RIGOR unveiled

A Video-Enhanced Flipbook to Promote Teacher Expertise in Relationship Building, Instruction, Goals, Organization, and Relevance

DOUGLAS FISHER
NANCY FREY
JAMES MARSHALL

Illustrations by TARYL HANSEN

Includes 150+ Videos

CORWIN
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FOR INFORMATION:

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A SAGE Company
2455 Teller Road
Thousand Oaks, California 91320
(800) 233-9936
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1 Oliver's Yard
55 City Road
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United Kingdom

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India

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Contents

In this book, you will be invited into classrooms as teachers engage in authentic work with students. We did not script these lessons, attempting for perfection. Rather, we provide you with real examples of the hard work of teachers who volunteered to allow us into their learning environments. As such, you will be able to identify success as well as next steps as these professionals strive to unveil rigor in their classrooms.

Visit the companion website at
https://companion.corwin.com/courses/RIGOR_Unveiled
for videos.

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Sandra K. Athans
Literacy Specialist, K–12, Chittenango Central Schools
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President, Educational Research in Action, LLC

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Burke County High School, GA

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Bonnie McGrath
Educational Consultant
San Diego, CA

Anne Meagher, NBCT
Limerick, MA

Natalie Polo
School District U-46, IL

Stephanie Salazar
Founder/instructional leadership coach, Sanctuaries of Learning

Emily Sitz
Instructional Coach, Lake Mary Preparatory School
Lake Mary, FL

About the Authors

Douglas Fisher is professor and chair of educational leadership at San Diego State University and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High and Middle College. Previously, Doug was an early intervention teacher and elementary school educator. He is a credentialed English teacher and administrator in California. In 2022, he was inducted into the Reading Hall of Fame by the Literacy Research Association. He has published numerous articles on reading and literacy, differentiated instruction, and curriculum design, as well as books such as *The Teacher Clarity Playbook, PLC+*, *Artificial Intelligence Playbook, How Scaffolding Works*, *Teaching Reading*, and *Teaching Students to Drive Their Learning*.

Nancy Frey is a professor in educational leadership at San Diego State and a teacher leader at Health Sciences High and Middle College. She is a credentialed special educator, reading specialist, and administrator in California. She is a member of the International Literacy Association's Literacy Research Panel. Her published titles include *How Teams Work, Kids Come in All Languages, The Social-Emotional Learning Playbook,* and *How Feedback Works*.

James Marshall is a professor of educational leadership at San Diego State University where he also leads the Doctorate in Educational Leadership program. A credentialed teacher, he began his career as an informal science educator at the San Diego Zoo. Jim's passion centers on the design of learning programs that yield predictable results. He has published broadly on needs assessment, learning initiative design, implementation, and evaluation. His published books include *Right From the Start: The Essential Guide to Implementing School Initiatives* and *Fixing Education Initiatives in Crisis: 24 Go-To Strategies.*

INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Although the term *rigor* is attached to many dimensions of teaching and learning, educators often struggle with how to define it in observable and actionable ways. Many will offer that they "know it when they see it," yet have trouble explaining it in ways that shed light on the path to improved rigor in classrooms. We've witnessed spurious claims of rigorous teaching: **rubrics** with words like "exceeds expectations," homework assignments that require hours of student time outside of school, and classrooms that assign "hard books." At its worst, we have unfortunately heard a few teachers brag that a high failure rate in their class equates to evidence of their "rigorous teaching." Let's start by dismantling these misconceptions.

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To read a QR code, you must have a smartphone or tablet with a camera. We recommend that you download a QR code reader app that is made specifically for your phone or tablet brand.

Table 1 Misconceptions About Rigor

#	Misconceptions About Rigor
1	"*Exceeds Expectations" grading scales equate to rigor.* If we know what the goal is, and the student hits the target, how do we define what is above and beyond? Increasing the difficulty or reducing the likelihood of accuracy does not equate to the level of complexity. In Olympic archery, the target is a 12-centimeter bullseye struck from 70 meters away. That's the goal. Changing the distance or the size of the target changes the goal itself. And making the goal more difficult to attain risks decoupling the learning goal from the standard (Guskey et al., 2024).
2	*Hours of homework equate to rigor*. The ability to self-direct learning and study is of value, to be sure, especially for middle and high school students. However, time-measured homework doesn't correlate to rigor. Several high-achieving countries, as measured by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), have vastly different time expectations for homework. Highly rated countries like Finland average less than three hours per week; the United States averages six hours per week; China averages nearly 13 hours per week. It's not time that predicts the relative rigor—it is how the time is spent.
3	*Hard books equate to rigor.* Difficulty and complexity are two different constructs. Difficulty is a measure of effort; complexity is a measure of thinking actions (Webb, 1997). The children's book *The Giving Tree* (Silverstein, 1964) is quite complex in a high school English unit about feminist theory in literature yet has a readability level associated with second grade. Complexity provides a far better picture of what is rigorous curriculum, not difficulty.
4	*Student failure is evidence of rigor.* Nope. Not even close. However, high failure rates might be good evidence of unresponsive teaching.

What Do We Mean by Rigor?

Rigor in teaching and learning means

- challenging students with high expectations;
- engaging them in deep and meaningful learning experiences; and
- supporting them to achieve their full potential.

There's a deep research base related to each of these characteristics.

