WHAT YOUR COLLEAGUES ARE SAYING . . .

Just like teacher clarity demystifies how to be successful teachers and learners, the authors of this practical playbook demystify teacher clarity for their readers. It's a must-read, must-practice book used by all educators across our school district. It's not another thing; it's "the thing" for targeted, successful teaching and learning!

—Angela Lyon Hinton, Assistant Superintendent for Instructional Services Spartanburg School District Two

It is a game changer when teachers discover the best hidden secret to learning (success criteria). In this second edition of *The Teacher Clarity Playbook*, the authors provide seven different ways of sharing what success looks like with learners. Module 4 becomes even more powerful as teachers realize the different opportunities they have to reach and empower students! —Chasity Gray, Director of Professional Learning

This playbook equips educators with a wealth of strategies, new examples, and practical tools to amplify their impact on student learning. These resources empower educators to cultivate a learning environment where students are actively engaged, while also helping teachers develop a profound understanding of their expectations, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience.

-Kelly Jensen, Director of Curriculum and Instruction Palmdale School District

With a through line of alignment and intentionality, this second edition of *The Teacher Clarity Playbook* emphasizes the cognitive complexities to consider in purposeful planning. This book truly highlights and reminds us of both the art and science of teaching and deepens our appreciation for teachers and leaders.

-Amy Miles, Professional Development Coordinator

In this second edition of *The Teacher Clarity Playbook*, teacher clarity is explicitly linked to alignment and the intentional moves teachers make when planning for and facilitating instruction. The authors provide a metacognitive road map for developing instruction that meets the cognitive complexity of content standards and supports students in knowing where they are now and where to next.

-Angie Schultz, Director of Curriculum and Innovation



Second Edition

THE TEACHER CLARITY PLAYBOOK, GRADES K – 12

A Hands-On Guide to Creating Learning Intentions and Success Criteria for Organized, Effective Instruction

Second Edition

Douglas Fisher Nancy Frey

John Almarode

Kierstan Barbee

Olivia Amador

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Foreword **by John Hattie**

Sketchnotes **by Taryl Hansen**





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FOREWORD



This book makes a bold claim. It describes excellent teachers as those who have appropriately high expectations; who share their notions of success criteria with their students; who ensure that there is constructive alignment between the lesson, the tasks, and the assignment; who ensure that the delivery of the lesson is relevant, accurate, and comprehensible to students; who give worked examples to illustrate the degree of cognitive complexity desired from their students; and who provide welcome feedback about where to move to next. This is what *teacher clarity* means throughout this book.

Consider the converse situation. I come into class as a student, and there are no expectations about how I will succeed. I do not know what success means (other than finishing my work by the bell); I do not see the relation between what my teacher is saying and asking me to do and what I do; I do not understand a lot of what my teacher says (but I pretend to listen, in case I get reprimanded); I know that I need to write something for the assignment or task, no matter what; and I know that whatever I do, the teacher will just ask me to do more. How many of these students do you have in your class? Now, consider *who* could make a difference to these students. This book shows *you* how to make that difference—and it also explains how students can help in this process. The joint aim is to turn students on to the excitement and joy of learning, while still instilling in them the notion that learning requires hard work.

The clarity claims in this book are underpinned by the notion of expertise. It takes expertise to appropriately diagnose the learning needs of all students relative to what they know, can do, and care about now; it takes expertise to devise optimal interventions and then ensure the fidelity of those interventions; and it takes expertise to evaluate the impact of each lesson on the student and how to modify the instruction (either during the current lesson or in the next lesson) in light of this impact. This impact involves not only what is intended to be known but also what needs to be comprehended; what is unknown; what is transferred to near and far tasks; what learning strategies are being used and whether there are other, more effective strategies that can be taught; and the depth or complexity of the learning as experienced by the student.

