

# The Teaching Playbook: the role and practice of our best Great Hearts teachers

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# I. Teacher Formation

*In this work of the teacher, the focus is attending to one's own development (rather than the students'). We can only teach from who we are, what we love, and what we know; we must, therefore, engage life-long learning in service to our vocation. As such, we manifest the virtue of wisdom in cultivating life aesthetically, morally, and intellectually. The teacher must continually explore the broader tradition, his own subject(s), and the craft of teaching. In submitting oneself continually to the study of these things in a spirit of humility, the teacher is well-prepared to serve others in the classroom. David Hicks notes, "Schools are places where students learn because they are places where teachers learn. Only a school (and by extension a curriculum) that encourages teachers to be always learning will keep its teachers fresh and fearless and its students happy and motivated in their studies, ready to test their lessons against life." (Norms and Nobility, vii).*

## A. Delighting in the Tradition

Preparing one's heart

An essential part of one's love of the true, the good, and the beautiful is a recognition that we teach in the context of something much bigger than us – not only the Great Hearts mission but also a classical tradition of educating hearts and minds that extends throughout history. We love moments of wonder spurred by the tradition we encounter with each other and our students. We believe a love of the liberal arts allows us to delight in freedom. As Chesterton said, "[T]radition is only democracy extended through time. It is trusting to a consensus of common human voices rather than to some isolated or arbitrary record." ([Orthodoxy](#))

### 1. The Western Tradition

As young Americans, all of our students are heirs of a great tradition, and the Great Hearts academies see our purpose as primary and secondary schools to form young Americans in this intellectual and cultural heritage—to help them to grow roots that probe deeply into the soil of science, math, history, literature, philosophy, and fine arts, and that have made the West a distinct culture over time and place.

*C.f. [Glossary](#): Tradition, Western Tradition; Classical Tradition*

### 2. Liberal and Fine Arts

“The utilitarian or servile arts enable one to be a servant and to earn a living. The liberal arts, in contrast, teach one how to live; they train the faculties and bring them to perfection; they enable to person to rise above his material environment to live an intellectual, a rational, and therefore a free life in gaining truth.” (Miriam Joseph, *The Trivium*)

“The method of liberal education is the liberal arts, and the result of liberal education is discipline in those arts. The liberal artist learns to read, write, speak, listen, understand, and think. He learns to reckon, measure, and manipulate matter, quantity, and motion in order to predict, produce, and exchange. As we live in the tradition, whether we know it or not, so we are all liberal artists, whether we know it other not. We all practice the liberal arts, well or badly, all the time every day.... The question, in short, is whether he will be a poor liberal artist or a good one.” (Robert M. Hutchins, *The Great Conversation: The Substance of a Liberal Education*. 4-5)

- a. The Liberal Arts: We have inherited an ancient tradition of academic study that nurtures the intellectual and moral development of students.
  - The Trivium (Arts of the Mind): Grammar, Logic, Rhetoric

- The Quadrivium (Arts of Matter): Arithmetic, Music, Geometry, Astronomy
- b. The Fine Arts: To complement and complete the liberal arts, we tend to the creative arts in order to nurture the aesthetic development of students.
- Music Performance, Painting, Literature, Drama, Architecture, Dance, Sculpture (N.B. the last three domains are not practiced within the GH curriculum)

C.f. [Glossary](#): Liberal Arts

### 3. Great Ideas and Great Books

At Great Hearts we are in pursuit of truth, goodness, and beauty, as values by which we judge the three ideas that make for the good community, as the Greeks believed: justice, liberty, and equality. These are ideas by which we try to teach and live. Therefore, the pursuit of knowledge, the shaping of conduct, and the aspiration of governance are best judged by the application of truth, goodness, and beauty.

*“Schooling is essentially humanistic only to the extent that it is tinged with philosophy – with an introduction to the great ideas...”*

*The words that name the great ideas...constitute the basic vocabulary...of human thought. If philosophy is everyone’s business, then...everyone should be able to engage, to some extent, in intelligent discourse about the object of thought under consideration.”* (Mortimer Adler, *Six Great Ideas*)

*“Liberal education will consist in studying with the proper care the great books which the greatest minds have left behind – a study in which the more experienced pupils assist the less experienced pupils, including the beginners...We are compelled to live with books. But life is too short to live with any but the greatest books.”* (Leo Strauss, “What is Liberal Education?”)

These are books that constitute the essential foundation of our heritage in the literature of Western culture. We encourage our students to engage deeply with the classics. We find treasured wisdom and resounding beauty by studying carefully what these authors still have to say to us today.

C.f. [Glossary](#): Great Ideas, Truth, Goodness, Beauty Great Books

Further Resources:

[The Great Hearts Pillars](#)

[The Great Hearts Six Loves](#)

<p><b>B. Immersing in the Content</b> <i>Preparing one's mind</i></p>	<p>A significant part of preparing oneself for the classroom is sinking deeper into the discipline – to love learning mathematical ideas (even if those ideas are never presented explicitly to students). Teachers seek to cultivate and therefore must manifest a sense of wonder and a depth of inquiry. They start with a fundamental characteristic of curiosity and imagination and believe they can deepen their own love and understanding of their own content area.</p> <p>“In order to teach, [teachers] must know what they teach and know how to teach it...deeply and well ... and, if possible under the demanding conditions that face so many teachers, it requires mastery of a subject” (Banner and Cannon, <u><a href="#">The Elements of Teaching</a></u>, 7).</p>
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1. **Content Knowledge** (on an adult level)

As Newman describes, “all branches of knowledge are connected together, because the subject-matter of knowledge is intimately united in itself” (Discourse V). This is a fundamental assumption that helps us as teachers to attain truth and deeply influences us as individual learners. “The profession of teaching is both a learned profession and a profession of learning... The best teachers are those who not only perfect what they’re teaching through practice of its arts, but who also deepen their grasp of the subjects they are teaching by further study of those subjects.” (“The Schooling of a People”, Mortimer J. Adler)

a. **Disciplinary Content Knowledge**

In the spirit of liberal learning, teachers should seek an in-depth understanding of their discipline that goes beyond what they will be required to present to their students and accept opportunities to further their own knowledge. While not a firm requirement, a good rule of thumb is to master content knowledge 4 years beyond one’s current teaching assignment.

b. **Interdisciplinary Content Knowledge**

Teachers should seek an appreciation and understanding of knowledge beyond their discipline and know which other disciplines within the tradition influence their own. They should be presented with continual opportunities of further understanding of interrelated disciplines.