High-expectations teaching. Rigor involves setting high standards for all students. The high expectations held by teachers for students include not only mastering basic skills but also developing their higher-order thinking skills like analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Opportunities to learn are evidenced in material ways. It isn't sufficient to say we have high expectations; instead, they are telegraphed through the many actions we take, the decisions we make, and the language we use. Rubie-Davies's (2014) seminal research on high-expectations teaching clearly outlines the behaviors of these teachers. The result? Students in high-expectations classrooms make notable achievement gains.

Learning at deep and transfer levels. Rigor goes beyond memorization and rote learning. Rigor means that learning extends beyond the surface, or foundational, level. **Surface learning** is important, but it's not sufficient to claim that the experiences are rigorous (Fisher et al., 2016). Rigor requires students to understand concepts deeply and make connections between ideas (deep learning). Deep learning indicates that knowledge has been consolidated. Transfer learning requires students to apply knowledge in new and/or problem-solving situations (Perkins & Salomon, 2012). Learning at the deep and transfer levels of learning is long-lasting.

Cognitively challenging experiences aligned to content standards. Rigorous learning includes tasks that are challenging and thought-provoking. Crucially, they are in alignment with the standards that delineate courses and grade levels. The **Depth of Knowledge (DOK) framework** outlines four dimensions of cognitive challenge, designed for use by educators and test developers to match tasks with standards (Webb, 2002).

Robyn Jackson (2024) asserts that high expectations done right leave people feeling inspired and empowered. High expectations done wrong just leave people feeling pressured and paralyzed.

Overall, the progression of task complexity addressed these questions (Francis, 2017):

- **DOK-1:** Recall and reproduce data, definitions, details, facts, information, and procedures (knowledge acquisition).
- **DOK-2:** Use academic concepts and cognitive skills to answer questions, address problems, accomplish tasks, and analyze texts and topics (knowledge application).
- **DOK-3:** Think strategically and reasonably about how and why concepts, ideas, operations, and procedures can be used to attain and explain answers, conclusions, decisions, outcomes, reasons, and results (knowledge analysis).
- **DOK-4:** Think extensively about what else can be done, how else learning can be used, and how the student could personally use what they have learned in different academic and real-world contexts (knowledge augmentation).

Taken together, students should experience a range of tasks that move them from knowledge building to thinking critically, solving problems creatively, and engaging in sustained inquiry.

Active engagement. Rigor involves students actively driving their learning (Fisher et al., 2024). Students should be asking questions, discussing ideas with peers, and reflecting on their learning. This active engagement helps deepen their understanding and keeps

them motivated. Intentional efforts by educators to foster emotional and cognitive engagement as part of a cohesive educational program through goal setting, achievement orientation, and mindsets has proven effective (Lazowski & Hulleman, 2016).

Support and ***scaffolding***. To ensure all students can meet high expectations, rigorous teaching includes providing the necessary support and scaffolding. This means breaking down complex tasks into manageable parts, offering guidance, and providing feedback that helps students improve their learning. The true power in scaffolding is the ability to optimize challenge such that students are prompted to extend what they know in new ways.

Assessment for learning. Rigorous teaching uses assessments not just to measure learning but to inform instruction and provide feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Assessments are used formatively such that teachers understand where students are struggling and adjust their teaching to meet students' needs. Assessments are also used summatively to gauge proficiency.

Relevance *and world connections.* Rigor is also about making learning relevant to students' lives and the world around them. When students see the connection between what they are learning and their own experiences or future goals, they are more motivated to engage deeply with the material. Relevance includes personal association, personal usefulness, and personal identification (Priniski et al., 2018).

We believe that rigor in action is multidimensional. Investment in one of the previously listed aspects of rigor while neglecting another will have a detrimental effect on any attempt to create and maintain a rigorous learning environment. Having said that, as school leaders and educators we understand the very real and practical challenges of attending to each of these factors simultaneously. We developed this video-enhanced tool to be used flexibly, yet purposefully, by individual teachers, teacher teams, and school leaders as they collaborate on elevating learning in their classrooms and schools. The conversations resulting from the focus on each aspect are intended to foster professional collaboration and collective teacher efficacy (CTE), the shared belief among a group of educators that through their combined efforts they can positively influence student outcomes and achieve significant educational goals. Among the more than 300 influences on student achievement, CTE has the highest potential of all for accelerating student learning (Hattie, 2023). Because CTE is the ultimate outcome, this tool should not be used as a means for evaluating teachers, principals, or schools.

The RIGOR Walk

The core of this flipbook is driven by the *RIGOR Walk* (Fisher et al., 2024), a process for centering reflection, collaboration, and continuous improvement (see Figure 1). A RIGOR Walk is a structured process in which educators, including teachers, teams, and administrators, observe classroom instruction to gather insights into teaching practices and student learning. The purpose of a RIGOR Walk is to foster professional learning through collaborative observation and reflection. During these walks, observers focus on one of five specific components, designed to capture the evidence-based research on characteristics of rigor in instruction, curriculum, and **classroom climate**.

Table 2 RIGOR Components

R	Relationships
I	Instruction
G	Goals
O	Organization
R	Relevance

Each component features five illuminative indicators to further define its aspects. Your team may identify additional indicators for a given dimension. *The goal is not to evaluate individual teachers but to identify effective practices*, share successes, and discuss areas for growth. This process contributes to a school culture of continuous learning and collective responsibility for student achievement.

