Center for Leadership & Educational Equity

Standards for Classroom Instruction

Newmann, Fred M., Secada, Walter G. and Wehlage, Gary G. "A Guide to Authentic Instruction and Assessment: Vision Standards and Scoring." Wisconsin Center for Education Research, 1995.

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High Order Thinking (HOT)	Students are engaged only in LOT (lower order thinking) operations; i.e., they either receive, or recite, or participate in routine practice, and in no activities during the lesson do students go beyond LOT.	Students are primarily engaged in LOT, but at some point they perform HOT as a minor diversion within the lesson.	Students are primarily engaged in routine LOT operations during a good share of the lesson. There is at least one significant question or activity in which some students perform some HOT operations.	Students are engaged in at least one major activity during the lesson in which they perform HOT operations. This activity occupies a substantial portion of the lesson and many students are performing HOT.	Almost all students, almost all of the time, are performing HOT. This occurs when students combine facts and ideas in order to synthesize, generalize, explain, hypothesize, or arrive at some conclusion or interpretation. Manipulating information through these processes allows students to solve problems and discover new meanings and understandings.
Deep Knowledge	Knowledge is very thin because it does not deal with significant topics or ideas; the teacher and students are involved in the coverage of simple information which they are to remember.	Knowledge remains superficial and fragmented; while some key concepts and ideas are mentioned or covered, only a superficial acquaintance or understanding of these complex ideas is evident.	Knowledge is treated unevenly during instruction; i.e., deep understanding of something is countered by superficial understanding of other ideas. At least one significant idea may be presented in depth and its significance grasped, but in general the focus is not sustained.	Knowledge is relatively deep because either the teacher or the students provide information, arguments or reasoning that demonstrate the complexity of an important idea. During the lesson many students do at least one of the following: sustain a focus on a significant topic for a period of time; or demonstrate their understanding of the problematic nature of information and/or ideas; or demonstrate understanding by arriving at a reasoned, supported conclusion; or explain how they solved a relatively complex problem.	Knowledge is very deep because during the lesson almost all students do at least one of the following: sustain a focus on a significant topic; demonstrate their understanding of the problematic nature of information and/or ideas; demonstrate complex understanding by arriving at a reasoned, supported conclusion; or explain how they solved a complex problem. In general, students' reasoning, explanations and arguments demonstrate fullness and complexity of understanding.

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Substantive Conversation*	Virtually no features or substantive conversation occur during the lesson.	Features 2 and/or 3 occur briefly and involve at least one example of two consecutive interchanges.	Features 2 (sharing) and /or 3 (coherent promotion of collective understanding) occur and involve at least one example of sustained conversation (i.e., at least 3 consecutive interchanges).	All three features of substantive conversation occur, with at least one example of sustained conversation, and many students participate.	All three features of substantive conversation occur, with at least one example of sustained conversation, and almost all students participate.
Connections to the World Beyond the Classroom	The lesson topic and activities have no clear connection to anything beyond themselves; the teacher offers no justification beyond the need to perform well in school.	Students encounter a topic, problem, or issue that the teacher tries to connect to students' experiences or to contemporary public situations; i.e., the teacher informs students that there is potential value in the knowledge being studied because it relates to the world beyond the classroom. For example, students are told that understanding Middle East history is important for contemporary politicians trying to bring peace to the region; however, the connection is unspecified and there is no evidence that students make the connection.	Students study a topic, problem, or issue that the teacher succeeds in connecting to students' actual experiences or to contemporary public situation. Students recognize some connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom, but they do not explore the implications of these connections, which remain abstract or hypothetical. There is no effort to actually influence a larger audience.	Students study or work on a topic, problem, or issue that the teacher and students see as connected to their personal experiences or actual contemporary public situations. Students recognize the connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom. They explore these connections in ways that create personal meaning and significance for the knowledge. However, there is no effort to use the knowledge in ways that go beyond the classroom to actually influence a larger audience.	Students study or work on a topic, problem, or issue that the teacher and students see as connected to their personal experiences or actual contemporary public situations. Students recognize the connections between classroom knowledge and situations outside the classroom. They explore these connections in ways that create personal meaning and significance for the knowledge. This meaning and significance is strong enough to lead students to become involved in an effort to influence a larger audience beyond their classroom in one of the following ways: by communicating knowledge to others (including within the school), advocating solutions to social problems, providing assistance to people, or creating performances or products with utilitarian or aesthetic value.

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*Substantive conversation has three features:

1. The talk is about subject matter in the discipline and includes higher order thinking, such as making distinctions, applying ideas, forming generalizations, or raising questions; not just reporting of experiences, facts, definitions, or procedures.
2. The conversation involves sharing of ideas and is not completely scripted or controlled by one party (as in teacher led recitation). Sharing is best illustrated when participants explain themselves or ask questions in complete sentences, and when they respond directly to comments of previous speakers.
3. The dialogue builds coherently on participants' ideas to promote improved collective understanding of a theme or topic (which does not necessarily require an explicit summary statement).

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