Consider the top eight ideals and corresponding effect sizes as described in the Visible Learning research: (1) Teachers and students, working together, evaluate their impact (d = 0.90); (2) all have high expectations (d = 0.90); (3) all move toward explicit success criteria (d = 0.64); (4) all use the Goldilocks principle of

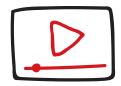
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challenge (not too hard, not too boring; d = 0.60); (5) all see that errors and trust present opportunities to learn (d = 0.72); (6) all maximize feedback to themselves about their impact (d = 0.51); (7) all focus on enjoying learning and appreciate that learning involves hard work; and (8) all ensure that there is the optimal proportion of surface to deep learning (d = 0.69). Clarity is one of the more powerful causal mechanisms to ensure that these eight goals are reached. Clarity can provide evidence of the learning's relevance to the student, so that the learning is meaningful—and this book's two modules on relevance and making meaning are worth their weight in gold.

At the end of the book, there is a challenge: "Focusing on teacher clarity could revolutionize your practice." Enjoy the revolution—certainly, your students will.

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LIST OF VIDEOS



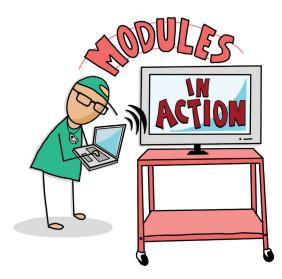
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The Teacher Clarity Playbook, Grades K-12

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Clear is kind. Unclear is unkind.

This statement, popularized by Brené Brown, speaks to the focus of this book. Being clear in what we want students to know and to be able to do is the right thing—the kind thing—we can do to support student learning.

When we are unclear, teaching suffers.

And when we are unclear, student learning suffers.

When learning is organized and intentional, and when students know what they are learning, great things can happen. When students don't know what they are learning, don't care about their learning, and have no idea if they are learning, great things are unlikely to happen.

Enter *teacher clarity*. Rosenshine and Furst (1971) identified eleven general categories of teacher behavior that accelerated learning. They noted that teacher clarity topped the list in terms of impact on students' learning. The components of teacher clarity they identified include these:

- 1. The clarity of the presentation is apparent to the students.
- 2. The points the teacher makes are clear and easy to understand.
- The teacher explains concepts clearly and answers questions intelligently.
- **4.** The lesson is organized.

Later, Fendick (1990) defined teacher clarity as "a measure of the clarity of communication between teachers and students in both directions" (p. 10) and further described it across four dimensions:

- Clarity of organization, such that lesson tasks, assignments, and activities are linked to the learning intentions as well as assessments of and for learning
- 2. Clarity of explanation, such that information is relevant, accurate, and comprehensible to students (The explanations have to develop students' understanding of the content expressed in the learning intentions.)

INTRODUCTION VIDEO ► resources.corwin.com/TCP2e



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- **3. Clarity of examples and guided practice,** such that the lesson includes information that is illustrative and illuminating as students gradually move to independence, making progress with less support from the teacher
- 4. Clarity of assessment of student learning, such that teachers are regularly seeking out and acting upon the feedback they receive from students, especially through their verbal and written responses, that aligns with the success criteria

Teacher clarity has an effect size of 0.85 (visiblelearningmetax.com). Effect sizes are statistical measures that allow educators to determine how powerful a specific influence is on learning. John Hattie has assembled the largest educational research database in history and has calculated effect sizes on more than 350 influences on learning. The average effect size in his database is 0.40. Teacher clarity, with an effect size of 0.85, is likely to significantly influence learning. In addition, when students know what they are learning, there is a 60 percent increase in positive emotions and well-being (Verso Learning, 2018, www.versolearning.com).

A major part of teacher clarity is understanding what students need to learn and identifying how they will know they learned it. To get there, teachers must analyze standards and plan meaningful instruction and assessments. But planning should be focused on impact, not on instruction. Yes, teams of teachers can talk about how they will engage students in meaningful learning, but they must focus on the impact of those activities on learning. In doing so, they clarify their expectations. And expectations also have a powerful impact on students' learning.

TEACHER EXPECTATIONS

Teacher expectations have a powerful influence on student achievement, with an effect size of 0.58 (visiblelearningmetax.com). In large part, teachers get what they expect; teachers with low expectations are particularly successful at getting what they expect. Teacher expectations for students tend to vary by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. However, these can be disrupted by focusing on specific strategies for resetting expectations. These strategies include linking teaching goals to uniformly high standards, flexible and responsive teaching, and assessment that informs both students and teachers (Rubie-Davies & Rosenthal, 2016).