Figure 1 RIGOR Walk

Relationships	Instruction	Goals	Organization	Relevance
Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.	Evidence of student learning is used to inform instruction.	Learning goals are aligned with grade-level expectations.	The physical environment is accessible for all students.	The learning process incorporates meaningful tasks that embed learning inside and outside the classroom.
Proximity is used to foster connections with students and ensure their learning.	Students interact with peers in meaningful discussions using academic language to complete tasks.	The level of knowledge expected of the learning goal aligns with the standard.	The physical environment is rich and recent.	Students describe the value of what they are learning and how they are learning it.
Students' interactions with peers are respectful and productive.	Scaffolds are strategically used to support learning, invite productive struggle, and ensure productive success.	Students can describe or demonstrate what successful learning looks like.	Grouping patterns are used flexibly to promote learning.	Students' lived experiences, as well as those from backgrounds different from their own, are incorporated into learning experiences, making lessons culturally relevant and inclusive.
Academic risk-taking is encouraged and celebrated.	Lessons include input based on student learning needs.	Students regularly self-assess their learning and revise their actions based on the results.	Student behavior is proactively managed, monitored, and addressed through productive procedures and interventions.	Artifacts and materials reflect the unique identities and interests of students.
Student ideas are valued and explored as bridges to learning.	Students practice and apply what they have learned to familiar and new situations.	Students seek feedback, are provided with actionable ideas, and follow through with next steps.	The flow and pace of the lesson is aligned with the learning goals.	Learning activates students' prior knowledge and experiences and fosters connections to new or more complex content.

This guide was developed for teachers and teams to use as they work to improve the learning outcomes for students. As such, we hope that educators consider each of these factors and identify their strengths. And we hope they focus on areas in which change can be made to ensure rigor. Importantly, simply making things hard for students does not mean that it's a rigorous learning environment. Instead, intentional teacher actions with support for students to accomplish greatness results in rigor.

We hope that team members will visit each other's classrooms and provide peer support for increasing rigor. A suggested protocol you can use or adapt is the *capacity-building RIGOR Walk* (Fisher et al., 2019). You will find a protocol for the RIGOR Walk on page 141 at the back of this flipbook. These walks can be used both within and across professional learning community teams. The purpose of a capacity-building RIGOR Walk is to accurately gauge current capacities to make decisions about future efforts. Therefore, RIGOR Walks are scheduled in advance with volunteer teachers. These volunteer teachers open their classrooms for short, scheduled observations (seven minutes) with a predetermined area of focus that is known by the volunteer teachers themselves. There is no point in "catching" people unaware. This undermines the entire point, which is to ascertain the current capacity of a school regarding a specific dimension of the RIGOR framework.

A person designated by the team hosts the capacity-building RIGOR Walk (e.g., instructional coach, classroom teacher, school leader). Observers are divided into three teams (A, B, and C) and have a specific task to conduct in each classroom: *What is the teacher saying and doing? What are students saying and doing? How does the environment support the learning?* The observers debrief after three classroom visits, and the discussion is confined to patterns gleaned; it is not about individual classrooms or teachers. The composition of the team rotates so that observers have the experience of collecting data across all three sources (teacher, students, and environment.) A team debrief of the experience is conducted at the end to draw conclusions about implementation and next steps.

How to Use the RIGOR Unveiled Flipbook

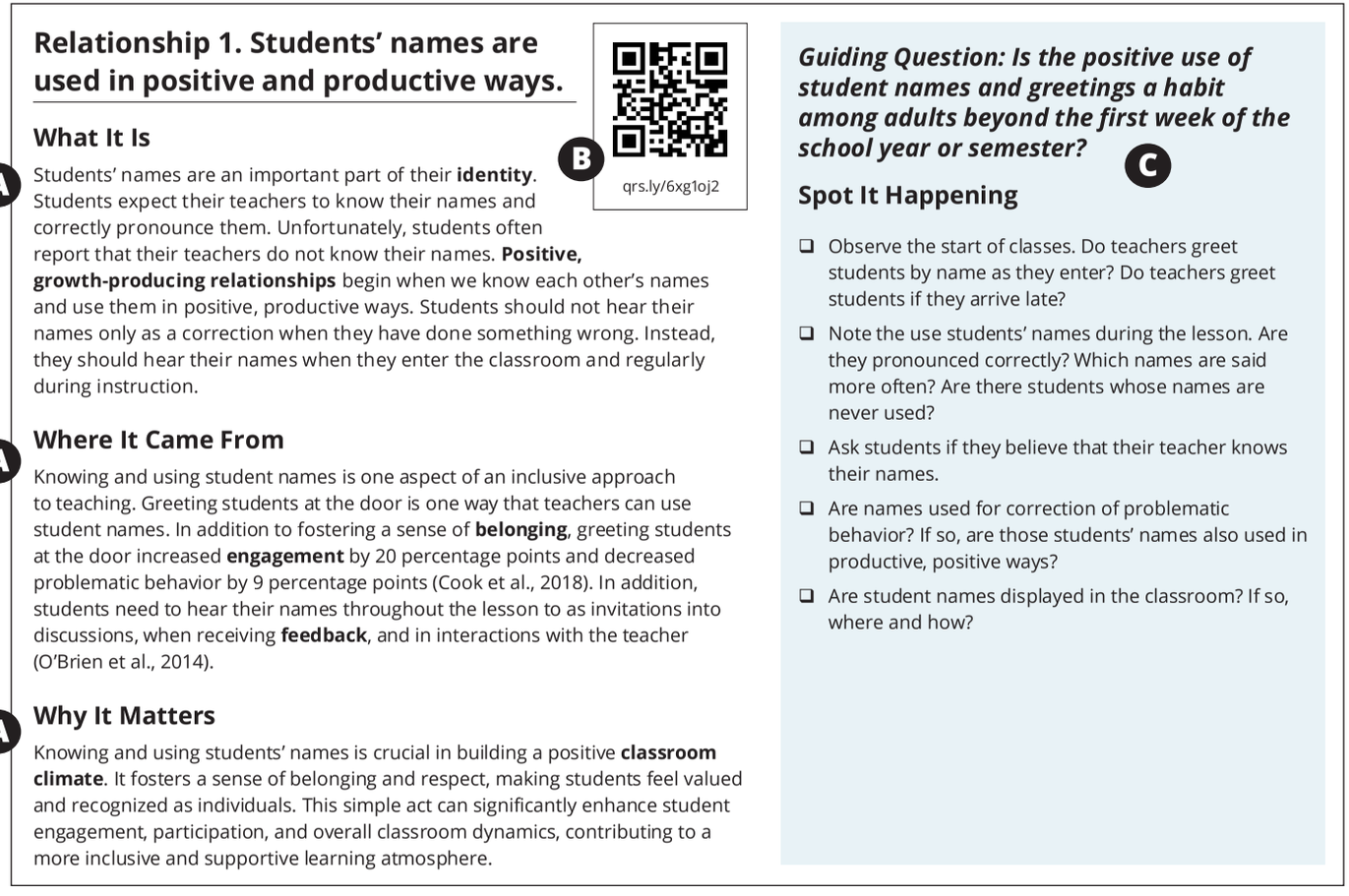
We have packaged this work as a unique tool to be used by individual teachers, teams, instructional coaches, and school leaders to stimulate deep discussion and action. The flipbook can stand in the center of a table as an interactive, visual way for teams to engage in pre- and postvisit debriefings of each other's classrooms. The five components of the RIGOR Walk are separated by tabs, with each of the five indicators of the component given two pages for all to see and consult.

