pestrak understands the importance of creating an effective feedback system and makes it an important part of Mastery's three-day coaching institute every summer. Mastery also conducts other observation learning throughout the year. These include calibration events, where observers make sure their feedback is consistent from one person to the next, and peer leadership reviews that bring observers from different campuses together to conduct a simultaneous observation and share their feedback with each other.

START AT THE SYSTEM LEVEL

For Laura Lipton, co-author with Bruce Wellman of *Learning-Focused Supervision* (in press) and co-director of MiraVia, a publishing and professional development company, effective feedback is learning-focused, complex, and an integral part of a learning system: "Feedback that

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leads to growth and improvement is data-driven, is based on shared definitions and understandings between parties, acts as a foundation for conversation, and sets goals and improves practice by naming strengths and gaps in relation to a clear set of standards."

Professional learning leaders often draw distinctions between coaching feedback and evaluation feedback, citing the need for coaching feedback to be nonjudgmental and unattached to the pressures and consequences of an evaluation process. However, the systemic foundation and framework for both types of feedback are almost identical for Lipton. "Whatever the label is, they both have to have a preponderance of types of evidence that substantiates descriptions of practice," she said. "You can be an evaluator and still have a learning-focused conversation that produces greater learning, forward movement, and problem solving. It is a matter of clarity of purpose and skillful communication."

These conversations are often sources of anxiety for those receiving the feedback, so *how* the feedback is delivered is as critical as *what* is being delivered. According to Lipton, this anxiety comes from being judged on one's frailties or weak points and can hinder the learning and improvement process. "This is why skillfulness in providing feedback needs to be deep and sophisticated," explained Lipton. "Evaluators need to believe that they are growth agents. They need a developmental mindset that tells them the purpose of the feedback is not to judge or be the end of a conversation. Feedback is just the beginning of a conversation that explores and improves practice. If these conversations are done well, they will shift the culture to start having data-driven, inquiry-based conversations between colleagues about improving practice. This shift gives everyone permission to give each other feedback and ask tough questions about what's happening in the school."

"Feedback is just the beginning of a conversation that explores and improves practice. If these conversations are done well, they will shift the culture to start having data-driven, inquiry-based conversations between colleagues about improving practice."

BUILD A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

According to Lipton, feedback is only as good as the opportunity to make meaning from it and apply that meaning to the receiver's own practice. To do that, Lipton says, the relationship between the giver and receiver of feedback needs to be clearly developmental and growth-oriented. This means there is a culturally shared belief that everyone can move forward to improve practice, and the feedback conversations establish a baseline and clarity about desired growth and desirable practice. "The system's values can be conveyed clearly and modeled congruently by the system leader and others," said Lipton. "The on-the-ground person can be clear by naming some of the outcomes of the conversations, the use of feedback, the desired qualities of the supervisor-teacher relationship, etc.

"Strategizing together helps the receiver increase capacity to self-monitor and self-modify — based on the same set of standards. This way, the language choices made by the evaluator become the internal talk of the teacher."

While coaches will often cite the need to establish strong relationships first before providing feedback, Lipton feels that it is possible to relate to someone in a way that helps them feel safe and emotionally secure, if one pays attention to the psychological and emotional aspects of providing feedback. Learning skills to establish psychological and emotional safety is critical for engaging in these types of conversations, said Lipton, and feedback providers should learn how to use verbal and nonverbal practices to demonstrate an underlying belief in the exploration of practice.

"If you look at the neurology of the brain," Lipton explained, "people shut down and do not have the capacity for complex thought when they feel threatened. This can happen if they feel they are being judged, or if they think that the evaluator feels they are not up to the task. To prevent this, the evaluator must learn to avoid questions that can be threatening. Inquiries must be exploratory and not have a 'right' or 'wrong' dynamic. For example, when the evaluator asks, 'Can you think of…' the question itself expresses the potential doubt that the receiver can think of something. Instead, the question can be phrased as 'What might be some ways to...' which invites exploration of the topic at hand. Instead of asking 'What might be *the* cause of…' which implies that there is one right answer, one could ask

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'What might be *some* causes of…' which implies that there is more than one correct answer.

"Therefore, the feedback giver is continually making intentional choices about verbal and nonverbal communication that leads to creating an environment of emotional safety, which gives the receiver the capacity to have cognitive complexity in the conversation."

PROVIDE SUPPORT

Pestrak understands the importance of making sure teacher evaluators are skilled in providing high-quality feedback and builds it into the system's professional learning schedule. "We do a significant amount of training on providing feedback and conducting observations and coaching," said Pestrak. "During our summer institute, Molly Eigen, our deputy chief academic officer, who is the brains and execution behind our coaching model and training, makes sure our coaches also study effective teacher practice, conduct modeling and norming activities — where we compare observation notes from different observers, review data to look at trends, review teacher thoughts on coaching and observations, and examine input from the supervisors of our observers."

To provide coaches and other observers with a solid foundation for delivering quality feedback, Mastery starts with the links between instructional models, coaching, and evaluation and how that alignment drives professional learning for teachers. "At the core of our instructional system is our instructional standards document," said Pestrak, "which we use to drive induction, orientation, and ongoing professional development for teachers. When our coaches coach, everything they use comes from it, such as observation tools, targeted feedback, and classroom visits. Everyone knows what expectation is — what we consider quality instruction."

