



Hoosac Valley Regional School District
Playbook for Instructional Improvement

Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Diversity, Empathy

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Purpose and Goals

The mission of Hoosac Valley Regional School District (HVRSD) is to create a partnership of our schools and communities that develops all of our students into educated, responsible and productive citizens.

To help us achieve this mission, leaders and teachers within our schools commit to a **centralized set of instructional improvement practices** as defined in this booklet. This document articulates the district's shared values and aligned rituals and routines that should be executed with fidelity across all Hoosac Valley schools.

While some priorities and protocols may be unique to an individual school, the content of this document outlines the **instructional improvement levers that *all* leaders and teachers commit to as part of Hoosac Valley Regional schools**. To that end, leaders and teachers can hold one another mutually accountable to supporting the implementation of these practices in service of students' growth and achievement.



Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs)

Overview

Vision

Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs) work collaboratively to set and address specific priorities in their school community, fostering a school-wide culture of collaboration and growth. The team acts as the “lead learners” of their school by setting a goal, engaging in learning and practice, and then implementing high-leverage and research-based strategies that will address the goal. Most importantly, they work with staff beyond the ILT to ensure everyone has access to enact these strategies and the support they need to master them.

Criteria for Success

A successful ILT will...

- ✓ Align goals and messaging to the visions of the district, school, and School Improvement Plan (SIP).
- ✓ Involve and impact all student-facing staff to build investment in shared goals and improve adult culture.
- ✓ Collectively build the knowledge and skills of its members and the broader school community.
- ✓ Increase student achievement by improving student engagement or staff expectations of students.
- ✓ Attend to the needs of marginalized learners throughout all stages of learning and monitoring.

✓ An ILT <i>is</i>	● An ILT <i>is not</i>
• A space for proactive learning and growth	• A place to reactively “put out fires”
• Educator-led and collaborative	• Top down or space for leaders to share updates
• Intended to drive toward school-wide goals	• A consultative committee between teachers and admin
• One of several intersecting levers of instructional improvement	• A replacement for other teacher development (e.g., coaching, PLCs, department meetings...)
• For <i>content-agnostic</i> instructional improvement	• For <i>content-driven</i> instructional improvement
• Transparent, representative, and supportive	• Opaque, mysterious, or “cliquey”



Instructional Leadership Teams (ILTs)



Implementation

WHO: ILT Participation

- ILTs are co-led by an administrator (Principal or Assistant Principal) and one teacher leader.
- ILT members (5-10) are selected annually by the lead administrator based on the following criteria:

Representation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Across grade bands and content areas✓ Special Educators and ELL teachers are included✓ Counselor (where possible)✓ Instructional Coaches✓ From identities and backgrounds representative of the greater Hoosac Valley community
Commitment
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ To the “lead learner” model✓ To the time commitment for participating on the ILT✓ To mentoring colleagues✓ To the school’s vision
Perception of Colleagues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ As trustworthy and deserving of respect✓ As strong relationship builders✓ As effective communicators✓ As strong leaders and collaborators
Mindset
<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ Believes in the capacity of all children, including those most typically marginalized✓ Able to identify both bright spots and challenges✓ Has an internal locus of control and the belief that they can and will affect change

Additional Resources


-  [Characteristics of Instructional Leadership Team Members](#) (University of Washington College of Education, 2016).
-  [Building Your Instructional Leadership Team: 5 Qualities to Look For](#) (New Leaders, 2022).




WHEN: ILT Cycles

ILT Cycles should be facilitated according to the following semester-based cycle.

Preparation	
May/June	Summer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ILT Applications Open • ILT Member Selection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District & SLs work together to identify datasets for ILT to analyze in September

Cycle 1			
September	October	November	December
Get Ready (<i>Sep only</i>) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Norms set • Calendar set • Roles set Analyze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data • Set SMART goal 	Analyze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate goal/strategy w school; garner input & involvement Learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize learning strategy • Learn! 	Share <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach Test & Respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor • Celebrate Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Self Assessment Survey (sample  here) 	Test & Respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor • Celebrate Stepback Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SL and District review self-assessment survey and progress toward SMART goal

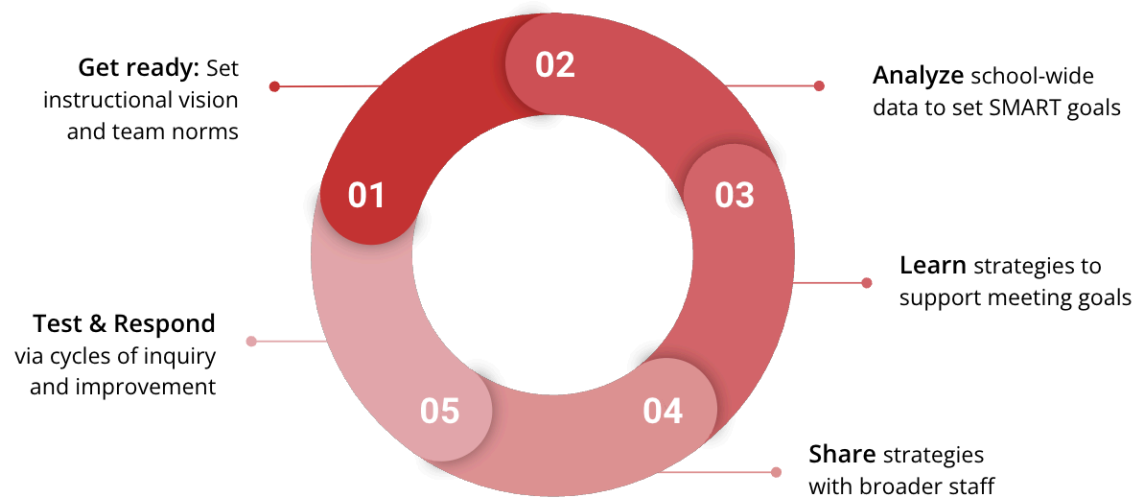
Cycle 2			
January	February	March	April-June
Analyze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analyze data • Set SMART goal 	Analyze <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate goal/strategy w school; garner input & involvement Learn <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finalize learning strategy • Learn! 	Share <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teach Test & Respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor • Celebrate Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Take Self Assessment Survey (sample  here) 	Test & Respond <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor • Celebrate Stepback Reflection <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability planning • Self Assessment Survey reflection





HOW: ILT Improvement Cycle Overview

The ILT process follows the general cycle illustrated and described below.¹



1 Get Ready	Set an instructional vision and team norms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Norm on a vision for effective, inclusive instructional practices; share with full staff. b. Establish clear purpose, norms, and roles for ILT participation. c. Finalize calendar for ILT meetings and ongoing work.
2 Analyze	Analyze school-wide data to set SMART goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review a variety of data aligned to instructional priorities. b. Align on related strengths and gap areas. c. Set bite-sized SMART goals for teacher behavior / student outcomes. d. Communicate goals to school; gathers input and investment
3 Learn	Learn strategies to support meeting goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Collectively identify strategies aimed at meeting SMART goals. b. Together learn strategies to pilot and refine in their own work. c. Prepare to turnkey strategies to designated staff.
4 Share	Share strategies with broader staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Plan best mechanisms for turnkeying information. b. Provide high-quality PD related to prioritized strategies.
5 Test & Respond	Test and respond via cycles of inquiry & improvement.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Identify learning questions to guide inquiry cycles. b. Set short-term goals and metrics for monitoring progress. c. Cyclically collect, analyze, and respond to data.

