

## THE BIG ROCKS OF HIGH-EXPERTISE TEACHING

1. Identification of the most worthwhile objective, making sure the students understand it, and using it as the focus of the lesson

*This cluster of skills makes sure we milk the most worthwhile target out of the actual curriculum materials we are using, and that this target is appropriately challenging for the student in front of us.*

2. Error analysis of student work to deliver re-teaching to those who need it

*This cluster of skills gets inside of student errors and misunderstandings. It lays the indispensable groundwork for re-teaching effectively.*

3. Feedback and Criteria for Success

*This complex cluster of skills, one of the two highest impact levers on student achievement, provide students with a constant flow of non-judgmental information about how they are doing that they can use to get better.*

4. Making Students' Thinking Visible

*This cluster of 24 skills is the key to successful implementation of the Common Core. It creates a talk environment of safety, intellectual risk-taking, rigor, very high student participation. It is the way to create a "thinking classroom."*

5. Using a variety of cognitive strategies matched to content and students\*

*This array of related and mutually dependent skills bring a century of rock-solid cognitive science into the classroom to accelerate the rate and durability of student learning. [See Skillful Teacher, chapter on Clarity.]*

6. 50 Ways to Do Attribution Re-Training and Generate Student agency.

Consistent communication of the 3 critical messages re: effort-based ability

- This is important;



- You can do it;
- and I won't give up on you.

Effective Effort is what makes the difference. [Growth Mindset]

*This cluster of interdependent structures, practices, and interactive verbal skills makes students, especially low-performing, low-confidence students, believe that ability can be grown, that “Smart is something you can get” ...and it teaches them explicitly how to do so.*

## 7. Cultural Proficiency and Relationship Building

*These two arrays of related skills makes students feel authentically known and valued by their teachers*

## 8. Building a classroom climate of community, risk-taking, and ownership

*These complex skills build a psychological and interpersonal environment where students know and support one another.*

## 9. High volume of student reading/writing and explicit embedded literacy instruction including non-fiction writing with complex sentences\*\*

## 10. Direct vocabulary instruction and practice

\* Appropriately using Activators, Summarizers, Checking for Understanding, Explanatory Devices like Modeling Thinking Aloud, Mental Imagery, Graphic Organizers, visual Representations....

\*\* “Conjunctions for the Common Core”

Students use “although, nevertheless, however, unless, if, because, in spite of, depending on, despite,” etc. with fluency and accuracy in speaking, writing, and making arguments.



## **Skills Pertaining to Planning**

### 1. IDENTIFICATION OF THE MOST WORTHWHILE OBJECTIVE

High Expertise Teachers *dig deeply* into their content as they are planning lessons. Thus they identify the most worthwhile learning targets (**objectives**) in the materials and make sure the students know what they are. The hierarchy of concepts within the content is outlined. Student misconceptions and points of difficulty are anticipated and provided for in the lesson because the teacher did the student tasks him/herself. They also make sure the learning experiences the students do are logically aligned with the learning targets (**objectives**) and that the assessment will give good data about student mastery. The criteria for success are carefully thought out and understood and used by the students. The objective is communicated to the students in student-friendly language that also makes the learning seem relevant, and then it is unpacked with them to make sure the students understand the objective. Finally, the teacher makes the objective the focus of the lesson and returns frequently to it.

Understand the hierarchy of concepts in the packages of the content

- Then, look at your materials in depth. Read it; do a few problems; try it out...
- Then, find out where your students are in the hierarchy so you can pick the most worthwhile objective
- Then, communicate it to your students in student-friendly language that also makes the learning seem relevant.

### 2. ERROR ANALYSIS

High expertise teachers know how to study student work, all the way from standardized tests to work samples from yesterday's class. They can analyze student errors and identify gaps in student learning. Thus skillful ***error analysis leads directly to re-teaching*** for those students who didn't get it the first time around.

## **Skills Pertaining to Instruction**

### 3. FEEDBACK

High Expertise Teachers arrange for a constant **flow of *feedback*** to students on their performance. The feedback is non-judgmental and keyed to specific **criteria** the students are clear about. Thus the students can self-evaluate and use techniques they have been taught to set effective goals and plans of action to improve. They have exemplars of good performance to check in with and understand how the criteria are represented in the exemplars.

### 4. STUDENTS THINKING VISIBLE

High Expertise Teachers **make *students' thinking visible*** during class interaction by using a constellation of 24 interactive skills. Thus there is a high degree of student talk both with the teacher and with one another about the content at a high level of thinking.



The students are active thinkers with the content and the teacher gets a constant reading on who understands and who doesn't. In turn, the students are required to become good listeners to one another and be active processors of information.

5. COGNITIVE STRATEGIES (“Clarity”)

High Expertise Teachers have a **repertoire of research-based *cognitive strategies*** like visual imagery and modeling thinking aloud. These strategies, chosen to match the students, the curriculum and the content, make concepts and ideas clear and accessible to students. Thus when content needs re-teaching for students who didn't get it the first time around, the teacher has alternative approaches to use. Learning experiences are framed by “activators” and frequent “summarizers.” Checking for understanding is constant.

### **Skills Pertaining to Motivation**

6. ATTRIBUTION RE-TRAINING

High Expertise Teachers convince students to believe in ***“effort based ability”*** (*The Growth Mindset.*) instead of fixed ability. Thus they are constantly doing Attribution Retraining” and consistently sending the messages: **“What we're doing is important; you can do it; and I won't give up on you” (tenacity and perseverance.)** These messages are sent through daily interactive teacher behavior, through class structures and routines, and through policies and procedures. These teachers take it upon themselves to teach the students explicitly *how* to exert effective effort and to welcome error as normative and an opportunity for learning.

7. CLASS CLIMATE

High Expertise Teachers create a ***climate of community, risk-taking, and ownership*** among all their students. Thus the students know each other as people and have been taught the skills to cooperate and work as a team. The students feel safe to make mistakes and view errors as feedback, not judgments; thus they take academic risks and challenge themselves to do hard work. And the students have voice and ownership in constructing the “rules of the classroom game.” They have ownership of their learning through self-scoring, self-evaluation, and goal setting with plans of action.

8. CULTURAL PROFICIENCY AND PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

High Expertise Teachers make students ***feel known and valued.*** Thus they know about the students' life and culture and show an interest in their activities and success. Artifacts, books, and curriculum experiences connect to the students' culture. The unrelenting tenacity and high-expectations of teachers with low-performing students also becomes evidence to the student that the teacher thinks they are worthwhile.

### **Skills Pertaining to Literacy**

9. READING AND WRITING

High Expertise Teachers make ***literacy an embedded priority.*** Thus regardless of their subject or academic discipline, they ensure a high volume of quality reading and writing



about their content, and they scaffold the students' entry into text. Of particular importance, they are assiduous at facilitating "literate conversations" (Allington 2011) about the text and writing with complex sentences (*Writing Revolution*, Atlantic 10/2012.)

#### 10. VOCABULARY

High Expertise Teachers become committed and proficient in **vocabulary instruction**. Regardless of their academic discipline, they understand that the words and the concepts they represent are intimately related and indispensable to student learning, and that we make far too many assumptions about what words students understand. (Isabel Beck)