Establishing and communicating learning intentions are important ways that teachers share their expectations with students. By comparing learning intentions with grade-level expectations, or with expectations in other schools and districts, educators can get a sense of the intentions' appropriateness, and they can identify the expectations they have for their own students.

Analyzing the success criteria is another way teachers can determine the expectations they have for students. A given learning intention could have multiple success criteria. Some may be at the surface level of learning, while others are at deeper levels of learning. The success criteria communicate the level of performance that

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students are expected to meet, and they allow teams of teachers to talk about the learning expected of students.

In addition, the experiences that teachers plan and the assessments they use also communicate the expectations they have for students. Teachers with low expectations tend to talk a lot to students (averaging about 80 percent of the minutes each week), and they tend to assess students at the basic skill level. Teachers with higher expectations tend to talk less (averaging about 55 percent of the minutes each week), and they tend to assess students at deeper levels of understanding.

All these elements—learning intentions, success criteria, meaningful experiences, and assessments—are components of teacher clarity, and each can be used to foster students' learning. Let's start with a discussion about the expectations teachers have for students' learning.

TEACHER COLLABORATION IS VITAL FOR RAISING EXPECTATIONS

One way to improve teacher clarity is to approach the task in the company of others. You may be using this playbook as a team. In that case, you probably have collaboration baked into your professional learning processes. One common structure for fostering teacher collaboration to improve the quality of learning has been the formation of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). PLCs usually involve small groups of educators who have come together to support each other's learning for the purpose of improving student achievement. These teams use the five PLC+ questions to keep a relentless focus on student learning outcomes and explain why the impact of PLCs is powerful (Fisher et al., 2019):

- Where are we going?
- Where are we now?
- How do we move learning forward?
- What did we learn today?
- Who benefited and who did not?

These discussions can result in improved instruction as well as better outcomes for students (e.g., Lai et al., 2014). In collaborative teams, teachers identify learning intentions and discuss ideas for instruction. They meet to review student work and figure out if their efforts have been fruitful. They also talk about students who need additional instruction or intervention to be successful. In other words, teacher clarity is the *what*, and the PLC+ process is the *how*. Teams use PLC+ processes to continually improve the clarity of the learning experiences for students.

Teams answer each of the five questions as they engage in teacher clarity work. Figure 1 provides an overview of the modules of teacher clarity linked with the PLC+ questions. You'll notice that the modules do not line up in order; planning instruction and assessment opportunities are recursive, and teams typically talk about all four questions in an integrated way.

Introduction

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PLC QUESTION	TEACHER CLARITY MODULE	DESCRIPTION
Where are we going?	 Module 1: Identifying Concepts and Skills Module 2: Sequencing Learning Progressions Module 3: Crafting and Sharing Learning Intentions Module 4: Constructing and Sharing Success Criteria 	In these modules, teachers or teams of teachers are analyzing the standards to determine what students need to know. They are sequencing learning such that it is logical and allows for both content and language to develop.
Where are we now?	 Module 5: Including Language Expectations in Success Criteria Module 6: Determining the Relevance of the Learning 	In these modules, teachers identify the relevance of the learning expectations to ensure that students are engaged and motivated. In addition, teachers consider the ways in which language contributes to students' successful learning.
How do we move learning forward?	 Module 8: Creating Meaningful Learning Experiences 	In this module, teachers design meaningful learning experiences aligned with the gradual release of responsibility.
What did we learn today? Who benefited and who did not?	 Module 7: Designing Assessment Opportunities Module 9: Establishing Mastery of Standards 	In these modules, teachers collect and analyze evidence of students' learning to monitor progress and determine mastery of the standards. They can use this information to monitor progress through instruction and intervention.