2. **Curricular Knowledge**

We intentionally and humbly draw from a tradition that predates us within the disciplines of science, math, history, literature, philosophy, and fine arts. Our curriculum is never separated from our pedagogy; what we teach is intimately related to how we teach.

a. **Hierarchy of Instruction within a Discipline**

The *telos* of working with students is to deepen their understanding and exploration in the discipline. There is a hierarchy of what teachers are fostering within the student. See appendix for more details.

*C.f.* [Hierarchy of Instruction within a Discipline](#)

**b. Instructional Goals**

These are the overarching annual goals for the students and content. Teachers need to be aware of where they start and finish the curriculum.

*C.f. [Great Hearts Philosophy of the Disciplines](#)*

**c. Scope and Sequence**

Depth/breadth of each course of study for each discipline/grade and the order and pace at which the content is taught, including vertical and horizontal alignment.

*C.f. [Great Hearts Core Curriculum Documents](#)*

<p><b>C. Seeking Mastery in the Craft</b> <i>Preparing one's hands</i></p>	<p>Every professional has tools he uses within his craft. And the work of learning the craft first involves the art of imitation – imitating the best materials, practices, and craftsmen (other experienced teachers). Just as we submit to the tradition, we submit to the guidance of those experienced mentors to help us improve. Of course, becoming more concrete or specific in training, observation, and feedback is never intended to squeeze the life or personality of a teacher. All teachers will have areas of strength and unique approaches. Mentorship, training, and coaching are designed to help teachers understand how to fill out the role of the teacher and also to identify areas of proficiency and love and areas for growth.</p>
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**1. Principles of Learning and Pedagogy – general and subject-specific**

Education has as its end the formation of the human person. While education is a lifelong endeavor, a true education prompts its charge to a full and flourishing life. A proper education seeks to form students who are morally, intellectually, and aesthetically alive. Curriculum and pedagogy are not divided; both are intentional. Rooted in the tradition, equipped with content framework, and informed by an understanding of human development, teachers will be empowered with practical skills and tools to engage in their daily practice of teaching successfully.

**a. Broad Principles of Classical Pedagogy**

Teachers should master instructional pedagogy and its principles at all levels. Examples of such principles are Order, High Standards, Making Haste Slowly, Much Not Many, and Wonder.

*C.f. [Glossary: Pedagogy](#)*

**b. Subject-Specific Pedagogy**

While many best practices stretch across grade levels and subject areas, the content taught dictates many elements of the form of teaching. Art classes are not conducted in the same manner as Humane Letters classes. Part of a teacher's role is to determine the best mode of delivery within a particular content area.

*C.f. [Great Hearts Philosophy of the Disciplines](#)*

c. **Theories of Human Nature, Development, and Learning**

Teachers should seek a basic knowledge of human nature and be presented with continual opportunities to deepen their understanding of it. To ask questions such as what is human nature? What is true about children regardless of the specific circumstances or context in which they live? These are practical principles to enact and not just theoretical knowledge of children’s psychology. While we do not believe that reading treatises on the psychology of children is the primary matter of preparing to teach well, we do believe that mentorship in and reflection on the needs of children at various stages of development is worthwhile. As Aristotle notes, we should pay attention to the sayings and experience of wise persons. Abstract theory can inform our teaching, but must not become a burden that compels us to engage in psychoanalysis of children’s behavior.

- Anthropology
- General Development and Its Stages and Different Manifestations of General Development (age, gender, etc.)

2. **Practice of the Craft**

Knowledge of theory does not ensure successful practice of its application. Teachers know that teaching is a practical science, and craft requires careful practice of the skills required as well as thoughtful implementation of wisdom within the classroom.

“If a human being were a machine . . . the work of the educator would be simply to adopt a good working system or set of systems. But the educator has to deal with a self-acting, self-developing being, and his business is to guide, and assist in, the production of the latent good in that being, the dissipation of the latent evil, the preparation of the child to take his place in the world at his best, with every capacity for good that is in him developed into a power. Though system is highly useful as an instrument of education, a ‘system of education’ is mischievous, as producing only mechanical action instead of the vital growth and movement of a living being.” (Charlotte Mason, *Home Education* pp. 9-10)

- a. **Professional Development**
- b. **Coaching and Mentoring**

Other Resources:

Site-based coaches (Admin, Master and Lead Teachers)

Network Instructional Coaches

Network-wide and academy-based training, team meetings, etc.

## II. Culture

*Teachers should strive to cultivate an ethos in their classroom that is unified with the overall school culture, engaged in the vision of Great Hearts and in keeping with the Western Tradition. The fundamental aim of our culture is virtue. By virtue we refer to the classical notion of arête or habits of excellence (moral, intellectual and physical). Our culture must draw our students to a love and hunger for virtue. This common school culture grants our students a shared identity of true excellence. This is realized only through the intentional cultivation of the minds, hearts, and physical being of each student. We strive to cultivate curiosity, order, and joy, allowing students to focus on the rich content being learned and to develop friendship with others. When working with students, we must consider two things:*

- *Every student has a personal will. A student's will can be weak or strong; it can be oriented toward virtue or vice; it can be engaged, enticed, and even developed to pursue the good. However, it should not be entirely avoided or over-run by the teacher.*
- *We trust that within students there is an innate love of the good and a desire to pursue it. We believe that with enough time, students can and will be drawn toward a pursuit of the good if they continually see someone else delighting in the good and presenting it in its proper glory. That leads to unquenchable good will.*

*Note: this description of culture largely surrounds the teacher's relationship with students directly and thus largely describes the classroom. However, the teacher should recognize their central role in the larger culture of the school.*

*C.f. Glossary: [Culture](#)*

## A. Setting the Conditions

### Working the soil

By appropriately setting the environment and expectations, we call students up toward the good and help prepare the academy and the classroom for interactions of order, focus, and joy. Taking proactive measures, we communicate expectations for the students and ourselves as teachers through the purposeful use of space, routines, and presence. In cultivating expectations into habits, the teacher plants the seed for all other growth.