Figure 2 How to Use the Flipbook, Page 1

A. The first page is intended for the previsit and provides an overview of the indicator (*What It Is, Where It Came From*, and *Why It Matters*).

B. The page features a short video *Spotlight* discussion from one of the authors to provide further explanation and elaboration. These can be used in advance of the team meeting or during the meeting when further clarification is needed.

C. Teams can use the *Spot It Happening* feature to calibrate their observations during the RIGOR Walk.



Relationship 1. Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.

B

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What It Is

A

Students' names are an important part of their **identity**. Students expect their teachers to know their names and correctly pronounce them. Unfortunately, students often report that their teachers do not know their names. **Positive, growth-producing relationships** begin when we know each other's names and use them in positive, productive ways. Students should not hear their names only as a correction when they have done something wrong. Instead, they should hear their names when they enter the classroom and regularly during instruction.

Where It Came From

A

Knowing and using student names is one aspect of an inclusive approach to teaching. Greeting students at the door is one way that teachers can use student names. In addition to fostering a sense of **belonging**, greeting students at the door increased **engagement** by 20 percentage points and decreased problematic behavior by 9 percentage points (Cook et al., 2018). In addition, students need to hear their names throughout the lesson to as invitations into discussions, when receiving **feedback**, and in interactions with the teacher (O'Brien et al., 2014).

Why It Matters

A

Knowing and using students' names is crucial in building a positive **classroom climate**. It fosters a sense of belonging and respect, making students feel valued and recognized as individuals. This simple act can significantly enhance student engagement, participation, and overall classroom dynamics, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere.

Guiding Question: Is the positive use of student names and greetings a habit among adults beyond the first week of the school year or semester?

C

Spot It Happening

- ❑ Observe the start of classes. Do teachers greet students by name as they enter? Do teachers greet students if they arrive late?
- ❑ Note the use students' names during the lesson. Are they pronounced correctly? Which names are said more often? Are there students whose names are never used?
- ❑ Ask students if they believe that their teacher knows their names.
- ❑ Are names used for correction of problematic behavior? If so, are those students' names also used in productive, positive ways?
- ❑ Are student names displayed in the classroom? If so, where and how?