¹ Adapted from [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's Instructional Leadership Team \(ILT\) Framework](#)



HOW: ILT Process Protocols & Tips

Step 1: Get Ready

Set an instructional vision and team norms.

1a. Norm on a vision for effective, inclusive instructional practices; share with full staff.

Set a Vision

District/school leaders help set an instruction vision using the following questions²

- What are critical components to high-quality instruction *across content areas and subgroups*?
- What key areas of instruction do we want to focus on as a district that are *universally applicable*?
- What does proficiency look like across these key areas?

Communicate with Staff

It is necessary for leaders to inform the full district/school community of the year-long instructional vision and to consider an ongoing communication plan to help maintain investment in the ILT's priorities. At the start of the year, identify all possible ways that the ILT may engage in two-way communication with staff (i.e. newsletters, staff meetings, through Grade Alike Meetings, surveys, etc).

1b. Establish clear purpose, norms, and roles for ILT participation.

In its early days, the ILT should create a set of norms that lay out the ground rules the group commits to that help ensure they function as a high-performing team rather than as a collection of individuals.

Sample Protocol (Adapted from the [Center for Leadership and Educational Equity](#))

1. *Solo brainstorm* of norms a team must commit to in order to collaborate well.
2. *Whip around* sharing one item each, with no repeats, going around until all are satisfied.
3. *Clarify* any open questions about the norms.
4. *Consolidate and prioritize* until you have 5-7 norms.
5. *Discuss* any that may raise issues or feel difficult to abide by.
6. *Check in* at the end of the meeting to assess the degree to which the norms were upheld.

Use Norms

Groups should post their norms and refer to them at the following times:

- At the start of every meeting as a reminder of the group's commitments to one another;
- When a norm will help a meeting run more effectively or when someone needs a reminder; and
- During an end-of-meeting reflection on what in the meeting went well or could be improved.

1c. Finalize calendar for ILT meetings and ongoing work.

Use the [ILT Improvement Cycle Overview](#) to plan a full year of ILT meetings, forecasting possible conflicts.

²From [ASCD Blog](#), 2023



Step 2: Analyze


Analyze school-wide data to set SMART goals.

2a. Review a variety of data aligned to instructional priorities.


2b. Align on related strengths and gap areas.

Types of Data

The ILT should look at data that can help them understand the state of instruction related to the instructional vision. As an example, if the vision is to increase outcomes across student subgroups, an ILT might narrow in on a goal by exploring data that will help them understand how subgroups are doing.

 **Examples of Data Sources:** We encourage the use of *street-level data*, or data that help us understand *experiences*, *misconceptions*, and *mindsets* of stakeholders that we can act on immediately. Examples include:

- Artifacts - Student work, agendas, lesson materials
- Narratives - Interview notes, recordings, survey open responses
- Observations - Notes, transcripts, photographs

 From [Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Prioritization Institute](#).


It can help to look at a cross-section of data to understand what is happening from multiple entry points, often starting big and then narrowing focus. Example methods include:

- [Data Equity Pause Protocol](#)
 - ↪ What are equity gaps in our system, what are the conditions that create and perpetuate them, and what is the highest-leverage instructional improvement priority that will ensure more students—particularly those from historically underserved groups and communities—have access to grade-appropriate assignments, strong instruction, and deep engagement in everyday learning?
- **Data analysis** (Protocols: [Looking at Data Sets](#), [Looking at Data](#), and [Data Mining](#) from SRI)
 - ↪ What are trends across multiple data sets?
- **Classroom observation**
 - ↪ What are teacher actions, student actions, and their drivers?
 - ↪ What are classroom conditions?
- **Root cause analysis** (Protocol: [Fishbone Root Cause Analysis](#) from the Minnesota DOE)
 - ↪ What are the best levers to solve problems and improve outcomes?
- **Driver Diagram** (Sample Protocol: [Driver Diagram](#) from the Vermont Agency of Education)
 - ↪ Given all possible ways to address the root cause, which makes the most sense for us?

Step 2: Analyze - Continued from the previous page





 **Note on ILT Focus Areas:** The result of the data analysis should be to elevate strengths and gap areas across the school, *not* in a single content area. Professional Learning Communities can solve *content-specific* problems; ILTs are meant to solve *content-agnostic* problems that are school-wide.

Examples of content-agnostic topics to explore:


- Student engagement across subgroups
- Attendance
- Student thinking and ownership over their learning
- End-of-class feedback on student work
- Collecting and responding to formative data during class

2c. Set bite-sized SMART goals for staff behavior / student outcomes

SMART goals are:


- Specific
- Measurable
- Achievable
- Relevant
- Time-Bound.

This level of clarity and specificity in goals helps boost the likelihood of them being *trackable*, *feasible* and ultimately *successful*.

 **Example:** By December 15, all teachers will use targeted engagement strategies to increase student participation in class discussions by 20% overall and by 30% among ELL and Special Education students as measured by a baseline, weekly walkthroughs, and endline.

2d. Communicate goals to school; gather input and investment

To be successful stewards of the ILT's priorities from the beginning, establish and share preferred communication and feedback structures. Use the communication structures you identified at the start of the year to determine the best way to inform and involve the broader school community. Be sure to read and respond to all feedback that is collected so that you build investment and trust in the ILT's priorities.

 **Note:** You won't be able to incorporate all feedback, but you *can* explain what you heard and how that feedback was considered.





Step 3: Learn

Learn strategies to support meeting goals.

3a. Collectively identify strategies aimed at meeting SMART goals.

Identifying Goal Aligned Strategies

Among many ways to identify and prioritize goal-aligned strategies to pilot, we recommend:

- **Learning Walks** - Conduct walkthroughs of classrooms to observe bright spots aligned to the focus area that might be leveraged school-wide. (More from the [Learner-Centered Collaborative](#); [Success Analysis protocol](#) from SRI)
- **Research** - Nominate/request volunteers to research goal-aligned strategies that apply across grade levels and content areas. Ensure strategies are evidence-based to increase likelihood of success.