1. **Classroom and Community Space** – orient toward the true, the good, and the beautiful, and minimize distractions. A structured environment should facilitate trust, community, and joy.
  - a. **Everything in its Place:** teacher, student, supplies all arranged for the best possible interactions - functional and aesthetic. Define boundaries and allow the space to communicate and facilitate proper activity - a place where each student can encounter beauty, explore truth, and practice good.
    - Minimize blind spots; C.f. Be Seen Looking (TLC 390-392)
    - Functional arrangement of materials, furniture, and supplies
    - Archways: rows and columns
  - b. **Aesthetics:** wall décor points to the True, the Good, and the Beautiful; it is aesthetically pleasing; it conveys a sense of order; it is relevant to the content being studied. It is an environment free from distraction or any toxic influence but rather creates a kind of sacred space in which the noblest and most lasting things are present and in proper balance.
    - Beware of overstimulation; Aristotelian mean (not crowded and not Spartan)
    - Limited to no "teacher store" materials; very little homemade items
    - If students are going to stare at it for hours, it should be worth staring at for hours

*C.f. [Great Hearts Classroom and Hallway Aesthetics](#)*

2. **Procedures and routines:** Order is important. We form habits of behavior and interaction that liberate the community from unnecessary, tiresome exertions of will. When a strong culture is in place, we can also build tradition and ceremony in the classroom. Aristotle: "Excellence is not an act but a habit"  
Charlotte Mason: "[T]he effort of decision is the most exhausting effort of life" (Vol. I, pg 100)
  - a. **Design:** Design classroom expectations toward efficient procedures and harmonious interactions.

- b. **Practice:** Procedures practiced to efficiency or mastery form a substrate of effortless ways of being; practice is always seen as an opportunity to pursue excellence with diligence - not drudgery. Well-executed routines offer opportunity for mastery and therefore pride through accomplishment and competence.
- Model and Describe. With older students, discuss the reason and purpose as necessary. It may also make sense at times to involve them (though this should be rare).
  - Engineer Efficiency (TLC 361-365)
  - Positive Framing (TLC 426-433; 448-449)
  - We describe correct behavior rather than focus on misbehaviors and their consequences; assume positive intent; and provide direct, concise corrections when necessary.
  - What to Do (TLC 417-420) – directions given to students short, specific, concrete, sequential, observable
  - Strategic Investment (TLC 365-372)
  - Do It Again (TLC 372-376)
- c. **Execute and Evolve:** When a baseline of good procedures are in place, we maintain them as needed but also reassess the habits they are forming and pointing toward. We may adjust as students grow and change or loosen them to meet further growth.
- C.f. [Essay – Developing Habits that Lead to Virtue](#)
- C.f. [Economy of language](#)
- C.f. [GH Teacher Resource Portal PD: Classroom Culture](#)

3. **Teacher-Embodied Ethos:** A teacher’s authority and presence in the classroom will stem primarily from a knowledge of and passion for the subject area and virtue. A teacher can further demonstrate and promote the Good through strategic communication with and disposition toward students. The approaches and techniques listed below do not represent the whole of the ethos of a teacher - rather, they come from the whole.

*“One fine day two Crabs came out from their home to take a stroll on the sand. ‘Child,’ said the mother, ‘you are walking very ungracefully. You should accustom yourself to walking straight forward without twisting from side to side.’*

*‘Pray, mother,’ said the young one, ‘do but set the example yourself, and I will follow you.’ –Aesop, “Two Crabs”*

- a. **Gravitas** – dignity, sense of weightiness of the matter, depth of personality
- “His body did not just occupy space; it seemed to organize the space around it”*  
(Description of George Washington by one of his biographers, as quoted by Joseph J. Ellis, Founding Brothers)
- Warm/strict (TLC 438-439)
  - Firm calm finesse (TLC 403-406) – environment of purpose and respect
  - Strong voice (TLC 412-416)
  - Make compliance visible (TLC 393-394)
  - Dynamic verbal modulation (tempo, volume/intensive)
  - Radar / Be Seen Looking (TLC 387-392) / Court Sense: 360 awareness – see students misbehaving and have them see you seeing.



- Emotional Constancy (TLC 439-442); Avoid Socrates’ criticism of Meno: "you desire to rule others, but you can’t even rule yourself."
- b. **Invitational Joy** – a passion and sense of life that is ordered to the good; it’s contagious *“Pippin glanced in some wonder at the face now close beside his own, for the sound of that laugh had been gay and merry. Yet in the wizard’s face he saw at first only lines of care and sorrow; though as he looked more intently he perceived that under all there was a great joy: a fountain of mirth enough to set a kingdom laughing, were it to gush forth.”* (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)
  - Wit and humor (but no buffoonery); mild self-effacement as appropriate; almost never sarcasm
  - Inspiration - the teacher should model an authentic sense of wonder, unadulterated by cynicism, and inspire that sense of wonder among the students
  - Passion and energy of the teacher for the subject at hand
  - Threshold (TLC 353-356, 368-369)
- c. **Virtue (intellectual and moral)** - commitment to excellence.
  - Model Speech - proper grammar, precision of vocabulary, accurate pronunciation
  - Actively Listen - fully engaged eyes, face; real reaction and response
  - Expectant, "I know you can do it" tone
  - The teacher’s character is imparted to the students.

<p><b>B. Growing Culture</b> Establishing and nourishing</p>	<p>Interactions with students present a constant interplay back and forth between teacher and student. Throughout this engagement (full of challenges, setbacks, recommitments, and epiphanies), the steady work and perseverance of the teacher is to cultivate intellectual and moral habits. This is where the art of teaching and our soul-crafting of students is most at stake, the essence of what we do.</p>
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1. **Culture of Learning** - cultivating curiosity, inquiry, and intellectual humility - a pursuit of beauty and goodness not divorced from a relentless pursuit of truth
  - a. **Active High Expectations** (active thing that is ongoing) - invite/expect student intellectual engagement and high participation; high accountability: compelling but not threatening; this rests on the belief that there is truth to be known.
    - No Opt Out (TLC 87-100)
    - Right is Right (TLC 103-107); not all student comments treated as equally valid or beyond criticism
    - Growth Mindset (Dweck 115-116, 434-435)
    - When learning is harder, it’s stronger and lasts longer. The more effort needed to recall a memory, the longer it will last. As student mature, we explain how learning works and that difficulties make learning stronger (“desirable difficulties”). (Make It Stick)
    - Communicate to students: "This is important. You can do it with effective effort. I won’t give up on you"
    - We know that even small actions of students in class can be tied to a higher good. For example, sitting quietly in the classroom is not just about preventing interruptions but also a practice for a student in self-control.