FIGURE 1 PLC+ Questions and Teacher Clarity

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Meaningful teacher collaboration builds collective teacher efficacy and collective responsibility for learning, which is a constellation of attitudes and beliefs about the efforts of a school to affect student learning (Goddard et al., 2000). More to the point, teachers with a high collective efficacy believe that "teachers in this school can get through to the most difficult students" (Goddard et al., 2000, p. 480). Importantly, perceptions are based on experiences. When teachers experience success collaborating with peers and those collaborations improve teaching and learning, they notice. These accumulated data points become the collective efficacy that researchers note is so powerful. With an effect size of 1.34, collective teacher efficacy is high on Hattie's list of influences on student achievement, more than tripling the speed of learning.

USING THIS PLAYBOOK

It is great if you can use this playbook as part of your collaboration with other educators, but you might be using this playbook on your own. In that case, never fear! We have taken steps to ensure that our discussions provide examples, suggestions, and prompts to guide your thinking—just as if you were working with colleagues. In the back of the book and on the companion website for this book (resources .corwin.com/TCP2e), you will find sample answers for the Guided Practice phase of each step in the process. These are not absolutes, but they do represent our thinking as we worked with experienced elementary and secondary teachers to develop these examples. You may have answers that differ from the ones we furnished; all we ask is that you are able to justify your responses in ways that are consistent with high expectations for student learning. In turn, we hope you will remain open to our responses. After all, reading involves engaging in silent dialogues with authors.

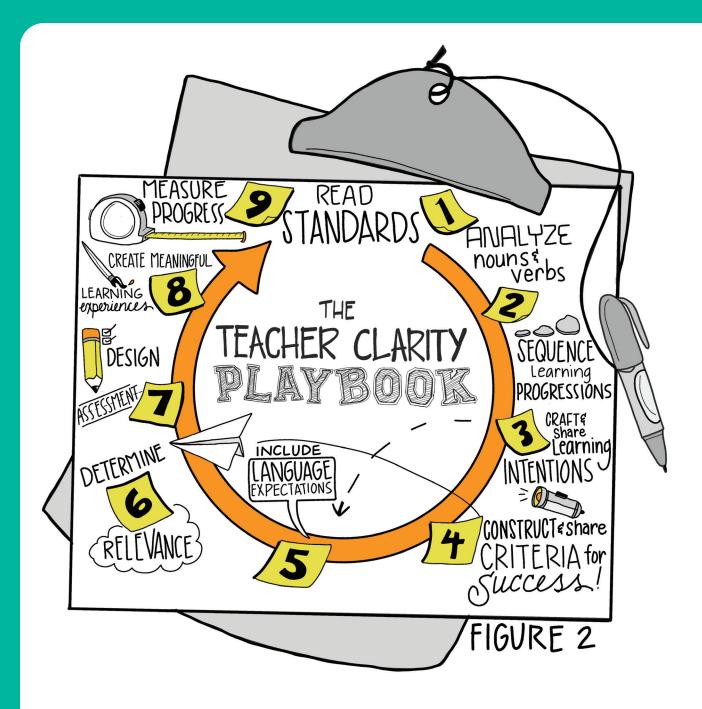
THE MODULES

Each of the nine learning modules in this playbook is designed to move you systematically through a process that begins and ends with the standards, from analysis through assessment. Our intent is not to introduce you to a process that you must implement in a lockstep way, but rather to build a habit of mind for how it is that you systematically and efficiently analyze standards, build curriculum, teach, and assess. In other words, this process can mobilize the impact of teacher clarity in your classroom. A flowchart for the nine modules can be found in Figure 2.

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THE LEARNING PROCESS

Each module utilizes a modified version of the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework (Fisher & Frey, 2021). Each begins with an explanation of the core concepts of the module to establish the purpose for learning and provide direct explanation. The module then continues with modeling how the process is applied through four examples:

- First-grade English language arts
- Third-grade mathematics
- Eighth-/Ninth-grade algebra
- Ninth-/Tenth-grade English language arts

In addition, there are modeled examples available online.

We integrate examples from the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS) and from social studies standards in the Guided Practice sections. Although some will resonate more with you than others, depending on your own professional interests, we encourage you to engage with all the examples so you can see a pattern across grade and content areas.