📌 **Example:** To address engagement gaps, in particular among ELL and Special Education students, conduct walkthroughs of classrooms that have stronger results, looking for bright spots.

Tips for making sense of walkthroughs:

- Beforehand, research strategies aligned to the focus area to have a reference point.
- Afterwards, conduct a brief interview with the teacher(s) to probe about what you saw.

3b. Together learn strategies to pilot and refine in their own work.

Dedicate an ILT meeting to deepening professional knowledge and skill in the prioritized instructional strategies. Ideas for how to do this include, but are not limited to:

- Invite expert practitioners to lead mini-professional learning sessions (where possible).
- Nominate or request volunteers to facilitate mini-professional learning for the group.

ILT members should then pilot strategies in their own classroom and reflect on implementation success and challenges in a follow-up meeting and plan how to improve their practice and prepare to turnkey.

3c. Prepare to turnkey strategies to designated staff.

From there, ILT members prepare to turnkey the strategy to colleagues. ILT members should be able to:

- ✓ Clearly articulate the goal(s) and criteria for success of the strategy.
- ✓ Describe the steps of the strategy.
- ✓ Model the strategy so that it can be applied in *any* content area and grade level.
- ✓ Provide feedback to others implementing the strategy using the criteria for success.



Step 4: Share

Share strategies with broader staff.


4a. Plan best mechanisms for turnkeying information

Building Structures for Learning

The ILT should work collectively to establish a work plan that includes structures for:

- Staff professional development in prioritized instructional strategies
- Post-implementation reflection and follow-up
- Learning walkthroughs so staff can see one another's implementation and impact


Ideally, these activities will leverage existing professional learning structures, such as PD workshops, instructional coaching, Grade Alike Meetings, etc.




 **Note:** It is helpful to name early and often that this professional learning is meant to be collaborative and supportive. ILT members are *colleagues*, not *superiors* or *evaluators*.

4b. Provide high-quality PD related to prioritized strategies.

Plan and execute one or more professional development sessions that are aligned to [MA DESE's Standards for High Quality PD](#). As you plan and execute the PD, consider what improvements you would like to see in classrooms the following week; make sure that teachers have the opportunity to practice and receive feedback on those desired strategies *during* the session.

Something important to consider in facilitating professional development is *managing change*. When a new priority feels imposed, difficult, unclear, or lacking purpose, it can become a point of contention and lead to roadblocks.

 **Note:** Part of making professional development effective is ensuring staff are invested in growth and change. See the following resources for support managing change alongside professional development:

-  [Education Change Management PPTA Toolkit - New Zealand Post Primary Teachers' Association](#)
-  ["Culture Shift Doesn't Occur Overnight—or Without Conflict" by Rick DuFour, NSDC](#)
-  [Using problems of practice to learn by doing](#) - the Holdsworth Center





Step 5: Test & Respond

Test and respond via cycles of inquiry & improvement.

5a. Identify learning questions to guide inquiry cycles

5b. Set short-term goals and metrics for monitoring progress.

Once the ILT has turnkeyed the prioritized instructional strategy and has created a plan and structures for ongoing reflection and learning, they must get clear on what they are looking for in each inquiry cycle.

Learning Questions

Some learning questions can be general, focused on what is going well and what challenges exist:

- What success are we seeing? For whom? What conditions lead to these successes?
- What barriers to successful implementation are we seeing? For whom? Why?
- What variation in implementation are we seeing, and what is the impact on students?
- What has been the impact of implementation on sub-populations?

At least one should also be more specific and aligned to concrete goals and metrics (see below).

- What % of students *[action]* as a result of *[strategy]* during *[time frame]*.

Aligned Goals & Metrics

Learning questions must be accompanied by short-term goals and metrics to ensure teams know what they are hoping to achieve and how to know whether they are doing so. See the example below, which addresses engagement gaps that a root cause analysis identified were caused by limited background knowledge when engaging with new topics.

Goal	Data	Metrics
<i>Ex. Teachers use randomized engagement strategies, wait time, and specific language scaffolds to increase student engagement. 20% among general ed students and 30% among ELL and special education students.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Daily participation tracker(s)</i>• <i>Weekly ipad student survey on felt experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>85% of students contribute to classroom conversations during the 15 minute observation.</i>• <i>85% of students answer “yes” to: “I talk to my peers and teachers about my assignment today” each day.</i>



5c. Cyclically collect, analyze, and respond to data.

Consider the following actions to facilitate learning cycles:

1. Create a time-bound plan for data collection, analysis, and response.

- You must fit in at least two rounds of learning per semester (see *calendar guidelines* [here](#)).
- You may choose to facilitate shorter rounds to allow for more feedback and testing.

2. Communicate the plan to staff during professional learning (PD / coaching).


- Ensure all teachers are clear on the purpose, goal(s), and data collection plans.
- Train teachers on tools and check for understanding.
- Share how teachers will be held accountable to plans and how they will be supported.

3. Pilot the plan.

- You may choose to make the first round of learning shorter to test and refine the process.
 - ↪ Address misconceptions early and while assuming the best.
 - ↪ Adjust data collection tools and processes according to trends in teacher feedback.
- Highlight bright spots and wins! We learn from others' successes, and they boost motivation!

4. Refine the plan.

- Leverage ongoing ILT and team meetings to analyze and respond to data. Sample protocols:
 - ↪ [Considering Evidence Protocol](#) (School Reform Initiative)
 - ↪ [Success Analysis for Leadership Teams](#) (School Reform Initiative)
 - ↪ [ATLAS Looking at Data Protocol](#) (School Reform Initiative)
 - ↪ [Massachusetts DESE protocols for examining data](#)
- Ensure data analysis meetings end with an action plan. Criteria for success include:
 - ↪ Specific next steps and owners
 - ↪ Concrete rationale for each next step
 - ↪ Specific deadlines for implementation, data collection, and the next data analysis
 - ↪ Plan for support and collaboration.

 **Example:** Watch [Leading Teams with Data](#) video by EL Education to learn more about using data responsively.





Instructional Coaching

Overview

Vision

In the Hoosac Valley Regional School District, instructional coaching supports continuous teacher improvement with the purpose of strengthening student outcomes. Instructional coaching is an essential lever for personalized teacher development. Coaching is individualized, non-evaluative, and provides an opportunity for teachers to invest in their own growth while highlighting their unique strengths.

Criteria for Success

A successful instructional coaching program...