- We do not let students pigeon-hole themselves. All are capable of liberal learning.
- b. **Deep Inquiry and Logical Diligence** - relentless pursuit and submission to a higher sense of truth; not resting on what we have as the end of truth or being satisfied with superficial answers. We don't seek to make reckless statements of "truth" but always seek the deeper why behind our ideas. We seek connections to other ideas and ultimately seek to know how we arrived at our current conclusion and how to move forward into a deeper understanding of the underlying truth. Knowing is not just a factual download but actual understanding.
  - c. **Aporia<sup>1</sup> and Intellectual Humility** - a desire to revisit, revise, improve our understanding and our conclusions. This humility must be combined with the courage and willingness to "put oneself out there" in one's pursuit of what is true. *Now the beginning of discipline is humility. Although the lessons of humility are many, the three which follow are of especial importance for the student: first, that he hold no knowledge and no writing in contempt; second, that he blush to learn from no man; and third, that when he has attained learning himself, he not look down upon everyone else*" (The Didascalicon of Hugh of St. Victor, 94–95).
    - Culture of Error (TLC 64-72, 81) – students feel safe making mistakes and see the value of contributing to learning. Making mistakes and correcting them builds bridges to advanced learning. Failure is part of the path to learning and the effort given to attempts need to be embraced to open up students to the learning process. (Make It Stick)
    - We must as teachers and students seek to acknowledge any problematic assumptions we might have that prevent our pursuit of the truth
    - Teacher modeling: acknowledging when he does not know something
2. **Culture of Community** – the teacher facilitates a sense of community among students, other teachers and parents through modeling right speech and listening (with students, other teachers, and parents) as well as guiding students' actions in class and outside of class in the pursuit of proper relationships in a community. One of the key elements of teaching is looking to the long-term future of relationships – even, perhaps, beyond a student's graduation.
    - a. **Community in Conversation:** Students interact through respectful dialogue and maintain a discipline of thoughtful listening.
      - They will develop their own voice in our classrooms. Speech is a learned habit.
    - b. **Community Roles and Servant Leadership:** Students develop the philosopher king's willingness to go back and serve others; love heroes that have gone before us and want to be served also. Recognize the needs of others, specifically and broadly. Sometimes that means taking up a good fight; sometimes that means serving or persuading others of truth; sometimes that means laying down one's life. This includes knowing proper moments of submitting to authority and assuming authority. In kindergarten they are primarily pursuing obedience but should take pride in being kind to others and picking up trash; by the time they are seniors they should pursue wisdom in knowing how to care

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<sup>1</sup> Greek word meaning "without passage" – a place where one admits he/she is stuck. In the Platonic dialogues, Socrates often brings his interlocutor to this place – to admit he does not know – in order to start building true knowledge.

and fight for the good of others, and yet obedience is still a worthwhile virtue to pursue as young adults.

*“[T]he good citizen ought to ... know how to govern like a freeman, and how to obey like a freeman — these are the virtues of a citizen.” (Aristotle, Book 3, Part 4)*

- c. **Virtue:** key ideas here include heroism, charity, and responsibility. Students must accept that they make mistakes in their pursuit and pursue heroism with humility.
- d. **Community rituals and traditions:** rituals and traditions tell students both that they are part of a unique community with a specific identity and that they are part of something that is bigger than themselves (for example, all students might partake in a tradition that all students from that classroom have experienced each year for many years).
  - Classroom greetings or songs, annual poem memorization, class celebrations (Rome Day, Pioneer Day)
  - Often evident at Threshold (TLC 353-356, 368-369)

### 3. Culture of Love

- a. **Love for the Students** – the work of leading students is always an act of love. As such we lead with the positive as a reminder that we are aspiring to the good (rather than fighting against the bad or ugly). This includes framing our directions and correction around what is the ideal and cultivating language of right speech regarding others. It is more joyful to learn with others than it is to do this alone.

“Happiness is a certain kind of activity of the soul in accordance with complete virtue.”(Ethics, 1102a)

- Positive Framing (TLC 426-433, 448-449) and What To Do\* (TLC 417-420)
  - Disciplined refraining from sarcasm toward the subject of the lesson, the text, or people
  - Never underestimate the value of good will. Our sincere care for our students as unique individuals worthy of love is necessary in order to guide our students in their growth in virtue.
- b. **Love for the Subject Matter** – we build a culture of wonder and delight for the ideas we have the privilege of exploring. It is a joyful thing to learn about the wonders of the human experience.
    - Teacher modeling passion and curiosity; dynamic tempo and voice; Without Apology (TLC 122-125)
    - Highlighting intrigue of the idea; intellectual suspense or drama; moments of "Eureka!" cultivated and encouraged
    - Students ask questions of their own

### C. Responding in Love

Promoting further growth - sometimes by weeding and pruning, sometimes through warmth and radiance.

As teachers interact with individual students, they must remember their goal is to foster the growth of virtuous habits of heart and mind within the child. It is the case that all students are endowed with a will of their own which must be acknowledged and an inherent dignity which must be honored, and that both of these elements of their person are in need of formation. It is essential, therefore, that teachers always strive to respond to students wisely, ever aiming for their ultimate good. The wise teacher's well-chosen words apply the appropriate mixture of mercy and justice, forbearance and assertiveness. Said another way, our teachers seek to respond at the proper time, in the proper tone, with the proper measure, and with the proper words.

“If a human being were a machine, education could do no more for him than ... to adopt a good working system or set of systems.

But the educator has to deal with a self-acting, self-developing being, and his business is to guide, and assist in, the production of the latent good in that being, the dissipation of the latent evil, the preparation of the child to take his place in the world at his best, with every capacity for good that is in him developed into a power” (Vol. 1, p. 9).

1. **Shining the Light on Right Action:** we celebrate, thank, acknowledge, and praise in the right moments and in the right proportion in order to illuminate virtue.
  - a. **Acknowledgement:** We acknowledge students who meet expectations.
  - b. **Gratitude:** We offer gratitude freely.
  - c. **Praise:** We offer Precise Praise (TLC 423, 433-437) when our expectations have been exceeded. The right actions of students are praised and in the right measure; praise is not overblown or directed at things that provide judgment to the identity of the student or are not within the student's power to control.
    - Praise can be public or private while criticism is only private
    - Teachers see patterns of performance and know how to call students up to the good (and improvement for each student); this requires knowing your students
    - Acknowledgement vs. praise ([TLC Field Notes](#))
  - d. **Celebration:** We celebrate what is noteworthy in our subject, colleagues, and students.
  
