

Cluster 2: Learning Environment

- Language of caring and respect between teacher and students and among students, and teacher's awareness of students' interests in and beyond school (2a)
- High levels of cognitive energy (2b)
- A safe environment for student risk taking (2a)
- High expectations for students' capabilities for learning (2b)
- Productive student engagement in small group work (2c)
- Students persevere, even in the face of challenges (2b)

Cluster 2 Considerations:

- In what ways do classroom interactions demonstrate genuine caring and a safe, respectful, supportive, and challenging learning environment?
- How do teachers convey high expectations for student learning and encourage hard work and perseverance?
- In what ways do teachers create classrooms that are safe for risk taking?
- How do students take ownership of their work and demonstrate a commitment to mastering challenging content?
- How do teachers establish environments that recognize and value students' identities as well as their social, emotional, and intellectual needs?

UNSATISFACTORY

Interactions between teacher and students and among students are characterized by negativity, lack of support, low expectations, and low levels of student perseverance.

- The teacher uses disrespectful talk toward students and does not address disrespectful interactions among students.
- The teacher displays no familiarity with, or caring about, individual students' interests or personalities.
- The teacher conveys, to at least some students, that the work is too challenging for them.
- Students exhibit little or no pride in their work; they abandon their efforts in the face of difficulty.
- Students participate in only routine responses and tasks that require only low levels of risk taking.
- Students receive no support from their classmates.
- Students show no signs of active collaboration.

BASIC

Interactions between teacher and students and among students are a mix of high and low support, moderate expectations, and modest levels of student perseverance.

- The quality of interactions between teacher and students, or among students, is uneven, with occasional disrespect; the teacher attempts to respond to disrespectful behavior among students, with uneven results.
- The teacher attempts to make connections with individual students, but student reactions indicate that the efforts are only partially successful.
- The teacher conveys only modest learning expectations for most students.
- The teacher encourages students to persevere with challenging work; but only some do so, or they do so in a desultory manner.
- Few students offer their ideas on questions that seem to entail intellectual risk.
- Students offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner when prompted by the teacher.
- Group work is sometimes collaborative, sometimes not.

PROFICIENT

The classroom is characterized by interactions that are both supportive and challenging, with student perseverance in challenging work.

- Talk between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with little to no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.
- The teacher makes connections with individual students.
- The teacher has high expectations for most students and demonstrates high regard for students' abilities.
- Student work and conduct during a lesson indicate a commitment to high quality; students persevere in understanding challenging content.
- Students participate willingly and appear confident in offering their ideas in front of classmates.
- Students spontaneously offer assistance to classmates in a supportive manner.
- Students are productively engaged collaboratively with a partner or during small-group work.

DISTINGUISHED

Classroom interactions indicate high levels of caring and respect, student assumption of responsibility for the culture of civility, mutual support for work of high quality, and perseverance in achieving that quality.

- Talk between teacher and students and among students is uniformly respectful, with no intervention needed by the teacher to correct disrespectful talk among students.
- The teacher demonstrates knowledge and caring about the lives of students beyond school.
- Students' questions, comments, and writing indicate high expectations for self and a desire for deep understanding of the content.
- Students engage in productive struggle, take initiative to improve the quality of their work, and look for ways to extend their learning.
- Students volunteer ideas, even when these ideas might seem to be unpopular among classmates.
- Students recognize and express appreciation for the efforts of their classmates.
- Group work is productive; groups take shared ownership of, and pride in, the products of their work. All members contribute to the group's work.