- ✓ Is grounded in student growth and achievement for *all* students, especially the most marginalized
- ✓ Facilitates strong relationships between coaches and teachers by positioning the coach as a partner who is *also* accountable to student learning
- ✓ Is prioritized—time is held sacred for observations and coaching meetings
- ✓ Invests teachers in personalized development goals and leverages their existing strengths
- ✓ Provides a safe, non-evaluative space for vulnerability and reflection

✓ Instructional Coaching <i>is</i>	● Instructional Coaching <i>is not</i>
• Opt-in for teachers	• Mandated by the school
• A support for teacher growth & development	• Evaluative or a “gotcha”
• Personalized based on teacher strengths/needs	• “One size fits all” or prescriptive
• Data-informed	• Based on preferences or subjective judgments
• Developmental for a teacher of any tenure/skill	• Remediation or exclusively for new teacher
• A collaborative partnership / facilitated growth	• A 1:1 “course” led by a teacher of adults

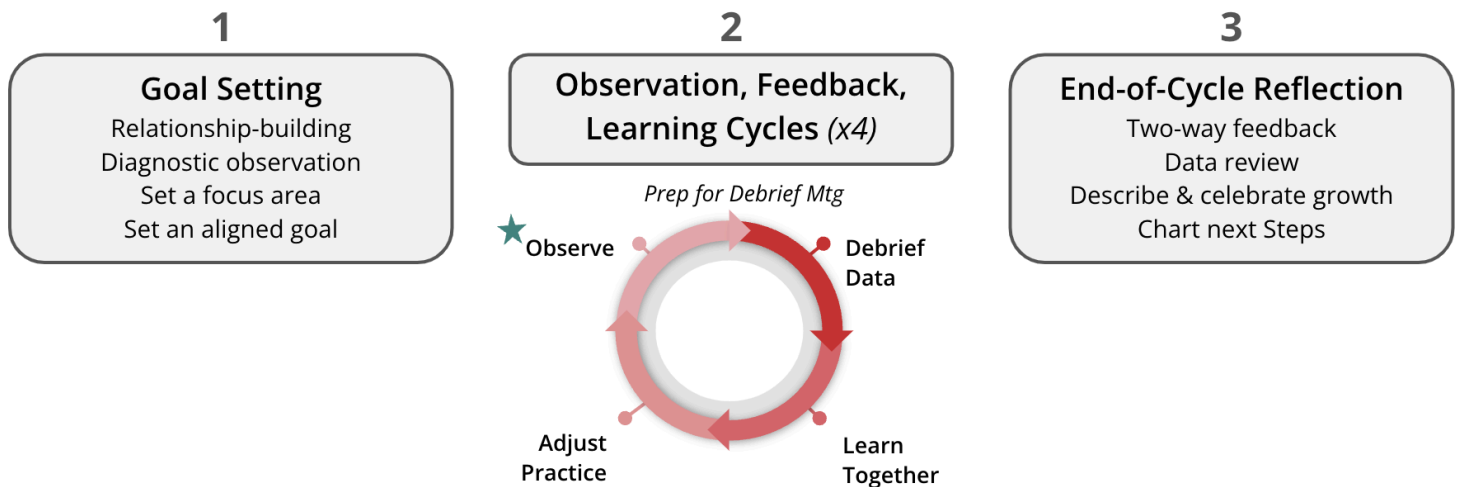


Instructional Coaching Implementation

WHO: Instructional Coaching Participation

- Instructional Coaches who are generally assistant principals
- Teachers who opt in to a coaching cycle

WHEN & HOW: Coaching Cycles - Coaching cycles take ~4-6 weeks and follows the process below:



Week by Week Overview	
Week 1	
Goal Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coach & teacher launch their relationship by:<ul style="list-style-type: none">◦ Discussing prior coaching experiences◦ Creating agreements◦ Self-assessing strengths and growth areas, and◦ Naming what they hope to get out of their collaboration.• Coach conducts a diagnostic observation to identify potential focus areas.• Coach & teacher discuss diagnostic observation, setting a focus area and goal.
Weeks 2-5	
<i>Four weekly cycles of the following activities (once per week)</i>	
a. Observe	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coach observes class to collect data aligned to the named focus area<ul style="list-style-type: none">→ Data should be identified and shared with the teacher prior to observation.→ Teacher should share lesson materials at least 24 hours in advance of lesson.→ Coach conducts observation and captures data in a centralized location.



Week by Week Overview

Week 1

b. Prep for Debrief Meeting

- Teacher *independently* preps for coaching meeting by:
 - Organizing data (e.g., work samples, scores, participation data)
 - Examining data to reflect on wins and gaps aligned to focus area
 - Considering future actions
- Coach *independently* preps for coaching meeting by:
 - Reviewing low-inference data collected during observation
 - Identifying strengths and their impact
 - Identifying a growth area aligned to the focus area
 - Considering how strength(s) could be leveraged to address growth area
 - Planning the flow of the coaching meeting based on the best-fit approach

c. Debrief Meeting:

Debrief Data

Coach and teacher...

- Discuss strengths and growth areas aligned to the focus area.
- Identify and prepare to execute 1-2 bite-sized action steps to address it
- Norm on focus area and look-fors to prep for the next observation
- Document all of the above in a shared tracker!

Learn Together

- Coach supports teacher to understand and prepare to implement action steps by:
 - Co-planning,
 - Scripting and/or practicing instructional strategies, or
 - Modeling and asking teacher to analyze/identify criteria for success

Adjust Practice

- Teacher implements action steps in advance of follow-up observation by coach.
- Teacher collects data on the impact of the change.
- *Cycle back to observation.*

Week 6

End-of-Cycle Reflection

Coach & teacher:

- Share two-way feedback on their collaboration
- Review data to celebrate describe and celebrate growth
- Chart next steps for the teacher, which include one or more of the following:
 - Engaging in another coaching cycle (and pre-identify focus area)
 - Naming specific ways in which teacher will continue to invest in personal growth
- Share and complete a close-out satisfaction survey.





How: Coaching Values³



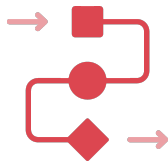
COMPASSION

We feel empathy for others and act on those feelings. Our understanding of interconnectedness allows us to feel compassion for all living things. We hold ourselves and others in unconditional positive regard.



CURIOSITY

We are insatiably curious about others, about ourselves, and about what is possible. We navigate our fear to stay open, curious and hopeful. We are comfortable with discomfort.



TRUST THE PROCESS

We recognize that there are many factors at play in transformation about which we may not be aware. We accept that we might lay seeds of transformation that will sprout up in another season and we settle into discomfort and uncertainty.



HUMILITY & MUTUALITY

We value the reciprocal nature of learning and the potential for our own improvement through the coaching process. We know that we have made just as many mistakes as our coachees and that we, too, have areas for growth.