2. **Observation and Decision to Engage:** The first step to responding appropriately is to “look,” to observe what is being done or said - its intent, its context, and its causes in so far as they are observable. This is hard and requires great attentiveness. Observing and attending are the fundamental acts of mind to which we call our students, so it is necessary also that we model these as well.
  - a. **Look and inquire:** When misbehavior (or positive behavior) occurs, we do not look away because we are afraid of conflict; rather, it is an act of love to engage a student as an emotional being (not just physical and intellectual). However, at the same time, this does not mean that we always engage.
    - Avoid “why did you do that”
    - Be Seen Looking (TLC 390-392); Make Compliance Visible (TLC 393-394)

- b. **Understand:** the ability to understand causes of various behaviors without trying to be a psychoanalyst. Likely categories of attribution: what can be observed and what happened (e.g. words, actions, facial expressions, and impact on others).
  - c. **Illuminate:** Especially younger students do not see why they are misbehaving and it is often helpful to aid them in this understanding. In addition, we always help them see how their actions impeded the work of the classroom and the pursuit of the good (for others and themselves).
3. **Promoting Justice and the Good through Discipline:** Discipline is an act of love and is always serving the good of the student; teachers must strive to maintain unquenchable good will. We know that students will make mistakes in their pursuit of the good and mistakes provide a prime opportunity for growth.
- “Punishment and correction should never be insulting. It should be undertaken in accordance with what is useful to the republic, not to the one who administers the punishment or reprimand... Our prayer should be that those in charge of the republic be like the laws, which are led to punish not through anger, but through fairness.” (Cicero, De Officiis, 1.88).*
- a. **A prudent disposition:** we know there is a difference between a student’s behavior and his character. Further, in discipline, we know the goal is character above immediate behavior modification. We fundamentally affirm the dignity of the student. We will be patient with repeated offenses. Teachers may show emotion in these conversations, but always in accord with reason (keeping in mind the ethos (appeal through one’s character) and pathos (appeal through emotion) of rhetoric (see appendix)).
    - We are not afraid of calling out evil behavior or noting wrongdoing.
    - Believing in the good does not mean that we are not surprised when children or teenagers make a mistake or act inappropriately.
  - b. **Reminders of expectations and correction:** always oriented toward their good
    - Appropriate reminders of scholarly position, behavioral standards, etc.
    - Positive Framing (TLC 426-433); Do It Again (TLC 372-376)
    - Redirection
    - Tying correction back to examples to emulate
    - No wasted words / No Empty Questions – reduce teacher talk/verbosity or questions not meant to be answered (“Is anyone listening right now?”)
    - Least Invasive Intervention (TLC); Strong Voice (TLC); Targeted Questioning (TLC)

*C.f. [Economy of language](#)*
  - c. **Avoiding unnecessary battles of the will** while maintaining one’s authority and the virtue of obedience and trust from students
    - Give choices
    - Affirming positive behavior as reinforcing the example for others
    - Lesson not unnecessarily derailed by behavior interventions
    - Enforceable statements (Love and Logic)
    - Least invasive response (TLC 395-403) as appropriate: Nonverbal, proximity, positive group correction, anonymous individual, private individual, lightning quick public, therapeutic errands
    - “I love you too much to argue with you about this” or “You are welcome to come back when you have something for us to discuss”

- d. **De-escalation:** provide empathy as appropriate while introducing reason - consider the heart, the mind, and the will
- Listen – with body posture, paraphrasing, and mirroring
  - Voice – balanced and controlled tone
  - Empathize
  - “I want to help you”
  - Re-focus, distract, change the subject
  - Use humor when appropriate (use caution with this)

C.f. [GH Teacher Resource Portal PD: Verbal De-escalation](#)

- e. **Art of Consequence:** appropriate and consistent - measured justice; consequences are always therapeutic (practice in serving what is good) rather than judgmental
- f. **Closing the Loop:** we always make sure to reconnect on a positive level after resolving the issue. We reset upon the beginning of the class period. We make sure all parties are contacted as appropriate – school leadership, student, and parent.

### III. Instruction

The teacher is a craftsman whose art is the instruction of students. The purpose of the teaching craft is to provide students with a full range of intellectual engagement: from knowledge to understanding to wisdom. Students need to know certain essential facts of the liberal arts and sciences, but they also need to understand connections between facts, and the larger context of all the arts and sciences. Finally, students need to deeply ponder the larger philosophical questions that are posed in the Western Tradition. The teacher must carefully plan, deliver lessons and assess students in order to ensure that students are engaging the subject with the greatest rigor and depth.

We are forming the intellect by establishing intellectual habits through purposeful instruction. The goal of such instruction is to communicate the general truth of being through particular truths of human experience. The manner is through questioning and conversation, which aims to eschew two extremes: efficient downloading information (by only memorizing an algorithm, for example) and exploring without purpose or conclusion. We want our students to come away with concrete ideas and knowledge and be prepared for the continual pursuit of knowledge within the disciplines.

#### A. Lesson Planning

The key focus of planning in any discipline is the lesson or unit's position within an overall goal of addressing big questions and pursuing the heart of the discipline itself. The lesson is the fundamental unit of instruction though it is not the end goal. There is a daily rhythm of the lesson plan; our efforts are shaped by the fact that we only get 40-60 minutes with our students. Thus, we neither try to do everything in one lesson, nor do we forget what the lesson points us toward. A key component of lesson planning is the collaboration with other teachers.