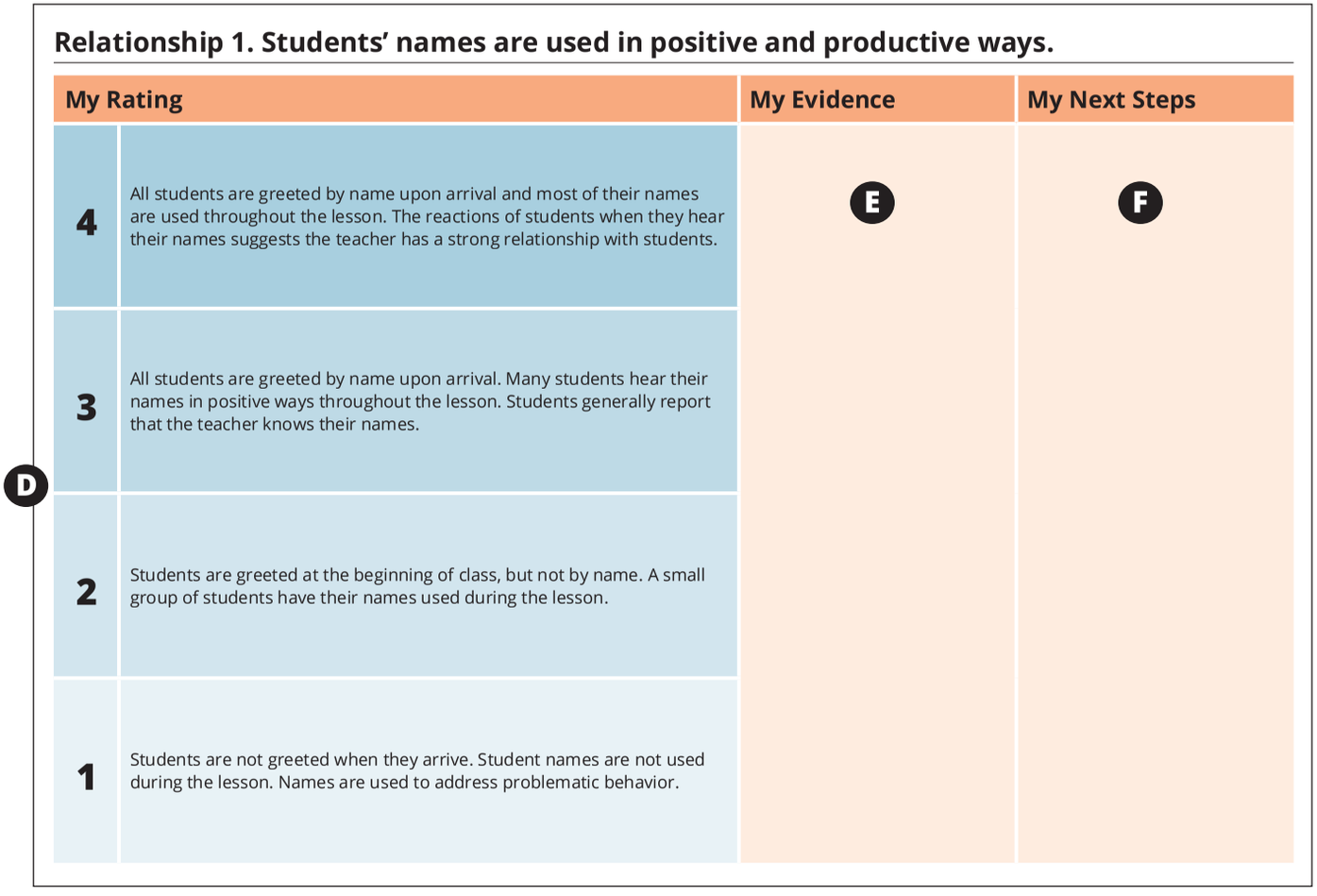
Figure 3 How to Use the Flipbook, Page 2

The second page is for the debriefing done during the postvisit.

D. The first column provides a **self-reflection** tool to further calibrate the observations.

E. Use the next column to summarize evidence.

F. Finally, the Next Steps feature offers the opportunity to identify future actions.



Relationship 1. Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	All students are greeted by name upon arrival and most of their names are used throughout the lesson. The reactions of students when they hear their names suggests the teacher has a strong relationship with students.	E	F
3	All students are greeted by name upon arrival. Many students hear their names in positive ways throughout the lesson. Students generally report that the teacher knows their names.		
2	Students are greeted at the beginning of class, but not by name. A small group of students have their names used during the lesson.		
1	Students are not greeted when they arrive. Student names are not used during the lesson. Names are used to address problematic behavior.		

The flipbook should also be used by every individual on the RIGOR Walk to further right-size the observation process through expert noticing. A marked difference between novice noticers and expert noticers is the ability to sift information in fast-paced environments to notice what is relevant and significant, while screening out extraneous information (Ericsson & Pool, 2016). As one example, an expert in the field of architecture is likely to notice the relevant technical information related to a house's structure and question whether the deck railing is safe; the novice touring the same house might overlook that detail entirely while being enamored with the deck furniture. The *Spot It Happening* feature is intended to refocus team members during their observations to foster expert noticing while screening out what is not relevant to the observation. And if you don't like to write in your flipbook, you can use sticky notes to record evidence.

There is one other feature of the flipbook that can support your team's expertise. A Video Glossary of Terms is provided at a separate tab for you to use as needed. Each video features an instructional coach explaining the bolded technical terminology used throughout.

If you or team members aren't familiar with the nuances of **Academic Risk-Taking** (ART) or **success criteria**, for instance, they are by your side to furnish a brief explanation and an example or two from classrooms.

Continuous investment in our teaching practice is not just a professional responsibility but a deeply rewarding journey that enriches our lives and the lives of our students. As educators, we have the profound privilege of shaping young minds and fostering a love of learning. By committing to continuous improvement, we embrace the opportunity to refine our skills, explore new strategies, and reflect on our experiences. This ongoing growth not only enhances our effectiveness in the classroom but also reignites our passion for teaching. Together, let's celebrate the victories, learn from challenges, and support each other in this shared mission. The joy and fulfillment we derive from seeing young people thrive and succeed are the greatest moral rewards we can achieve. Let's embark on this path with enthusiasm and a shared commitment to strengthening our own practices while supporting each other in growth-producing ways.

RELATIONSHIPS

Section 1: Exploring Relationships

Positive relationships between teachers and students—and among students—form the bedrock of learning. Child psychiatrist James Comer noted that "no significant learning occurs outside of a significant relationship." It creates a supportive and trusting environment where students feel safe to take risks, ask questions, and make mistakes. When students have positive relationships with their teachers and peers, they are more engaged and motivated to learn. These connections foster a sense of **belonging** and community, which can significantly enhance a student's academic and social-emotional development.

