

Cluster 4: Intellectual Engagement

- The content is seen as worthwhile, important, and interesting (2b)
- Content is presented in a manner that engages students in thinking and reasoning (3a)
- Learning tasks require students to engage intellectually, to *think*; some may involve productive struggle (3c)
- Questions/discussions involve higher-order cognitive activity; students have time to develop their ideas and productive habits of mind (3b)
- The lesson has a recognizable structure, with time for reflection and closure (3c)
- Students explain their thinking and question the thinking of others (3b)

Cluster 4 Considerations:

- How do the structure and flow of lessons support the development of ideas and opportunities for students to engage in thoughtful discussion and reflection?
- In what ways do instructional activities and questions explored promote intellectual engagement and energy in classrooms?
- In what ways are students asked to explain their thinking, construct arguments, and question the thinking of others?
- How do teachers create the conditions for students to take responsibility for their own learning?
- How do activities invite students to grapple with challenging content and solve problems in their collaborative and individual work?

UNSATISFACTORY	BASIC	PROFICIENT	DISTINGUISHED
<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is low.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher conveys no energy for the importance of the learning goals and assignments. • Content is presented in a didactic manner, with no invitation for students to think and make their own meaning. • Learning tasks require only recall or have a single correct response or method; students are not invited to stretch their thinking. • The teacher’s questions are rapid-fire and convergent, with a single correct answer, and do not invite student thinking. • The teacher does not ask students to organize their thoughts and formulate ideas. • All discussion is between the teacher and individual students; students are not invited to speak directly to one another. • The teacher does not ask students to explain their thinking. • Few students are involved in the activities and discussions. • The lesson has no recognizable structure; it’s a random series of events. 	<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is modest.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher displays little energy for the lesson’s purpose or assignments. • The teacher’s explanation of concepts includes perfunctory invitations for student thinking. • Learning tasks are so highly scaffolded that the result is a single pathway to completion. • The teacher’s questions are a mix of those with a single correct answer and methodology and other questions inviting student thinking. • The teacher attempts to provide time for students to formulate their ideas; some make productive use of this time. • The teacher invites students to respond directly to one another’s ideas, but few students do so. • The teacher asks students to explain their reasoning and cite specific evidence, but only some students attempt to do so. • About half the students are involved in activities and discussions. • The lesson has a recognizable structure, although parts of it may be rushed, while others drag. 	<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is high, creating a cognitively busy place, with students encouraged to use their minds.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The teacher exhibits energy for the topic and conveys its importance. • The teacher’s explanation of concepts invites student intellectual engagement and time to share their thinking with others. • Learning tasks demand higher-order thinking, inviting students to take initiative, and may involve productive struggle. • Many of the teacher’s questions are open-ended, or have multiple correct answers, inviting students to think. (When low-level questions are used, they provide scaffolding for new learning.) • Wait time is used productively; students engage in thoughtful reflection during discussion. • Students direct their comments to one another during full class discussions; there is lively discussion during small-group work. • The teacher asks students to explain their thinking, citing specific reasons; most students do. • Most students are involved in the activities and discussions. • The lesson has a clear structure, with time for students to engage in thoughtful participation in discussions and learning tasks. 	<p>The level of student intellectual engagement is demanding, creating a cognitively vibrant environment, with students encouraged to stretch their thinking.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The students exhibit energy for and interest in the topic and associated tasks; they push their classmates’ thinking with extended questions. • Students are thoughtfully engaged in the teacher’s explanation of concepts, as evidenced by their conversations and questions. • Students modify a learning task to make it more meaningful or relevant to their needs. • Students initiate higher-order questions; they invite comments from their classmates during a discussion and push their classmates with extended questions in both small group and whole class contexts. • Students extend the discussion, enriching it. • Students build on each other’s ideas and make conjectures/connections aimed at either deeper conceptual understanding or connecting procedures to underlying concepts. • Students cite specific evidence and reasons to explain their thinking without prompting by the teacher and prompt one another to provide similar reasoning and evidence. • Students themselves ensure that all their classmates are involved in the activities and discussions. • Students have an opportunity for reflection and closure on the lesson to consolidate their understanding.