*C.f. [GH Teacher Resource Portal PD: Principles of Planning and Instruction](#)*

1. **Choosing Goals and Content:** choosing the "what" and "how much" of lessons is crucial.
  - a. **Begin with the end in mind:** Goals (unit) and objectives (lessons) should be designed to serve a higher purpose (corresponding unit, semester, or annual goals). The art of understanding the big ideas or the essentials of a unit.
    - Begin with the End (TLC 132-137)
    - 4 Ms (TLC 137-140)
    - Larger Context (Make It Stick) - attaching new knowledge to previous and broader ideas will help the new knowledge / story stay with students
    - Longitudinal planning – as teachers begin to know the arc of the year, they should start planning with other units in mind to engage the right level of spiraling and content connections
  - b. **Classical, liberal arts content and intellectual skills** - Both should be considered in goals or objectives; we strive for rigor and richness with attention to a student's resulting knowledge, understanding, skills, and loves. What do you want students to know, do, or love through this exploration?
  - c. **Manageable scope:** content and goals broken into a logical and achievable structure for the time allotted; while we drive toward an understanding of the deeper questions and bigger picture, we don't try to get to the end in one lesson (or even in one unit). Understanding which paths (and even certain content choices) might help students encounter the core ideas or questions that represent the goal of the unit.
2. **Setting the Pace, Staying on the Path** - a well-designed structure lays a clear path toward the goals and objectives. This is about determining the "how" and "how fast" after we have established the "what" and "how much."

- a. **Pacing** - appropriate and clear milestones with time for adjustments built in
  - Recommended: 10-20% saved for reteaching if necessary.
  - Time allotments for activities in a lesson
  - Change the Pace (TLC 201-210)
- b. **Structured development** – an arc of inquiry-driven exploration and the habit-driven practice aimed toward the purpose that the teacher has set (choosing goals and content). This includes the Socratic element, a proper introduction and sense of narrative and drama, planned questions, planned error or moment of *aporia*, and closure.
  - Plan for Error (TLC 60-64)
  - Strong Start (TLC 356-360)
  - Do Now (TLC 147, 155, 161-164, 192, 338, 356-359)
  - Beginning, Middle, End (see resources on Lesson Planning)
  - Students who attempt to solve a problem before being taught the solution will more likely remember the solution (Make It Stick)
  - Modeling and progression of ownership: I do (teacher), we do (teacher-student), you do (student); practice of Coaching
- c. **Consider all players** and how they interact with each other in a lesson (teacher, student, context):
  - Capitalize on the right teaching actions (the things the teacher does that prompt student actions) to meet goals/objectives
  - Form of activity (discussion, Q&A, lab, etc.) appropriate to content
  - Student activities tied to student outcomes
  - Double Plan (TLC 143-151)
  - Differentiation - meeting various student needs to achieve a common end
  - Interventions, Modifications, Accommodations
  - Evidence and testing does not currently support common “learning style” theories (kinesthetic learners v. ...). We do not pigeon-hole students into one “intelligence” but tap into them all and build on both strengths and weaknesses. (Make It Stick)

*C.f. [Accommodations vs. modifications](#)*

### 3. Keeping Accountable

- a. **Collaboration and Consultation:** Rarely is a teacher single-handedly responsible for instructing students in a subject area or grade-level. It is for the good of students that we align our plans to other teachers in a grade level, subject area, and across the network to a prudent extent. We engage with the wisdom of experienced teachers through network resources and conversation with others, include one’s headmaster – in addition to being open to new ideas of team members.
- b. **Assessment part of planning:** The right way to “teach to your test”...what evidence will show you that students get it?
  - Homework planned and understood as how it fits into assessment and an anchor of planning
  - CFU (TLC 142)

*C.f. [Hierarchy of Instruction within a Discipline](#)*

### 4. Preparing to Deliver



- a. Tweak for the now: Even if a teacher is using work done before her, she must always carefully absorb the material and make it her own. It must be responsive to what has happened with the class. This includes a deeper understanding than will be transmitted to students and the details are well-rooted and fresh.
  - Teacher should have more content at the ready in the lesson plan than will be delivered
- b. **Consider logistics of materials** and activities (and practiced if needed)
  - Labs, copies, parent communication

## B. Delivering (Execution of Lesson)

At all times, we employ the teaching techniques that engage all students and that are appropriate to their age and development, to the content, and to the cultivation of love for learning. We are faithful to our plans and disciplined about the use of class time, but we are flexible and respond to the needs of the students and the demands of the moment. We check for understanding and ensure students are not being left behind.

1. **Developing Capacity for Learning** - Elements to consider are ones that use interactions with students to prepare them for the learning that will take place (to build habits of discipline that will unleash their ability to learn); they are often done at the beginning of the lesson but should not end there. Done well, however, they also serve an end in forming them as students and human beings through habits of intellectual and moral discipline.

*C.f. Tone and Disposition of Teacher (Culture: Building Culture )*

- a. **Clear Communication and Directions** – a teacher gives students (in person or on written assignments) all guidance needed to understand and follow the request of the teacher. The clarity, specificity, and brevity of directions will help build the habit of attentiveness.
  - Framing activities often include tying the subject material to the higher idea, the greater good, and to past material and previewing a bit of the future (though taking care not to ruin the drama set up).
  - Lesson plan or discussions placed on the board as necessary – create a strong feeling of forward momentum; a feeling that we marking progress in learning this content
  - Teacher speaks to class - not notes, book, or board
  - Framing as necessary - but not chanting of the “objective of the day”
  - No Wasted Words / No Empty Questions – limiting random teacher talk, verbal efficiency and efficacy
  - Students given a heads up when most effective (warning of upcoming task); surprises or changes don’t lead to inappropriate confusion or meltdown of culture
  - Instructions broken down as necessary, appropriate scaffolding; Break It Down (TLC)
  - Brighten Lines (TLC)

*C.f. [Glossary](#): Gravitas; [Economy of language](#)*

- b. **Well-deployed time and material resources** - Festina Lente (see appendix)
  - Warm-up activities (bell work, introduction, quiz, homework review) efficient
  - Work the Clock (TLC 220-224, 231); possible: timer, transitions; Every Minute Matters (TLC)
  - Lesson does not founder, meander, or race ahead
  - Adjustments as necessary; tangential explorations limited and controlled (but explored as appropriate)
  - Brighten Lines (TLC 211-214, 230-231)- make beginnings and endings of activities visible and crisp