The Guided Practice section is for you to write on—and to discuss with your team, if possible. We have suggested answers in the back of the book to help you, but, as noted earlier, they should not be interpreted too narrowly as the *only* correct response. Each module ends with a section called Independent Practice, where you apply the same process to a grade level and subject area you have selected. Although that practice involves independent learning, ideally you will also be able to continue these discussions with colleagues.

OUR HOPE

We really do believe that teacher clarity is important—so critical, in fact, we are convinced it is key to the Visible Learning[®] story. We don't promise that it is easy work, but we do promise that if you see this through to the classroom, you will detect a notable positive change in how you and your students talk about learning. What could be better than that?

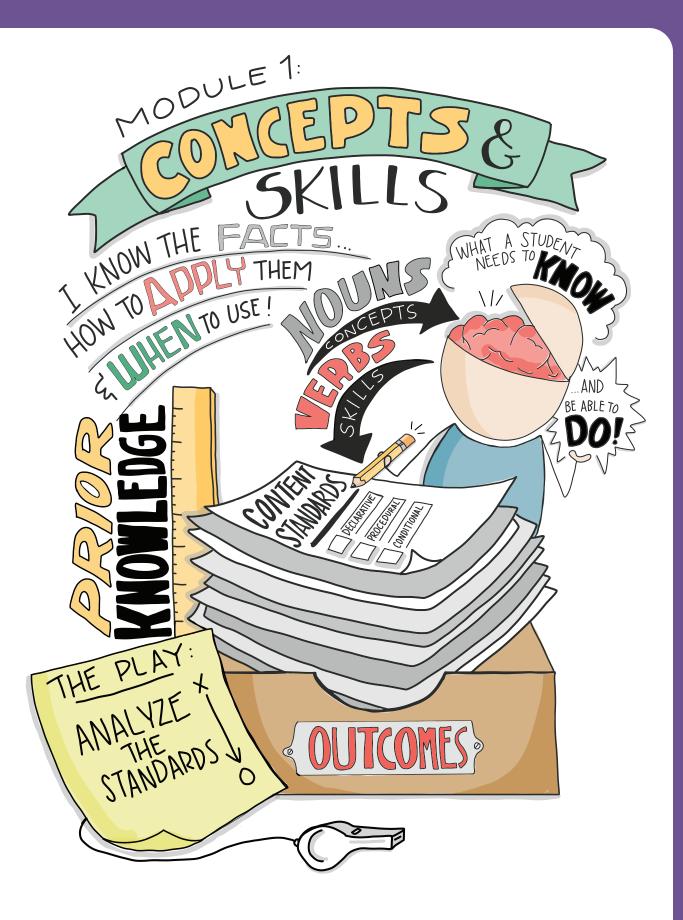
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MODULE 1: IDENTIFYING CONCEPTS AND SKILLS



◄ Module 1 Overview resources.corwin.com/TCP2e

The journey toward clarity of learning must begin with the end in mind. For almost all of us, this is communicated

through our standards and supporting materials. Together, these documents articulate what learners must know, understand, and be able to do within a given grade level and content area.

Clarity demands that educators analyze these documents to identity the concepts, understandings, and skills, along with the prior knowledge necessary to engage in the new learning. When you take a close-up look at the standards, you will notice that the learning outcomes are often linked to an application of those outcomes to an everwidening set of problems, situations, contexts, and/ or texts. Thus, these outcomes and applications are not meant to be mastered by your students in a day or a week. Instead, teaching these standards require you to engage in intentional planning and implementation over multiple learning experiences, which may also rely on concepts, understandings, and skills from other integral standards.

Let's take a closer look at the nature of the concepts, understandings, and skills, which include the content knowledge and the cognitive complexity of our standards.

WHAT IS THE CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF THE STANDARD OR STANDARDS?

Not all standards are the same. Not all content within a standard is the same. We know that

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there are some standards that provide an initial introduction to content, while other standards take a deeper dive into the content.