LEARNER ORIENTATION

We consider ourselves to be learners alongside other learners and are grateful to those who share their practices with us. We solicit feedback and seek out ways to continue learning.



COURAGE

We know that we are all born with courage. We take action even when we don't feel courageous. To cultivate our courage, we navigate our emotions and we keep our eyes on the prize of a more just and liberated world.

³ Adapted from Elena Aguilar's Transformational Coach's Way of Being.





HOW: Coaching Tools & Resources

1. Goal Setting

Relationship Building





Criteria for Success

Coach and teacher...

- ✓ Consider their prior experiences with coaching and anxieties they bring up.
- ✓ Gather information to guide coaching agreements to guide the relationship.
- ✓ Determine avenues and cadence for bi-directional feedback.
- ✓ Self-assess strengths and growth areas and prepare for a diagnostic observation.


Activities

Meeting Preparation

1. Coach considers their values, their purpose, their skills, and their goals for coaching.
 -  [Developing a Coaching Mission & Vision](#) from *The Art of Coaching* by Elena Aguilar
 -  [8 Key Coaching Skills Checklist](#) by Jim Knight
 -  [Transformational Coaching Rubric](#) by Elena Aguilar
2. Teacher completes a survey about their experience with coaching, their self-assessed instructional strengths and areas for growth, their preferences for feedback, and their goals for coaching.
 -  [Example survey](#) from EL Education

Example Questions:

- What has been your experience with instructional coaching in the past (good and bad)?
- What are you hoping to learn, do, or achieve through instructional coaching?
- What is your biggest concern about working with a coach?
- What are 2 of your greatest strengths as a teacher, and 2 areas in which you aim to grow?

3. Coach reviews the teacher survey, plans their own answers to key questions, and creates/modifies a draft set of coaching agreements.
 -  [Coaching Agreement](#), from *The Art of Coaching* by Elena Aguilar

Meeting Activities

1. Discuss survey results, inviting probes and elaboration, especially around history with coaching.
2. Share draft coaching agreements and revise together, citing survey results from the teacher.
3. Establish time for a diagnostic observation as a precursor to identifying a coaching focus area.



1. Goal Setting, continued

Diagnostic Observation

Criteria for Success


- ✓ Teacher shares lesson materials in advance of implementation (e.g., plan, student activities).
- ✓ Coach collects low-inference notes (e.g., video, running record, student data samples).

Activities

Before Observation


1. Coach norms with the teacher on how they will enter and behave during the observation.

 [Pre-Observation Conversation](#) checklist and [Observation Plan](#) by Jim Knight

 **Note:** It can be helpful for coaches to circulate the classroom to listen to student conversations, to ask students questions during independent or group work, and to look at student work to capture them making meaning and demonstrating their learning.

During Observation


1. Coach takes **low-inference notes** to capture data on what the teacher does and what students do.


 [Sample rubric](#) from TNTP to guide focus of low-inference notes

 [Running record](#) tips from TNTP


 [Best Practices for Low-Inference Notes](#) from Achieve the Core

 [Sample Observation Tool](#) from EL Education

 **Note on Low-Inference Note Taking:** Low inference notes...

 Are *observable*, capturing what is seen and heard without interpretation or vagueness.

→ Ex. “4 students raised hands to participate”, *not* “very few students participated.”

 Capture the stated goal of the lesson and interactions.

With permission, filming video to reflect on together is objective and highly effective.

2. Coach engages in the class as discussed with the teacher beforehand.

After Observation

1. Leave a post-it note with the teacher that contains 1-2 glows from the lesson.
2. Conduct a debrief meeting to norm on a focus area for the next 5 weeks of coaching.



1. Goal Setting, continued

Step 1: Diagnostic Observation Debrief

Criteria for Success

- ✓ Coach uses data to share strengths and targeted growth areas from diagnostic observation.
- ✓ Coach and teacher norm on focus area and observation times for upcoming coaching cycle.
- ✓ Coach previews coaching cycle.

Activities

Debrief

Use the following information to prepare for and facilitate your initial debrief.

1. Reflect on the lesson

- Ask targeted but open-ended questions. This can assess teacher self-reflectiveness.

Example Question Stems

- What was the objective? To what degree did your students meet it? How do you know?
- How would you describe student engagement today? What evidence do you have?
- What is something that you feel went well?
- What is something you wish had gone better or want to explore?

2. Summarize your findings; propose a focus area

- Share data to corroborate or push on teacher reflections
 - ↪ Go heavy on strengths, making sure they are all grounded in objective data
 - ↪ Propose *one* data-based focus area, explaining how improvement can have impact
 - ↪ Share & model a bite-sized action step to look for in the next observation.

Note on Identifying a Focus Area: Teacher investment is crucial to successful coaching, so they *must* have some input on the focus, but a coach should guide them using data.

Resources:

- [Identify](#), from *Unmistakable Impact* by Jim Knight
- [Instructional Coaching Focus Areas](#) - from Quakertown Community Schools

3. Preview the flow of instructional coaching

- Decide when you will observe, at least once per week for 35 minutes.
 - [Impact Cycle](#) by Jim Knight



2. Observation, Feedback, Learning Cycles

a. Prepare & Observe

Criteria for Success

- ✓ Coach identifies and shares with the teacher what data they'll collect aligned to the focus area.
- ✓ Teacher shares lesson objectives and materials at least 24 hours in advance.
- ✓ Coach conducts 35-45 minute observations and captures data in a personal tracker.

Activities

Prepare

1. Create a centralized location for capturing lesson information and low-inference notes.
2. Preview the teacher's lesson materials.
3. Prepare an appropriate method for capturing data on the focus area.

Example Data-Collection Methods

- The data you collect should directly align to your area of focus.
 - Ex. If you want to capture the nature of teacher-student interactions, try [this](#).
 - Ex. If you want to capture engagement data, listen to [this video](#) by Jim Knight.
 - Ex. If you want to improve reading conferences, transcribe conversations for analysis.

Observe

1. Sometimes, things come up! If so, reschedule your observation for *that week*. Consistency matters!





2. Observation, Feedback, Learning Cycles, *continued*

b. Prep for Debrief Meeting

Criteria for Success

- ✓ Coach and teacher independently prepare for the debrief meeting.

Teacher Prep

1. Organize data (e.g., work samples, scores, participation data)
2. Examine data to reflect on wins and gaps aligned to focus area
3. Consider future actions

Resource

- 🔗 [Teacher Self-Reflection Form](#) from Kiowa County Schools Evaluation System
 - ⇒ Create or adapt/shorten something like this for teachers to complete before debriefs.