- Space for reflection for students- include the opportunity to retrieve knowledge and earlier training, connect new experiences; teacher should mentally rehearse for what could be done differently (Make It Stick)
  - Use of the board or other visual aids
  - Technology used appropriately and directed in the right way (teacher not fumbling with it)
  - Teacher notes referenced as needed but does not read from a script
  - Materials easily accessed / not in the way / used in a timely manner
  - K-5: TA walking around the room monitoring or helping students at key moments as necessary
  - Appropriate use of manipulatives or models
- C.f. Instruction: Planning
- c. **Inviting and commanding participation and engagement** [move toward universal and mandatory; not by force of will but also incredibly compelling; also builds on teacher ethos; see Charlotte Mason]
- Ratio (TLC 19, 234-276, 311-339) – have the students doing more of the work than the teacher as appropriate
  - Cold call (TLC 209, 241, 249-255, 260-262, 275, 284, 318-399)
  - Call and response (TLC) / choral response (either voiced or non-verbal); clean prompts and ensuring 100% (TLC 262-268)
  - Turn and talk (TLC 324-328, 330-335) (shoulder partners, pair share)
  - Show me (TLC 47-48, 53) / whiteboards / doc cam
  - Circulate (TLC 183-187, 189-190, 300, 335, 397)
  - All Hands (TLC 214-220); Bright hands (TLC)
  - Call and Response (TLC 262-268)
- d. **Academic/intellectual skills, habits, and capacities modeled, coached, and reinforced** (beyond those that are being taught directly lesson (reinforcement of past-taught skills))
- C.f. Student routines in Culture
- Format Matters (TLC 116-122); CFU (TLC 142)
  - Habits of discussion and speech - coached for clarity, syntax, formality, vocabulary, pronunciation, listening; Voice (TLC 316-324, 340)
  - A pause to focus on language (e.g. choosing one vocabulary word a day for reflection – etymology, word families, etc.)
  - Observation and intellectual regard; accurate description and articulation, scientific inquiry
  - Other Practical Studying and Learning Skills and Habits of Study (explicitly taught and practiced): note-taking, organization, homework, memory cues (Memory palace, Mnemonic devices, Peg method) (Make It Stick); Board = Paper (TLC 169-170)
  - Skill and Habits of Engaging the Text - annotate/underline, cite, analyze, reading
  - Skills of Presentation: demonstration, explanations
  - Physical Skills and Habits: Posture, (K-2: Pencil hold), tracking the speaker; SLANT (TLC 47)
  - Habits and Skills of Thought: e.g. subordination and classification of terms and ideas to each other, identifying logical fallacies

- Rule learning (Make It Stick), Structure building (Make It Stick), Mental modeling (Make It Stick)
  - Making other curricular connections with students
2. **Fostering the Learning** - a teacher aims to use the right techniques to convey the best information and in the proper form appropriate to the discipline and student. The teacher seeks to foster knowledge of the content and the unique skill to operate within the discipline. This is the heart of the lesson delivery.

*“When you have established an active sympathy with your class, you can tell when they are profiting from every word, enjoying every quotation, participating in the act of thought; and then it is your duty to go on improvising as far as the argument, your enthusiasm, and their understanding will carry you. But the next day or next week you must re-establish the proportions. Point out and summarize what you have passed over. Explain what stage you have reached, and be sure the pupils are following you closely. You are a guide, not a fugitive.” (Higget, *The Art of Teaching*, 68-69)*

*The best thing you can do for your fellow, next to rousing his conscience, is—not to give him things to think about, but to wake things up that are in him; or say, to make him think things for himself. (George Macdonald, “The Fantastic Imagination”)*

- a. **Command of the Drama:** finding the drama, the tension, or the humor innate in the content at hand such that students are compelled by what is at stake in their exploration of the idea. Create a sense of an essential question posed and incite wonder in the students.
  - The key question is often returned to - and asked more deeply
  - Reading aloud with expression is a particularly meaningful exercise here
  - Control the Game (TLC)
  - Learning is stronger when it matters, when the abstract is made concrete and personal. (Make It Stick); low-stakes quizzes
  - The teacher allows for careful and disciplined tangents. As Socrates notes, “we must follow the argument wherever it leads us.” This is set up by good planning and prudence in the moment, allowing us to make wise choices. “Not all who wander are lost” (Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*)
- b. **Command of Instructional Forms:** there are tried and tested techniques of classical education appropriate to the subject matter, student, and modern context. These can take the form of teacher to class, teacher to student, student to student – and can all happen during the same lesson. There are some unique techniques that may feel uncomfortable at times, but we trust them and strive to improve in them as we trust the good of their use.
  - Lecture, coaching, seminar
  - Narration, imitation, demonstration
  - Questions not used when imprudent - teacher gives quick explanation directly when appropriate
  - Limited and very well-structured and intentional “group work”
  - Students practice and perform with coaching
  - Crisp cues to students - students know how to respond to various prompts (choral response, rapid fire Q&A, discussion format, etc. (non-verbal and voiced); Call and Response (TLC 34,35)
  - Habits of Discussion (TLC 317-324, 340)
- c. **Command of Questions:** appropriate use of Socratic questioning - proficiency; have the students do the heavy lifting and work through the form or logic to make connections and

create understanding; this happens during all forms and must be appropriate to the grade level and content.

- Analytical focus – bite-sized as necessary
  - Stretch it (TLC 108-116)- Questions push students beyond contentment with right answers; push students to explain their thinking
  - Elaboration (Make It Stick) – give new material meaning by student expressing it in student's own words and connecting it with what you already know
  - Not guess-what-I'm-thinking and not overly broad
  - A diversity – from factual in nature to philosophical, from analytical to synthetic
  - Review questions appropriate but not dominant
  - Questions indicate a check for understanding and respond to current student understanding
  - Wait Time (TLC 258-260)
  - Know when to stick with a student vs. involve others (TLC 146-147, 199-231, 250, 255, 410, 412)
  - We want students to expand and frame new knowledge, to draw out the most essential causative forces, common threads, or deep connections which exist in content they study.
- d. **Clarity of Explanations:** in each lesson there is a time to ensure that no ambiguity is left around an idea, and it is the responsibility of the teacher to present the ideas clearly.
- No factual or conceptual errors; correct pronunciation of key terms, names; precise and accurate terminology of the discipline
  - Teacher can answer student questions well (anticipated) if appropriate
  - Clear, vivid, concise - explanations and responses to questions
  - No verbal wandering or inappropriate ranting
  - Broad use of explanations: analogies, models, pictures/diagrams, recordings, organizers
  - Students are corrected when there is a misunderstanding (problematic assumptions are not allowed to linger and remain uncertain)
3. **Solidifying Understanding** - produce clarity/learning through assessing students' progress and responding appropriately. Teaching should constantly assess progress.
- a. **Student Practice, Engagement, and Response**
- Time for independent practice (more support for struggling students)
  - Consolidation (Make It Stick) – the process of strengthening these mental representations (from encoding) for long-term memory.
  - At Bats (TLC 188-189)
  - Show Me (TLC 47-50)
  - All students evaluated at some point during class
  - Time and opportunity and guidance given to record and solidify the important “take-away” information
  - Students constantly activate and engage past knowledge - keep certain skills and knowledge alive.
  - Re-consolidation (Make It Stick) – retrieving a memory from long-term storage to strengthen memory traces and to modify or connect them to recent learning
  - Deliberate practice (Make It Stick) – goal directed, solitary, repeated striving to get beyond your current level

