

M1-S6: Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere

CLH	Hi Gina!
GK	Hi Christina! What are we talking about today?
CLH	We are talking about teaching today, like everyday. In fact, our session title is Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere.
GK	What do you think that's all about?
CLH	I think it's about this block many of us have about the last few years. We were suddenly disconnected from the thing that felt like school – you know, the actual school building, our classroom, our students. And we were required to make do with something pretty unfamiliar.
GK	I totally get that. The thing that we were good at – teaching kids in a classroom – we couldn't do that anymore. We had to carry on with this thing we weren't as good at. YET.
CLH	YET. So that makes me think about all the ways that teachers have actually made school happen, and have done excellent work, in ways that didn't fit the mold of traditional teaching.
GK	I just read an article about a teacher named Zekria Farzad that really inspired me. He lives in a refugee camp in Greece filled with thousands of refugees from Afghanistan, he is one of them. Even though Zekria was trained as a journalist and not a teacher in Afghanistan, he founded a school for the children of the refugee camp. They started by having school under an olive tree, talk about having nothing. Now they serve a thousand children in 3 rooms with very little of what we would call school supplies.
CLH	That's amazing. Human beings are so resilient and resourceful. And clearly there is something about excellent teaching that transcends space, time and equipment.
GK	Well, there's our opening, what do you think? What is good teaching, regardless of where and when it happens?
CLH	Glad you asked! In session 6, we are focusing on teaching practices that are shown to make the most difference in student learning outcomes. We'll be looking at effective teaching practices through the lens of portability– what do we already have in our back pockets that travels well when we move between learning environments?
GK	This is a great followup to our last session, where we looked at instructional planning for moving between modalities. So, based on what we know about planning, let's say we are entirely clear about the goal of each lesson. We have planned our lessons with the end in mind, and we have provided multiple means of engagement, representation and expression. Now it comes down to the art of

M1-S6: Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere

	teaching.
CLH	Yes and there is so much out there about high-impact teaching, it's kind of overwhelming. I think I've narrowed it down to three high-leverage strategies.
GK	Seriously, that's not bad.
CLH	Yes, but each strategy has about a BILLION teaching practices associated with it. So here's what I want to run through with you.
GK	I'm listening.
CLH	I'm going to lay three high level strategies on you, and then I'm going to pick one specific teaching practice that kind of exemplifies the strategy.
GK	But how will you pick? Aren't there like a billion choices?
CLH	There are, but we're here to focus on teaching practices that are portable, meaning they travel well between learning environments. So are you ready for high-level strategy number 1?
GK	Lay it on me.
CLH	<p>The first high-level teaching strategy is to create a student-centered classroom. In student-centered learning, students' interest drive education.</p> <p>Student-centered classrooms include students in planning, implementation, and assessments. Teachers have to change their leadership style from directive to being more like a consultant -so not as much "Do as I say" and a lot more "Based on your needs, let's co-develop and implement this plan of action."</p>
GK	OK, I have to admit I find that a little scary but also a little exciting. I have a thought for a teaching practice that falls under the category of student-centered classroom. Can I propose Academic Conversations as a specific teaching strategy that is student-centered AND is incredibly portable between environments?
CLH	You sure can! What's an Academic Conversation, and how is it not just...talking?
GK	You'll love the book "Academic Conversations: Classroom Talk That Fosters Critical Thinking and Content Understanding" by Zwiers and Crawford. It's in our resources. These two researchers identify 5 core conversation skills that students should use to transform their ordinary conversations, i.e, talking, into academic conversations. These skills are transformative, the skills are explicitly taught, that's the role of the teacher, they are practiced and scaffolded. The academic conversations aren't debate, they aren't about reaching one conclusion. Instead they're about exploration; they don't stop at the "I agree or I disagree with that", but they ask questions about the topic, leading to a deeper understanding of it from multiple points of view. In an Academic Conversation lesson, students explore the challenging topics they are