Trusting relationships allow teachers to better understand their students' needs, strengths, and challenges, enabling them to tailor instruction to meet individual needs effectively. This personalized approach can lead to increased student achievement and a more inclusive classroom atmosphere.

In this section, we focus on these items:

- The use of student names and greetings
- How proximity is used proactively to lead and manage classrooms
- Respectful and productive student interactions
- Fostering academic risk-taking
- How student ideas are valued and explored

Reflective Discussion Questions for the Relationship Component

Discuss these guiding questions in advance of the RIGOR Walk. Then, revisit the questions after the RIGOR Walk is completed.

1. How consistently do adults make positive use of student names and greetings beyond the first week of the school year or semester?
2. Is **proximity** used proactively to engage and reengage students? Do teachers regularly circulate through the classroom?
3. Are we teaching students how to have productive interactions with peers? These skills include team organization and roles, techniques for monitoring and repairing shared understanding, taking action on tasks, and evaluating their success in solving the problem.
4. In what ways is the **classroom climate** constructed to encourage **academic risk-taking** (ART)? How are we using language to foster ART?
5. How are we using language and classroom structures to signal that our students' ideas are valued?

Universal Discussion Questions for Continuous Improvement

Use these universal questions to reflect upon your findings, summarize your results, and define your plan of action.

- What are our strengths?
- Where do we need more work?
- How does this impact our multilingual learners?
- How does this impact our students with disabilities?
- How does this impact our high-achieving students?
- How and with whom will we share our findings and decisions?

Notes

Relationship 1. Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.

qrs.ly/6xg1oj2

What It Is

Students' names are an important part of their **identity**. Students expect their teachers to know their names and correctly pronounce them. Unfortunately, students often report that their teachers do not know their names. **Positive, growth-producing relationships** begin when we know each other's names and use them in positive, productive ways. Students should not hear their names only as a correction when they have done something wrong. Instead, they should hear their names when they enter the classroom and regularly during instruction.

Where It Came From

Knowing and using student names is one aspect of an inclusive approach to teaching. Greeting students at the door is one way that teachers can use student names. In addition to fostering a sense of **belonging**, greeting students at the door increased **engagement** by 20 percentage points and decreased problematic behavior by 9 percentage points (Cook et al., 2018). In addition, students need to hear their names throughout the lesson to as invitations into discussions, when receiving **feedback**, and in interactions with the teacher (O'Brien et al., 2014).

Why It Matters

Knowing and using students' names is crucial in building a positive **classroom climate**. It fosters a sense of belonging and respect, making students feel valued and recognized as individuals. This simple act can significantly enhance student engagement, participation, and overall classroom dynamics, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere.

Guiding Question: Is the positive use of student names and greetings a habit among adults beyond the first week of the school year or semester?

Spot It Happening

- ❑ Observe the start of classes. Do teachers greet students by name as they enter? Do teachers greet students if they arrive late?
- ❑ Note the use students' names during the lesson. Are they pronounced correctly? Which names are said more often? Are there students whose names are never used?
- ❑ Ask students if they believe that their teacher knows their names.
- ❑ Are names used for correction of problematic behavior? If so, are those students' names also used in productive, positive ways?
- ❑ Are student names displayed in the classroom? If so, where and how?

Relationship 1. Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	All students are greeted by name upon arrival and most of their names are used throughout the lesson. The reactions of students when they hear their names suggests the teacher has a strong relationship with students.		
3	All students are greeted by name upon arrival. Many students hear their names in positive ways throughout the lesson. Students generally report that the teacher knows their names.		
2	Students are greeted at the beginning of class, but not by name. A small group of students have their names used during the lesson.		
1	Students are not greeted when they arrive. Student names are not used during the lesson. Names are used to address problematic behavior.		

Relationship 1. Students' names are used in positive and productive ways.

Watch, Notice, Wonder Video

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Watch, Notice, Wonder Notes

Coach's Lens Video

qrs.ly/u1gd9i5

Coach's Lens Notes

Notes

Relationship 2. Proximity is used to foster connections with students and ensure their learning.

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What It Is

Proximity is the physical distance between the teacher and students. It is one of the ways that teachers can proactively lead and manage the class as they move around the room, getting closer to students who might be at risk for disengaging in the lesson (Lampi et al., 2005). But proximity is also good for learning and **engagement** (Dong et al., 2021). Teachers can more directly observe the learning in progress and monitor the impact of the lessons when they are close to students at work.

Where It Came From

Proximity as a teaching tool has been recommended for decades (Good & Brophy, 1987). The evidence suggests that teachers should move within three feet of a student for it to be effective (Etscheidt et al., 1984). However, the teacher does not have to remain in close proximity to specific students to have an effect (Van Houten et al., 1982). Rather, teachers should circulate around the room in somewhat unpredictable patterns to interact with students, verbally or nonverbally, as part of the lesson (Gunter et al., 1995).

Why It Matters

Students may be distracted or temporarily disengaged, resulting in compromised learning. Proximity is a low-cost technique to monitor students' engagement in the learning and to collect evidence of the impact of lessons for possible adjustments to the learning. One challenge with the integration of technology is that teachers must be more creative in moving around the room when the technology is being used to support instruction.