Coach Prep

1. Review low-inference data collected during observation
 - Identify strengths and their impact *and* a growth area aligned to the focus
2. Consider how strength(s) could be leveraged to address growth area

Example Data-Collection Methods: Data collected should directly align to your area of focus.

- Ex. If you want to capture the nature of teacher-student interactions, try [this](#).
- Ex. If you want to capture engagement data, listen to [this video](#) by Jim Knight.
- Ex. If you want to improve reading conferences, transcribe conversations for analysis.

3. Select your best-fit coaching approach based on teacher need⁴.

Facilitative Coaching

Works best for...	Teachers who are high-performing and knowledgeable who would benefit from a thought partner and second set of eyes to help them grow.
Looks like...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers do most of the talking.• Coaches present data and ask guiding questions to support teacher thinking.
Coach skills	Listening, questioning, paraphrasing, restraint

⁴ Adapted from Jim Knight's work on [coaching approaches](#).



Directive Coaching

Works best for...	Teachers who need to acquire knowledge or master skills they do not have who would benefit from modeling and ongoing constructive feedback
Looks like...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coaches lead as the expert in the relationship, doing most of the thinking and setting the direction.• Teachers follow the direction of the coach and practice as directed by the coach.
Coach skills	Instructional expertise, modeling, precise praise, bite-sized feedback


Dialogical Coaching

Works best for...	Teachers who need someone to serve as <i>both</i> a collaborator <i>and</i> an expert to help them make strong decisions for their instructional practice <i>and</i> build skill.
Looks like...	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers and coaches are equal partners and dialogue about what the teacher can do to improve their practice; coach offers skill-building help.
Coach skills	Questioning, listening, collaborating, facilitating practice

4. Plan the coaching meeting.


- *Structure* - The debrief structure should consider a [coaching approach](#) and the following:
 - ✓ Aligning on the focus area for the observation
 - ✓ Space for teacher reflection
 - ✓ Sharing of data-based strengths and areas of improvement related to the focus area
 - ✓ Sharing of data to identify an area for improvement
 - ✓ Learning or skill-building around the area for improvement
 - ✓ Action planning for implementing the improvement and coach follow-up

Resources:

-  [6-Step Feedback Template & Example](#) from *Leverage Leadership*. This can be adapted for all three coaching approaches and provides a focused agenda.

- *Equity-Focused Conversations* - Some debriefs will focus on beliefs and mindsets about students. It's important to prepare for these conversations thoughtfully in order to get to the root of inequitable or unproductive beliefs *and* to provoke self reflection and change.

Resource:

-  [Planning for an Equity-Focused Conversation](#) by Elena Aguilar can help you think deeply about how to be ready for a difficult conversation.



🚩 **A Note on Problem-Solving** - Instructional coaching is complex. What we think are the root causes of challenges aren't always right. To ensure action steps address underlying issues, consider:⁵

Adult Learning	Is the teacher unaware or lacking knowledge? Do they feel safe to learn?
Change Management	Are conditions right for change (e.g., vision, leadership, time, resources)?
Inquiry	What other perspectives can help us understand the problem better?
Systems Thinking	What about <i>systems</i> has led to this, and how can we address them?
Emotional Intelligence	What might a teacher need to remain regulated and resilient?
Equity	Who has power here, and who doesn't?
Compassion	How might others be experiencing this situation?

⁵ Adapted from [The Coaching Lenses](#) by Elena Aguilar.





2. Observation, Feedback, Learning Cycles *continued*

c. Debrief Meeting

Criteria for Success

- ✓ **Debrief Data:** Coach & teacher use data to identify strengths and growth areas aligned to focus area.
- ✓ **Learn together:** Coach helps teacher prepare to execute 1-2 bite-sized action steps to address it.
- ✓ **Adjust Practice:** Coach and teacher norm on look-fors to prep for the next observation.
- ✓ Coach and teacher document the above in a shared tracker.

Activities

Debrief Data



1. **Use Sentence Stems & Questions** - Coaching debriefs are conversations, which means that they are two-way and at least a little bit unpredictable. Coaches should internalize and have in their “back pockets” sentence stems and questions they can use to engage, invest, and inform teachers as they move toward identifying strengths and areas for growth..

- *Stems* - Elena Aguilar has categorized strong coaching stems into the following categories:

All Purpose Stems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Active Listening Stems</i> - Prompt teachers to share openly.• <i>Clarifying Stems</i> - Make sure you understand what’s shared.
Facilitative Stems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Cathartic Stems</i> - Make space for teachers to share emotions.• <i>Catalytic Stems</i> - Prompt teachers toward action / consider the future.• <i>Supportive Stems</i> - Focus on what was successful.
Directive Stems	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>Informative Stems</i> - Share books, resources, and contacts.• <i>Prescriptive Stems</i> - Give explicit directions.• <i>Interrupting Stems</i> - Get teachers to consider a different perspective.

 **Note:** If using a Dialogical approach, use facilitative and directive stems flexibly.

Resources:

-  [Coaching Sentence Stems](#) by Elena Aguilar contains specific examples of each of the stems above. We recommend printing and having this document on hand.
-  [Checklist: Listening and Questioning Effectively](#) by Jim Knight



Debrief Data, continued

2. **Use Data** - Data is what you use to tell the story of what is happening in class and the impact it is having on student growth and achievement. Below are important points to consider when leveraging data to guide teacher lesson analysis, learning, and development in a debrief.


Tips for using data in a debrief conversation

Be selective

You should have aligned with the teacher about what type of data you intended to collect during your observation and why. You will likely be drawn to additional data points. Be selective in what else you present to the teacher to avoid overwhelming or discouraging them. If you do share more data than planned, do so because it is something they need to address urgently for the safety and well-being of their students *or* because it's necessary en route to their goal.

Form questions around objective data

When sharing data, do so objectively. There should be no room for interpretation. In fact, it helps to lead with questions that guide the teacher to analyze what they notice and wonder about their own data first. Plan [questions](#) to help them uncover key noticings to guide action steps.

 **Note:** Ideally, questions should be posed in a way that gradually guides teachers to identify their strengths and areas for growth. Examples:

- "We are focusing on student engagement. Look at this engagement data and tell me what you notice."
- "What teacher moves in the first 10 minutes of the lesson do you think led to those results? Let's take a look at *[video or transcript]*."

If a teacher identifies the strengths and growth areas on their own, stamp them. If they don't, take a directive approach and tell them explicitly. Unpack the *action* and its *impact*, guided either by you or by the teacher.