M1-S6: Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere

	<p>passionate about using learned skills that the teacher helps them practice. That's what makes it student-centered, it allows them to push through some of their own limitations about having really high-level conversations about the things they care about.</p>
CLH	<p>That sounds really applicable for my middle school ELA classes. Can I ask what are the 5 core skills? I mean I know I definitely have to dig into the resources on this, but what's the headline?</p>
GK	<p>Yup, here they are:</p> <p>Teaching students to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Elaborate and clarify -Support their ideas with examples -Build on or challenge their partners idea -Paraphrase -Synthesize <p>So you can see how this is operating at a really high level.</p>
CLH	<p>Okay, the second high level strategy is to thoughtfully examine the roles of physical space and teacher role in student learning. This sort of gets to what we were talking about earlier – that we're used to school being a physical place and the teacher occupying a certain role. That speaks right to teaching across learning environments.</p>
GK	<p>Well, I've been in education for a long time so I have a possibly calcified idea of what my role is as a teacher: Our primary responsibility is to develop engaging, meaningful educational experiences that allow students to solve meaningful problems and then be able to show they have learned big ideas, powerful skills, and habits of mind and heart that meet agreed-upon educational standards. Is that anywhere close to the role of a teacher?</p>
CLH	<p>Yes that sounds about right, I mean, it's a big ask but it is the practice of checking for understanding.</p> <p>A critical role of the teacher is to use frequent checks to make sure that the target learning is happening. Checking for understanding is the teacher continually verifying that students are learning what is being taught while it is being taught. CFU provides the teacher this opportunity to improve learning throughout the whole process.</p>
GK	<p>OK, I got that, so if the high-level strategy is to check for our role, one of the actual practices is to make sure that our role is constantly checking for understanding, we always have to be hooked into learning outcomes. Check for understanding has been around for a really long time, it's tried and true. What are some of your favorite ways</p>

M1-S6: Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere

	to check for understanding?
CLH	Well when I had students both in class and online, we did a lot of Kahoots and we did some google quizzes, like an exit ticket at the end. Something I always really like is the post-it on their desk. At the end I always ask them to leave a post-it on their desk before they go. I'll ask them a quick question and when I'm online, that works with Jamboard. The main thing that I learned is that checking for understanding does not have to be a paper-and-pencil assessment. The best checks are quick, embedded, and they do not have to stop instruction. They travel well they have that portability between in-person and remote learning.
GK	And that's what we're here to talk about today. OK! Bring us on home. What's the 3rd high level instructional strategy that gets the most bang for the buck? We had student-centered classroom, we had close examination of teacher role and physical space. What is the third one?
CLH	The last high-level teaching strategy is relationship building. In Session 3 of this module, we learned that strong relationships with teachers and school staff can dramatically enhance students' level of motivation and therefore promote learning. Students who have access to more strong relationships are more academically engaged, have stronger social skills, and experience more positive behavior.
GK	You are playing my song. I have a great example of a relationship building teaching practice.
CLH	Go for it friend.
GK	Alright, so you know I am really into restorative justice practices, the tier one restorative practice is Community Building Circle. Community building circle is one of the methods of restorative justice in education. Little backfill: restorative practices focus on resolving conflict , repairing harm, and healing relationships. They are the opposite of sort of dropping the hammer with an automatic punitive response. One of the pieces of evidence that is emerging about restorative practices is that they support a positive and safe school climate, prevent bullying , and reduce disciplinary incidents and office referrals overall. And, restorative practices operate at both the preventive and responsive level. So you can use some of those practices after an incident harm and one of them is proactive. That is community-building circle practice. You sit in a circle, and the Circles are structured discussions designed by the teacher to build, strengthen and maintain relationships among students and teachers. Circles are planned like lessons, they have group agreements and predictable routines. One of the benefits of dedicating time to restorative circles is the reward of getting to know your students well.

M1-S6: Excellent Teaching Happens Everywhere

CLH	<p>That reminds me of a quote I came across recently by a teacher named Marieka Van Woerkom. She says:</p> <p>“Our students come to school with many issues on their minds and in their hearts. As educators, we can help them process their thoughts and feelings so they can better handle their situations and be more present in class.”</p>
GK	<p>I love that, the whole idea of Empty the Cup. There was a book that came out maybe 10 years ago, called “Empty the Cup”, and it’s about just pouring off the top, all the things you’re holding on to, so you can be more present in class and more available for learning, that’s the reason to do it! That is so wise. I appreciate that kind of thinking so much. Well, that’s about it for this session. Thank you for the talk, Christina!</p>
CLH	<p>Yes, thank you! And thank you, listeners. Bye everyone.</p>