Guiding Question: Is proximity used respectfully and proactively to engage and reengage students? Do teachers regularly circulate through the classroom?

Spot It Happening

- ❑ Using a seating map, track the movement of the teacher around their room. How many places and students are accessible to the teacher?
- ❑ Select three students at random and observe a lesson to determine if the teacher moved within three feet of the selected students.
- ❑ Notice the pattern of movement around the room. Is it highly predicable to students?
- ❑ When students appear to be distracted or beginning to disengage, does the teacher move to that general area and offer redirections?

Relationship 2. Proximity is used to foster connections with students and ensure their learning.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	The teacher moves around the room and gets within three feet of every student in the room, interacting with students as the lesson progresses.		
3	The teacher circulates around the room, interacting with students and offering feedback and support.		
2	The teacher moves around the front of the classroom and mostly attends to students in the front of the class.		
1	The teacher remains fixed in one part of the classroom (e.g., desk, lectern, board).		

Relationship 2. Proximity is used to foster connections with students and ensure their learning.

Watch, Notice, Wonder Video

qrs.ly/1bgd9fz

Watch, Notice, Wonder Notes

Coach's Lens Video

qrs.ly/9lgd9i6

Coach's Lens Notes

Notes

Relationship 3. Students' interactions with peers are respectful and productive.

qrs.ly/wrg1okv

What It Is

Respectful and positive **peer interactions** are an indicator of a safe learning environment. These peer interactions can be aligned with specific learning activities as well as general ways in which students interact in the classroom. The teacher establishes the **classroom climate** and can foster positive peer interactions (Nasi, 2022). In these cases, bullying is reduced, students share their ideas freely, and students learn more.

Where It Came From

Students who feel they belong in the class and school, including the feeling they are needed, befriended, and supported, are more likely to participate in lessons and learn more (e.g., Smith et al., 2024). As Johnson (1981) noted, "Experiences with peers are not a superficial luxury to be enjoyed during lunch and after school. Constructive student-student relationships are a necessity for maximal achievement, socialization, and healthy development" (p. 5).

Why It Matters

Students are more likely to be motivated to learn, to enjoy learning more, to feel more positive about the content being studied, and to be more accepting of one another when they work together with peers, as opposed to working competitively or individually (Johnson & Johnson, 2013). In terms of rigor, when the learning environment is emotionally, psychologically, and physically safe, students are more likely to engage in meaningful interactions, ask questions, and engage in **academic risk-taking** without fear of embarrassment or failure. This fosters deeper understanding, critical thinking, and the ability to collaborate effectively with peers, which are essential components of a rigorous educational experience.

Guiding Question: Are we teaching students how to have productive interactions with peers? These skills include team organization and roles, techniques for monitoring and repairing shared understanding, taking action on tasks, and evaluating their success in solving the problem.

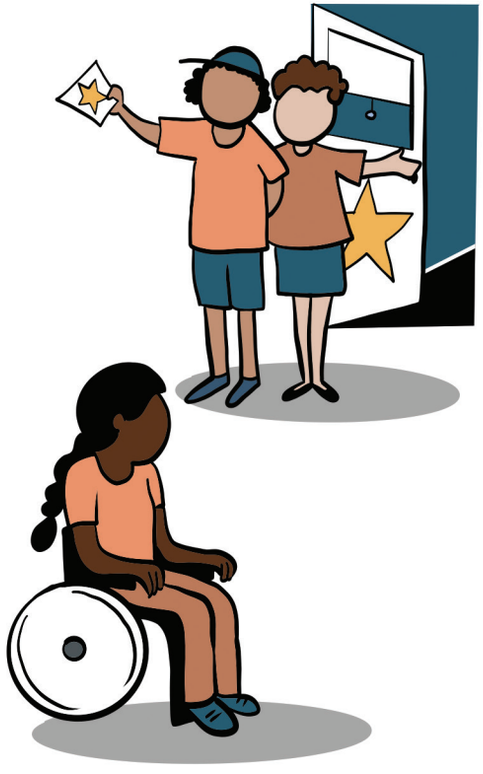
Spot It Happening

- ❑ Listen to student conversations. Are students comfortable sharing ideas? Do the conversations build on ideas and extend the thinking of the group?
- ❑ Look for classroom artifacts to support healthy student conversation, such as table tents with language frames, or use accountable talk procedures.
- ❑ Observe the physical and procedural classroom structures in place that encourage or discourage idea generation, the validation of ideas, and the thoughtful consideration of ideas.
- ❑ Watch how the teacher monitors small-group student discussion to redirect less productive dialogue and reinforce respectful interactions.

Relationship 3. Students' interactions with peers are respectful and productive.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	Students seek out peers for interactions in both formal and informal groups. The interactions are respectful and represent a give-and-take conversation in which students build on the ideas of others.		
3	Students interact with one another in both formal and informal groups. The interactions are productive and respectful.		
2	Students interact with a small group of peers, and these interactions are mainly confined to formal learning experiences in the class.		
1	Students are not encouraged or required to interact with peers during the lesson.		

Relationship 3. Students' interactions with peers are respectful and productive.



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Notes

Relationship 4. Academic risk-taking is encouraged and celebrated.