A useful method for determining the cognitive complexity of a standard is to focus our analysis on the standard's nouns and verbs. The nouns in a standard generally represent what the student needs to know—the concepts—and encompass the following:

- Declarative knowledge, which is the factual information associated with the subject
- *Procedural knowledge*, which is the application of the information
- Conditional knowledge, which is knowing when the information should be used

Many of the nouns in a standard reveal the factual, procedural, and/or conditional knowledge the student needs to learn. In other words, these are the content demands. Take this example from the Michigan Social Studies Standards for Grade 5, with key nouns and noun phrases underlined:

STANDARD(S)

Describe positive and negative consequences of changing the physical environment of the local community.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

SKILLS (VERBS)

consequences of changing (positive and negative)

physical environment

local community

We didn't underline *positive* and *negative* in this case because we wanted to focus for now on

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the essential nouns. That IS not to say that these adjectives are not important—quite to the contrary, they are important because they provide further detail and nuance about the concepts that need to be taught. But for now, we just want to tease out the key nouns and noun phrases present. We will also analyze the skills/verbs shortly.

The nouns of the standard also represent the academic vocabulary necessary for navigating through and communicating about the learning. As we will show in an upcoming module, insight into the language of the standards allows us to build the academic vocabulary in our students and scaffold the linguistic demands associated with the learning.

This example focuses on one standard. In many subject areas, teachers are teaching multiple standards at the same time. In that case, you'd list all of the standards in the top box and identify the range of concepts (nouns) and later skills (verbs), and then continue the process outlined in this playbook.

WHAT IS THE COGNITIVE COMPLEXITY OF THE STANDARD?

Of course, teaching is far more than just pouring facts into the heads of students. Likewise, our standards are more than just vocabulary terms to be memorized and regurgitated. The syntax of the standards helps us again, this time in the form of verbs. The nouns tell us what learners must know, and the verbs tell us how well they must know it. Many of the verbs in a standard speak to the skills students must acquire in order to make the concepts, and content, useful. The verbs communicate the cognitive complexity of the standard. There is a difference between the skills of identifying and analyzing and those of naming and evaluating. Let's look again at the same standard from before, this time with the verbs underlined.

STANDARD(S)

<u>Describe</u> positive and negative consequences of changing the physical environment of the local community.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

SKILLS (VERBS)

describe

consequences of changing (positive and negative)	
physical environment	
local community	

Describing is a more complex cognitive skill than listing consequences associated with changes. Chances are good that the moment you considered this verb, you immediately began thinking in two divergent directions:

- What other knowledge and skills would students need to develop an argument?
- 2. How might a student demonstrate this skill?

The first question speaks to the prior knowledge and skills needed, while the second question addresses wonderings about teaching and assessment.

These questions are an essential part of the clarity journey and will be a focus of upcoming modules. For now, let's not jump too far ahead. Instead, consider the cognitive demand associated with *describe*. This is above and beyond simply reproducing facts. *Describe* requires learners to use factual, procedural, and conditional knowledge as those elements apply to the concepts in the standard.

However, we also want to highlight what the word *describe* doesn't say. Nowhere is there

a directive about how this skill will be accomplished or what the learning experiences will look like. The outcome might include a written explanation, a presentation, or a debate. Standards tell us what to teach, not how to teach. Those decisions are yet to come as you identify learning progressions, learning intentions, and success criteria in the coming modules.

Let's model and practice identifying concepts, understandings, and skills.

PLC+ CONVERSATIONS

- How has this module changed your approach to creating clarity of and for learning?
- 2. How will you package and pace the standards? Would a pacing guide for all of the standards be useful?
- What is the cognitive complexity of standards for your grade level and/or content area?
- How will you know if you analyzed the standard(s) correctly?

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MODELING



In this section, you will find examples of standards with the nouns and verbs identified. In three of the examples, we focus on a single standard. However, in the Algebra example, we focus on a cluster of standards to

model how the analysis might look when planning longer units. Language added in parentheses indicates further context from the standard to flesh out the meaning of the skill. In one case, we present a cluster of standards that are commonly taught together. We have modeled this process for you.

GRADE 1 – ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS

STANDARD(S)

Know and use various text features (e.g., headings, tables of contents, glossaries, electronic menus, icons) to locate key facts or information in a text.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

SKILLS (VERBS)

Text features	Know (text features)
• Headings	Use (text features)
Tables of contents	Locate (key facts or information)
Glossaries	
Electronic menus	
• Icons	
Key facts	
Key information	
Text	

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GRADE 3 – MATHEMATICS

STANDARD(S)

Use multiplication and division within 100 to solve word problems in situations involving equal groups, arrays, and measurement quantities (e.g., by using drawings and equations with a symbol for the unknown number to represent the problem).