The summer learning Pestrak provides is then supported throughout the year. "Everyone has a supervisor who provides coaching and support. They co-observe, calibrate, and review observations. We also have regional directors and directors of teacher coaching that can support principals and assistant principals as well. We routinely collect formal observation data, look for trends, and talk with people about what we see in the data. We will have assistant principals and principals from several schools gather in one school to co-observe one teacher. They will record and review their observations collectively. We might also watch videos of teachers to calibrate our observational practices. So there is this constant conversation about the feedback that administrators and coaches provide to ensure they are improving and in alignment."

See pp. 6-7 for tools that help structure feedback conversations.

Helping facilitate these constant feedback conversations, said Pestrak, is Mastery's value-based culture. "We have a culture of open doors where teachers and administrators talk to each other. Everyone should feel comfortable in talking to each other. One of our values is straight talk, which means that we should be able to talk with each other in a direct and nice way."

Learning Forward BELIEF

Sustainable learning cultures require skillful leadership.

Mastery schools use formal observations that are based on their five instructional standards and require both a rating and a narrative. "We have our observers rate the teachers on each of our five instructional standards and the accompanying specific strategies we expect to see being used to implement the standards," said Pestrak. "The observers then write comments for each that form a narrative of the observation, like 'The lesson was conveyed clearly and was highly focused. Could use more checking for understanding and cold calling.' "

Because Mastery's instructional standards and expectations are the basis for observation and feedback, the process is assured alignment, a common language, and clear goals for moving forward. "All of our professional development, induction, teacher coaching, and performance-based evaluation system is directly tied to our instructional standards," said Pestrak. "The ideal that we work towards is transparency as to what the observer is looking for; training to prepare the teacher for such an instructional approach; agreement among all that those key standards and focus areas are valued; and the confidence that our observers know how to evaluate. These have all contributed to our improvements in practice and gains in student achievement."

According to Lipton, the importance of ensuring that evaluators can provide the right quality of feedback and deliver it with psychological and emotional skill cannot be overstated. "Without high-quality feedback, people will stagnate — there will be no growth. When people engage in rich conversations, it changes the culture to one of collective efficacy. Shining spots of distinguished practice are not enough to produce rich learning for all kids. Teachers and administrators need to talk with each other, learn, be willing to learn, and see each other as resources so that we are all moving forward in improving practice."

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Anthony Armstrong (anthony.armstrong@learningforward.org) is publications editor at Learning Forward.

Learning-focused conversations

Feedback is the beginning of a conversation that explores and improves practice. Use these conversation templates to help shift your culture through data-driven, inquiry-based conversations about improving practice.

A TEMPLATE FOR PLANNING

ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING

Context

- What are some things about your students' readiness (social skills, routines, self-management) that are influencing your lesson (unit) design?
- What are some of the skills/knowledge students will need to bring to this lesson (unit) to be successful?

Presenting issues

- What are some special areas/student needs you will need to address?
- What are some issues you anticipate might influence student learning?

EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

Goals and outcomes

- As you think about what you know about your students, and the content, what are some key learning goals?
- What are some ways that these goals integrate with other content learning?
- What are some thinking skills students will need to apply?

Indicators of success

- Given these goals, what are some things you expect to see/hear as students are achieving them?
- Given these goals, how will you monitor student learning?
- What kinds of assessments will you use to determine student success?

Approaches, strategies and resources

- What are some strategies you're planning that will both challenge students and support their success?
- What are some ways you'll ensure high engagement for all students?
- What are some resources or materials you/your students will need to support and extend student learning?

Potential choice points and concerns

- As you anticipate teaching the lesson, what are some points where students might struggle?
- What are some options for supporting struggling students and enriching those who need greater challenge?
- Should you notice that students' attention is drifting, what are some possibilities for reengaging them?

ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

Personal learning

- What are some ways that this lesson provides opportunities to pursue your own learning goals?
- What new learning/skills will you try or exercise in this lesson?

Next steps

- As a result of this conversation, what are some next steps?

These planning and reflection templates include sample questions, not scripts, to illustrate each category being explored (e.g. presenting issues). Adjust the categories to meet your professional learning needs.

A TEMPLATE FOR REFLECTING

ACTIVATING AND ENGAGING

Recollections

- As you reflect on this lesson/unit, what are some things that come to mind?
- Given your recollections, what are some things that captured your attention?

Perspectives and perceptions

- In this lesson/unit, what was particularly satisfying?
- In this lesson/unit, what were some things that concerned you?

EXPLORING AND DISCOVERING

Weighing evidence

- What is some of the evidence that supports your impressions/ judgments?
- What are some examples that stand out for you (student responses, work samples, interaction patterns)?

Search for patterns

- Given what occurred, how typical are these results?
- What percentage of the time does this (behavior, learning, response pattern) tend to happen?

Compare / contrast

- How similar or different is what you anticipated from what occurred?
- How might you compare students who were successful to those who were less so?

Analyze cause-effect

- What are some factors that influenced what happened?
- Given (specific success/concern), what's your hunch about what may have it produced it?

ORGANIZING AND INTEGRATING

Generalizations

- What are some big ideas that you are taking away from this conversation?
- Based on this experience, what are some new connections (about students, curriculum, instruction) that you are making?

Applications

- What are some things that you are taking away from this experience that will influence your practice in the future?
- As a result of new learning, what are some goals you're setting (for yourself, for your students, curriculum, this unit)?