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What It Is

Learning requires a willingness to engage in tasks that may result in errors or failures. Tolerance for possible error or failure requires students to be willing to revise and persist when first attempts are not fully successful. This **academic risk-taking** (ART) is undermined by teacher expectations of error-free work coupled with praise and reward systems that cause students to associate teacher approval with flawless execution. ART is fostered in an environment that values the development of a **growth mindset** (Dweck, 2006) and is paired with a **productive failure** (sometimes called productive struggle) instructional approach that values long-term learning over proximal success (Kapur, 2016).

Where It Came From

Clifford (1988) described ART as a student's willingness to choose more challenging and difficult tasks. Observable demonstrations of ART include "sharing tentative ideas, asking questions during learning, and a willingness to learn new things" (Abercrombie et al., 2022, p. 2). Students who exhibit ART are not only willing to persist when struggle does occur, but they also possess a positive emotional outlook to engage in a challenging task to begin with.

Why It Matters

ART is understood to be an important component of **motivation** theory. It is also situational, in that a classroom environment that is not perceived as physiologically and emotionally safe by the student may cause the student to choose tasks that are below their current level but are safe from error. ART is necessary for students to engage in deep learning and is discouraged in classrooms that value reproduction of knowledge over critical thinking and co-construction of knowledge (Hübner & Pfost, 2024).

Guiding Question: In what ways is the classroom climate constructed to encourage academic risk-taking? How are we using language to foster ART?

Spot It Happening

- ❑ Observe how academic tasks are presented. Listen for language that encourages students to try new tasks in a way that sets the stakes low.
- ❑ Listen for teacher language that encourages speculation, especially in refraining from identifying student responses as correct or incorrect. Offering neutral responses to students, such as, "Interesting idea. Who can add to this?" keeps the discussion going.
- ❑ Watch for use of wait time, which allows all learners to cognitively engage and provides students with additional time to add ideas and questions.
- ❑ Examine classroom artifacts that convey grading and assessment practices that reward attempts, not just outcomes.
- ❑ Listen for regularly spaced intervals when students can pose questions and discuss concepts or procedures with each other and their teachers.
- ❑ Watch for spontaneous celebration when academic risk-taking is spotted.

Relationship 4. Academic risk-taking is encouraged and celebrated.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	Students have multiple opportunities to ask questions and think critically and speculatively about concepts being taught. They are encouraged to take on new tasks while lowering risk. Their efforts are praised rather than correctness of the work. Wait time is used regularly to foster thinking among all students. The grading system is similarly aligned to foster ART.		
3	There are more limited opportunities for students to ask questions and engage in critical discussion about the concepts being taught. There is some variance in what is praised or valued, either through teacher statements or the grading system. Wait time is used most of the time to foster thinking among all students.		
2	A more limited array of students participates in question formation and discussion, with most others left to passively observe. Tasks may be geared more to reproduction of knowledge rather than deep learning. Teacher praise is more commonly about the accuracy of the student response. Wait time is used more sporadically. The grading system may be oriented toward error-free learning but not to attempts.		
1	Teaching is primarily a one-way transmission model of knowledge reproduction at the expense of deep learning. Students have few opportunities to ask questions. Discussion is limited. Student responses are confirmed to a few, and wait time use is limited. Teacher praise is based on whether the answer is correct. The grading system does not allow for revision and additional attempts.		

Relationship 4. Academic risk-taking is encouraged and celebrated.

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Relationship 5. Student ideas are valued and explored as bridges to learning.

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What It Is

In some classrooms, students feel comfortable sharing their ideas. But in others, students are reserved and only respond when directly asked a question by the teacher. Listening to students' ideas demonstrates respect for students and allows teachers to consider what students already know and where the learning needs to go next. There are also more formal ways to solicit information from students, such as **empathy interviews** (e.g., Lewis et al., 2023), but regular classroom interactions demonstrate for students that their ideas are valued.

Where It Came From

Feeling accepted and believing that you have ideas to contribute are indicators of **belonging**, which is widely recognized as contributing to student achievement and well-being (e.g., Smith et al., 2024). In part, this relates to the research on **student voice** (e.g., Quaglia et al., 2020), which requires that students have opportunities to express their values, opinions, beliefs, and perspectives.

Why It Matters

Listening to, and acting upon, students' preferences, interests, and perspectives helps students feel invested in their own learning and fosters positive relationships between teachers and students (Toshalis & Nakkula, 2012). When students have a vested interest in their relationship with the teacher and their own learning, they are more likely to act in prosocial ways and to learn more as a result.

Guiding Question: How are we using language and classroom structures to signal that our students' ideas are valued?

Spot It Happening

- ❑ Observe the reaction of the teacher and students when ideas are shared. Do ideas seem to be valued?
- ❑ Listen to student discussions. Are ideas validated and challenged in ways that communicate the value of idea generation?
- ❑ Watch for opportunities for students' ideas to be explored in more depth. Listen for language from the teacher that encourages student speculation—for example, "That's an interesting thought. Tell us more about it."

Relationship 5. Student ideas are accepted and explored as bridges to learning.

My Rating		My Evidence	My Next Steps
4	The teacher has systemic ways for encouraging students to share their ideas. Students engage in discussions, and their ideas are validated, explored, and respectfully challenged.		
3	During class discussions, there is a free exchange of ideas, and many students contribute their thoughts. The conversations move forward, with students adding their ideas and offering constructive feedback to the ideas of others.		
2	Students share ideas with friends and the teacher when encouraged but rarely volunteer. Their ideas are considered, and others build on ideas.		
1	Students are criticized for their ideas and opinions by teachers or peers.		

Relationship 5. Student ideas are valued and explored as bridges to learning.

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