**Note: It is generally wiser to allow a teacher to guide a reflection to train them to be self reflective, but if they are not getting there, you need to ensure they see and understand the change that needs to occur, so do not hold back, even if they are experienced teachers.*





Learn Together


3. **Name Action Steps & Prepare for Implementation** - Once you and the teacher have named a change, it's important to go beyond *telling* and actually *show* the teacher what they need to do and *verify* that they understand it before they walk out of the coaching debrief. Failure to confirm understanding can lead to misinterpretation, mistakes, and ultimately missed opportunities for teacher and student success.

Below are examples of how coaches and teachers can prepare to implement the action step.


Co-plan	Support teachers to design stronger activities or assessments.
Prepare	Help teachers get ready to implement a practice like flexible grouping using mid-class assessments so they are set up for success.
Stand-Up Practice	Coach models, teacher analyzes the model for its strengths and fundamental parts, and teacher engages in role-play practice. Ex. See It, Name It, Do It .
Modeling	If mutually agreeable, coaches can model a strategy in a teacher's class <i>or</i> co-teach with them to ensure they understand and can execute a strategy.

Adjust Practice

4. **Norm on Criteria for Success / Look-Fors for Next Observation** - Part of the action step creation, modeling, and practice should involve identifying criteria for success that the teacher can use to guide the changes to their practice. The coach will use the same criteria to measure the impact of the teacher's change during their next observation.

 **Example:** A teacher focusing on engagement has decided to test using popsicle sticks to randomize and diversify who is called on. After they unpack potential pitfalls and plan the roll-out, the coach models the practice and asks the teacher to identify what they did and what worked. *This* should be captured and serve as the criteria for success or "look-fors."

5. **Tracking Feedback & Growth** - Coaches and teachers keep a shared tracker in a spreadsheet or doc with action steps, criteria for success and teacher progress like [this one](#) from Jim Knight.

 **Note:** Coaches should co-manage the shared action step tracker *and* they should keep a separate spreadsheet and/or folder with docs to manage their planning and reflection over time. Additional information they might include is:

- Mindset gaps to address
- Larger goal broken into smaller steps that they share with teachers one at a time
- Raw notes



🚩 **Note on Avoiding Debriefing Pitfalls:** An [agenda](#) alone does not make for a strong debrief; use these tips to ensure yours are strong/actionable. Instructional coaching is an art and a science. There are reliable [structures](#) and [approaches](#), but conversations are unpredictable, so consider potential pitfalls in advance.

Debrief Conversation Pitfalls and How to Navigate Them

1. Teacher has negative mindset about students (e.g., “My class is just lazy.”)

Address mindset issues head-on.

- Interrupt: Pause the meeting
- Inquire: “I heard you say [x]. Can you tell me more about why you say that?”
- Inform: Share an alternate perspective or research/data that corrects the mindset.

2. Teacher disagrees with your feedback.

Leverage data and relationships.

- In [relationship building conversations](#), get to know teachers’ experiences and preferences re: feedback and plan accordingly.
- Collect objective data that is easy to understand and impossible to contest.
- Pose questions about data to help the teacher identify their skill gap (e.g., re: engagement data, “Who did you call on most/least? What patterns emerge?”).

3. A teacher has more experience or expertise than you do.

Remember your role as a learning partner.

- Name that *everyone*, including CEOs and principals, benefit from coaching.
- For strong teachers, position yourself as thought partner and a second set of eyes.
- For weak teachers, take a [dialogical approach](#).





3. End-of-Cycle Reflection (week 6)

Criteria for Success

Coach and teacher...


- ✓ Share two-way feedback on their collaboration.
- ✓ Review data to describe and celebrate growth.
- ✓ Chart next steps for the teacher, including another coaching cycle *or* other professional growth.
- ✓ Share and complete a close-out satisfaction survey.

Two-Way Feedback

1. **2x2** - A “2x2” conversation gives teachers and coaches an opportunity to share bi-directional feedback about the course of their work together. While this should always happen at the end of a 6-week coaching cycle, the structure can also be leveraged midway to provide adjusting feedback.

The basic structure is as follows:

1. Teacher shares two “glows” and two “grows” for *themselves* related to how the coach and teacher are working together (e.g., “I always communicate when I have a conflict.”)
2. Coach shares two “glows” and two “grows” for *the teacher*, stamping and expanding upon what the teacher has shared.*
3. Repeat the process so the coach is able to share personal feedback and hear from the teacher.
4. Thank one another for the feedback.

 **Note:** *It is helpful for the coach and teacher to share the feedback they have for themselves first. It allows them to name for themselves what they are struggling with and provides a springboard for the other party to name their feedback. Ideally (but not always), the feedback a person gives to themselves aligns with what the other party articulates. This helps to create a safe space of reflection.

 **Example:** [2x2 feedback form](#) from The Management Center

Use Data to Describe & Celebrate Growth

The coach and teacher should together look at the [action step and progress tracker](#) and identify concrete areas of growth and outstanding areas of opportunity. They might use questions such as:

- To what degree did we reach our goal? What data points to that?
- What do you think led to your successes? What will you *keep* doing?
- What, if anything, held you back? How might you address this moving forward?



Chart Next Steps

Building on the final question of the growth reflection, “How might you address [growth areas] moving forward?”, the coach and teacher should decide on a professional development plan for the teacher moving forward.

- If this *will* involve coaching, the teacher and coach should norm on a new focus area.
- If this *will not* involve coaching, they should make a concrete plan for how the teacher will continue to grow, in particular in the areas they have identified as continued needs.

Close-Out Satisfaction Survey

As noted in the 2x2 process, feedback makes us all stronger. It’s important for the coach to collect information from the teachers they support, and a survey provides a safe space for the teacher to do so.

Examples of questions include, but are not limited to:

- Has working with your coach helped you reach professional goals? Why or why not?
- To what degree have your instructional practices improved after working with your coach?
- How well have you sustained new instructional practices you learned with your coach?
- How much improvement have you seen in your students’ learning after working with your coach?⁶

⁶ From NWEA, “[3 key questions to measure instructional coaching effectiveness.](#)”





Grade Alike Meetings

Overview

Vision

In Hoosac Valley, Grade Alike Meetings provide regular opportunities for teaching teams to convene to discuss instructional approaches, to explore grade-level data or deep-dive into the student work of individual students, and to explore ways to strengthen culture. Grade Alike Meetings do not focus on content. These meetings should alternate with [Content Alike Meetings](#).

Criteria for Success

A successful Grade Alike Meeting will...

- ✓ Assign a team leader and a notetaker to ensure effective operations.
- ✓ Focus on problems of practice that result in concrete actions for team members.
- ✓ Follow a predictable agenda.
- ✓ Set and revise norms over time.

