

Table 3.1: High-Leverage Instructional Practices That Empower Students to Own Their Learning

Instructional Practice	Impact on Student Learning
<p>Using learning targets <i>Learning targets translate standards into student learning goals for lessons. They are written in student-friendly language that is concrete and understandable, beginning with the stem “I can.” Learning targets are posted, discussed, and tracked by students and teachers.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Learning targets set a course for learning: Students know where they are headed during the course of the lesson. » Learning targets contain embedded vocabulary. Unpacking the targets with students is an opportunity to teach new words, particularly academic vocabulary. » When learning targets are used actively during lessons, students gain valuable skills in setting goals, taking ownership of their learning, and reflecting on their progress. » Beyond mastery of standards, student ownership of and engagement with their learning is a higher-level goal of the curriculum.
<p>Checking for understanding <i>Checking for understanding goes hand in hand with using learning targets. Quick and frequent formative assessments allow you to adapt instruction quickly and respond to students’ needs in real time so that you can move forward if they are ready and help them get back on track if necessary.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Frequent formative assessments of student progress allow you to adapt instruction to meet students’ needs. » Getting students back on track quickly helps them sustain their confidence and effort, which leads to new learning. » Asking students to frequently self-assess their progress keeps them tuned in to their learning targets and further develops their ownership of their learning.
<p>Employing total participation techniques <i>The total participation techniques in the curriculum are used to solicit answers to questions or prompts from a wide variety of students. Rather than just calling on those students who may have their hands raised, these total participation techniques (e.g., Turn and Talk) challenge and hold accountable all students.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Total participation techniques demand accountability and attention from all students because anyone can be selected to offer their ideas at any time. » Especially when a positive classroom culture has been established, students who otherwise may have remained quiet have the chance to share ideas with a peer, small group, or the whole class. » Total participation techniques establish a sense of fairness for students: Rather than the “smart kids” or the “struggling kids” always being prioritized to be called on, all students have the same chance, voice, and expectation of active engagement.
<p>Fostering a culture of grappling <i>A culture of grappling is one in which students are supported to make meaning on their own or with peers, rather than being taught by a teacher first. In the curriculum, students often have a “first go” at something, particularly complex text, before teacher instruction or intervention. The idea is not to “give” students information or understandings that they can figure out on their own.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Students learn best when they can grapple with challenges that are within reach (i.e., productive struggle). If they are “spoon-fed” information, they won’t experience the joy that comes from figuring things out on their own, and they often won’t learn the concepts deeply. » Productive struggle supports students to build a growth mindset and take academic risks.

Cont.

<p>Using questions to promote—not just assess—student learning <i>In the curriculum, we view questions as a way to help students learn, not just as a way to assess their learning. Strategic questions can help “lift” students to an understanding of a challenging text or make sense of a tricky concept.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Asking open-ended questions, rather than those with “right” answers, gives students a chance to come up with their own ideas, individually or in collaboration with peers, and defend them with evidence. » Strategic questions can engage students more deeply in the lesson content, help them make connections, and require them to articulate their learning in their own words. » Strategic questions demand that students think deeply and critically, not just that they remember or relate to their own experience.
<p>Engaging students with protocols <i>The protocols in the curriculum are one of the key ways that students are engaged in discussion, inquiry, critical thinking, and sophisticated communication. There are a variety of protocols in the curriculum, and all offer a structure and a set of steps to help students talk to each other and dig deeper into text or ideas. Protocols can be used throughout the school day, in any classroom, to promote student engagement and discussion.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Protocols are one of the best ways we know to help students be leaders of their own learning. » Making meaning together enhances learning. Rather than looking to the teacher for answers and information, protocols help students learn to find those answers themselves and with the help of their peers. » Protocols are a great way for students to learn and practice speaking and listening skills and to build their habits of character.
<p>Deepening student discourse <i>Perhaps the best measure of an effective classroom is the quality of student conversation. With teacher modeling, Conversation Cues, sentence frames, consistent use of academic vocabulary, and a commitment by the teacher to draw out and celebrate student ideas, students can learn to have powerful analytical conversations at all grade levels.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » When students recognize that their ideas and opinions will be taken seriously by you and their peers—analyzed, critiqued, and built-upon—it lifts their commitment to sharing their best thinking. » Simple sentence frames can transform discussion in a classroom (e.g., “I would like to build on Chantelle’s idea”; “I appreciate that idea, but I respectfully disagree”; “Can you offer some evidence?”). » Prioritizing discourse in the classroom elevates student voice, develops their oral processing skills, and deepens their learning.
<p>Co-constructing anchor charts with students <i>Anchor charts make student thinking visible by recording content, strategies, processes, cues, and guidelines during the learning process. Students add ideas to posted anchor charts as they apply new learning, develop new understandings, and expand their knowledge of the topic. These charts reflect the current learning in the classroom, contain only the most relevant or important information, and are neat and organized, with simple icons and wording.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Posting anchor charts keeps relevant information easily accessible for all students, reminds them of prior learning, and enables them to add to their learning as it changes and expands. » Posting anchor charts provides students with support when answering questions, adding to discussions, and problem-solving in class. » English language learners and students who may need additional support with perception and information processing benefit from this kind of visual display as a varied means of representation. » Providing individual copies of anchor charts to students and/or customizing the display (e.g., enlarging the font; adding simple icons, definitions, or translations next to important words or ideas) also provides students with additional support.