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)	SKILLS (VERBS)
Multiplication	Use (multiplication and division)
Division	Solve (word problems)
Word problems	Represent (the problem)
Situations	
Equal groups	
Arrays	
Measurement quantities	
Drawings	
Equations	
Symbol	
Unknown number	
Problem	
·····	:

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GRADE 8/9 - ALGEBRA

STANDARD(S)

F-IF.1 Understand that a function from one set (called the domain) to another set (called the range) assigns to each element of the domain exactly one element of the range. If *f* is a function and *x* is an element of its domain, then f(x) denotes the output of *f* corresponding to the input *x*. The graph of *f* is the graph of the equation y = f(x).

F-IF.2 Use function notation, evaluate functions for inputs in their domains, and interpret statements that use function notation in terms of a context.

F-IF.4 For a function that models a relationship between two quantities, interpret key features of graphs and tables in terms of the quantities, and sketch graphs showing key features given a verbal description of the relationship. *Key features include intercepts; intervals where the function is increasing, decreasing, positive, or negative; relative maximums and minimums; symmetries; end behavior; and periodicity.*

F-IF.5 Relate the domain of a function to its graph and, where applicable, to the quantitative relationship it describes. *For example, if the function* h *gives the number of person-hours it takes to assemble* n *engines in a factory, then the positive integers would be an appropriate domain for the function.*

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)	SKILLS (VERBS)		
Function	Understand (the concept of a		
Set	function)		
Domain	Assign (elements from one set to elements of another)		
Range	Use function notation		
Element of a set			
Input/output	Evaluate functions		
Function notation	Interpret (function notation in terms of a context)		
Statements that use function notation	Interpret key features of graphs		
Relationship between two quantities	Interpret key features of tables		
Graphs of functions	Sketch graphs showing key		
Tables	features		
Key features of graphs	Relate (a domain to a graph)		
Key features of tables	Relate (a domain to a quantitative		
Verbal description of a function	relationship)		

Module 1: Identifying Concepts and Skills

GRADE 9/10 - ENGLISH

STANDARD(S)

Introduce precise claim(s), distinguish the claim(s) from alternate or opposing claims, and create an organization that establishes clear relationships among claim(s), counterclaims, reasons, and evidence.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

SKILLS (VERBS)

Precise claims

Alternate claims

Opposing claims

Organization with clear relationships

- Claims
- Counterclaims
- Reasons
- Evidence

Introduce (claims) Distinguish (claims) Create (organization)

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GUIDED PRACTICE

For the following examples, identify the nouns and verbs. First underline them, then place them in the corresponding boxes that follow.

GRADE 5 – WRITING

STANDARD(S)

Write opinion pieces on topics or texts, supporting a point of view with reasons and information.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

: SKILLS (VERBS)

GRADE 11 - WRITING IN HISTORY/SOCIAL STUDIES

STANDARD(S)

Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary that makes clear the relationships among the key details and ideas.

CONCEPTS (NOUNS)

SKILLS (VERBS)

resources 💫

For suggested answers, please turn to the Appendix (page 169) or visit the companion website at **resources.corwin.com/TCP2e**.

Module 1: Identifying Concepts and Skills

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INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

Fill in your own standard(s), concepts, and skills in the below template.

NOTE: If you would prefer to work from the full template, you may either download a blank copy or flip to page 153 and complete all end-of-module independent practice there.

STANDARD(S)	
CONCEPTS (NOUNS)	SKILLS (VERBS)
online \mathbb{R} For a blank version of the independent practice pages in	this book, visit resources.corwin.com/TCP2e .

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Videos and additional resources may also be accessed at resources.corwin.com/TCP2e



Module 1 in Action—Elementary resources.corwin.com/TCP2e



Module 1 in Action—Secondary resources.corwin.com/TCP2e



Module 1 Think-Aloud resources.corwin.com/TCP2e



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