✓ A Grade Alike Meeting <i>is</i>	● A Grade Alike Meeting <i>is not</i>
• Space to focus on targeted grade-specific topics	• A catch-all for announcements and logistics
• Educator-led and collaborative	• Top down or space for leaders to share updates
• For <i>content-agnostic</i> improvement	• For <i>content-driven</i> improvement
• Productive, collaborative, and supportive	• A place to vent or point fingers

Implementation

WHO & WHEN: Grade Alike Meeting Participation

- All teachers should participate in Grade Alike Meetings.
- A Grade Alike leader or chair may be appointed or elected and should *want* the role.
- Special Education or EL teachers may need to attend multiple meetings or rotate between them.



HOW: Implementation Guidance

1. **Agenda** - Grade Alike Meetings should follow a standard agenda that fits into ~40 minutes. The Grade Alike lead is responsible for preparing the agenda after taking into account team preferences.

Sample Agenda		
Date		
Attendees & Roles		<i>Name a facilitator, a notetaker, and a norms monitor.</i>
Objectives		
Time	Topic	Notes
2 min	Norms Review	<i>Which norm do you want to live into today?</i>
5 min	Quick Hits	<i>What is coming up for our grade level soon that we need to discuss?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Add items to future agendas</i> • <i>Name actions and owners for low-lift items</i>
35 min	Core Topic	<i>The topic should be pre-identified and agreed upon by participants. See more about how to select a topic below.</i>
3 min	Next Steps	<i>Restate action steps for attendees. Outcomes <u>should</u> impact most, if not all, participants.</i>

2. **Topics & Protocols** - Grade Alike Meetings should focus on content-agnostic topics that impact students across the grade. Grade Alike Meetings should work to increase students' access to High Expectations or Deep Engagement⁷. Facilitators should select 2-3 key protocols to use repeatedly throughout the year. Sample protocols follow.

High Expectations <i>Protocols to support teachers to connect practice to student performance.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quick Sort Protocol - A protocol that provides time, space, and thought partnership for teachers to discuss data; <i>not</i> a deep dive into content-specific planning for re-teach. (RBTeach) • ATLAS Looking at Data - Guides teachers to discover what students, educators, and others understand and how they are thinking. (Source: School Reform Initiative (SRI)) • Criteria Analysis Protocol - A tool to help teams identify criteria for success. (RBTeach)
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⁷ From [TNTP's Opportunity Myth](#)





Deep Engagement

Protocols that support teachers to identify stronger strategies to engage all students.

- [Motivating Students](#) - This tool helps teams to identify and intervene with students in need of additional academic or social-emotional support. (Source: Stand for Children Leadership Center)
- [Behavior Response](#) - This document is a guide for teams to use to help facilitate their grade level team meetings focused on behavior. (Source: MI's Integrated Behavior & Learning Support Initiative)
- [Support of Social-Emotional Learning](#) - This tool provides discussion prompts related to four important topics related to SEL that can positively influence grade teams. (Source: CASEL)





Content Alike Meetings

Overview

Vision

Content Alike Meetings provide teachers with a common planning time during which they learn from one another, collaborate on projects or skill-development intended to improve the quality and impact of instruction. When run well, these meetings involve ongoing reflection, celebration, and professional growth. These meetings should alternate with [Grade Alike Meetings](#).

Criteria for Success

A successful Content Alike Meeting will...

- ✓ Assign a team leader and a notetaker to ensure effective operations.
- ✓ Result in concrete outputs and/or actions for all team members that are related to instruction.
- ✓ Follow a predictable agenda.
- ✓ Set and revise norms over time.

✓ A Content Alike Meeting <i>is</i>	● A Content Alike Meeting <i>is not</i>
• Space to collaborate on content-specific topics	• A catch-all or space for individual prep
• Educator-led and collaborative	• Top down or space for leaders to share updates
• For <i>content-driven</i> planning and improvement	• For <i>content-agnostic</i> planning and improvement
• Productive, collaborative, and supportive	• A place to vent or point fingers

Implementation

WHO & WHEN: Content Alike Meeting Participation

- All teachers should participate in Content Alike Meetings.
- A Content Team leader or chair may be appointed or elected and should *want* the role.
- Special Education or EL teachers may need to attend multiple meetings or rotate between them.



HOW: Implementation Guidance

- 1. **Agenda** - Content Alike Meetings should follow a standard agenda that fits into ~40 minutes. The Grade Team lead is responsible for preparing the agenda after taking into account team preferences. The high-level [agenda mirrors that of a Grade Team Meeting](#) but focuses on different topics.
- 2. **Topics** - Content Alike Meetings should focus on content-specific topics that impact students across the grade. Ideas include, but are not limited to the following:
 - a. Curriculum Internalization
 - b. Lesson Rehearsal
 - c. Data Analysis
 - d. Specific Differentiation for SWD, MLL, and students with learning gaps
- 3. **Protocols** - Use the protocols below to guide the design of your meeting agendas.

a. Curriculum Internalization Prepare for lessons by analyzing ways that lesson components support students’ overall learning goals, anticipating barriers, and planning delivery.			
Secondary			
Math	Science	ELA	History
Unit Module	Unit Module	Unit Module	Unit Module
Elementary			
Math	Science	ELA	History
Unit Module Lesson	Unit Module	All Protocols	Unit Module

Continued on the following page.





b. [Lesson Rehearsal](#)

Rehearsals are an opportunity for teachers and teacher educators to figure out how an instructional episode may play out and to use what they learned in analyzing and unpacking practice to aim towards productive enactment of their instructional plan. While this practice is commonly used with novice teachers, it is highly effective with veterans as well.

The following resources can ensure strong rehearsal facilitation.

- [Script for Introducing Rehearsals](#) - This resource provides talking points for introducing lesson rehearsals for the first time. Some teachers struggle with the idea of rehearsing lessons because it can feel awkward, so stating a clear rationale and expectations at the outset—and reinforcing them over time—is important to building investment.
- [Roles in Rehearsals](#) - This resource names the roles teachers can play during rehearsals (teacher, students, and facilitator).
- [Sample Norms](#) - This is a sample set of norms that can guide rehearsals. Setting shared norms ensures all staff are held jointly accountable to meaningful engagement.
- [Criteria for Success](#) - The second page of this document outlines aspects of teaching practice that can be developed through rehearsals. Colleagues can support one another by sharing feedback related to these criteria.

c. Data Analysis

There are many data analysis protocols to leverage, including:

- [Data Mining Protocol](#) - To use with educators in illuminating two data sets. *(Source: SRI)*
- [Looking at Data Sets](#) - Provides a presenter with space to reflect on data with support and feedback from colleagues. *(Source: SRI)*
- [Assessment Data Protocol Process](#) - A process for teams to maximize resources within and/or across classrooms and to plan for accelerated learning for all students. *(Source: Pennsylvania Department of Education)*