- Generative learning (Make It Stick) –answering a question or attempting to solve a problem rather than being presented with the information or the solution or re-reading
  - Spaced, varied and interleaved (mix of concepts and subjects) Practice (Make It Stick) - will be more effective because students can apply and recall in a wider array of ways; helps fight against the illusion of mastery (I know it now but not later; I recognize the information but could not produce it); (TLC 188-190)
- b. **Ongoing Assessment** – knowing if you know it; checking comprehension.
- Reject Self-Report (TLC 30-34)
  - Targeted Questioning (TLC 34-39)
  - Standardize the Format (TLC 39-45)
  - Tracking, not Watching (TLC 45-47)
  - Fist to Five
  - Show Me (TLC 47-51)
  - Affirmative Checking (TLC 51-55)
  - Excavate Error (TLC 22-27)
  - Pepper (TLC 274-276)
  - Retrieval Practice (recalling facts or concepts from memory such as flashcards) (Make It Stick) using the generation effect (using modest effort to generate a response strengthened memory of target word (foot-s\_\_e instead of foot-shoe)) - combine with spaced out practice
- c. **Teacher Responsiveness – re-teaching in the moment**
- Lesson plan adjustments – realized that the lesson did not accomplish the objective and being willing to divert course either in the moment or the next day
  - Active Listening - truly hear a student’s answer or question and pinpoint what the confusion might be or what the nuanced insight might be; poll a range of students
  - Monitor and Adjust
  - Control the Game (TLC 172-183)
  - Break It Down (TLC)- when a concept doesn’t seem to be coming across properly, the teacher knows where to back up and break a bigger idea into smaller parts that are digestible; scaffolded questions
  - Delayed Feedback (Make It Stick) - produce better long-term learning than immediate feedback. Immediate feedback creates dependence from the learner for constant correction.
- d. **Closure:** the students know where a lesson lands - ideally there is a sense of landing on a conclusion and a sense of “take-aways” (usually directly tied to lesson objectives) but also potentially room for agitation and further inquiry in the near or distant future

<p><b>C. Assessing</b> <b>Reflect and Improve</b></p>	<p>Assessments are tools that provide helpful information in determining whether teachers and students are progressing toward the stated aim for a class. To that end, we must have clearly defined our aims, and assessments must be aligned to them. We prize the assessment of authentic activities within the discipline (i.e. we assess the most important things that get to the pure activity of the discipline itself). <i>You haven’t taught until they have learned. (John Wooden)</i></p>
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1. **Understanding the Purposes of Assessments.** Assessments function to convey what is important in a subject; thus, it is imperative for the teacher to be intentional and properly aligned to the hierarchy of instruction. Each of these purposes – to communicate what is most important,

to serve a learning tool, and to change behavior – can be accomplished in preparation for taking a test, during a test, and reflection from a test.

- a. **Communication tool:** assessments reinforce what is most important in a lesson, unit, class, or course of study; this is a part of setting expectations of mastery and defines the rigor.
  - The more cumulative the test, the more important this is.
  - Assessment should be a celebration of what has been experienced and may provide some opportunities to tackle something new; however, assessments should not play “gotcha”
- b. **Pedagogical tool:** assessments motivate/spur progress toward the goal outlined in planning; assessments can engage the act of learning itself (happens while preparing to take it, in the act of taking it, and reflecting on the feedback).
  - Preparation for the test gets students to learn
  - Assessment stimulates learning (e.g. flashcards – you actually learn by “testing”). *“Retrieval interrupts forgetting. Retrieval ties the knot for memories, so ideas don’t fall off the string. Testing is a tool for learning as a form of retrieval practice, not a dipstick to measure learning” (Make It Stick)*
  - When creating the assessment and trying to drill to the core of what they want to come out of the instruction of a unit, teachers will reflect on and possibly adjust current teaching approaches.
- c. **Evaluation tool:** assessments provide feedback on individual and collective progress toward what is most important / the goals; they identify gaps in both current students and the transition from year to year.
  - Provides indication of each student’s grasp of the material.
  - May motivate (or indicate a need for) student or teacher change in behavior or practice. At the beginning of a unit or even course, an assessment determines possible gaps that could motivate a change in teaching. At the end of the course, an assessment contributes to a determination of whether a student is ready to move on to the next grade.
  - Assessment should generate self-reflection / an awareness of self.
  - The different results from the same assessment among different teachers may reveal areas for improvement for a teacher and/or the class

#### Examples

- Student assessments: can be a written test, physical exhibit, interview or verbal presentation, survey, demonstration, etc.
  - Student evaluations: written reflections on the estimated progress of the student.
  - Teacher self-assessments: any form to collect information about the teaching process for reflection (and improvement); could be lesson recording, external observation of the lesson, review of planning or assessment materials, etc. Student assessments reflect on the teacher’s strengths and weaknesses.
  - When determining whether we are meeting this goal, reflection on teacher actions is as important as information generated through student assessments. We trust in certain classroom methodologies and realize that they produce outcomes that are not measurable through student assessments.
2. **Designing the Tool** – as a communicative, motivational, and instructional tool, the design and implementation of an assessment must be inherently tied to the overarching goal of the class. It

must serve the purpose of the class – to move students toward the goal – in a timely and meaningful manner.

- a. **Reflecting goal:** define how the assessment tool points to the goal. Assessment and planning reflect each other. First, we define what student (or teacher!) progress you can assess (match to the goals of the course the nature of the discipline and be clear what is still to be done that is hard to “assess”). Second, we define how you will assess it (and defend how that is still pedagogical and moves students toward the telos of the discipline as much as possible)
  - Examples: in HL, the ability to engage in conversation and write cogent response; in math, solve and write formal solutions of proofs - “to do math”; in art, doing art (not an art history exam).
  - Note: When creating an assessment, teachers will have to be honest with themselves as to what is most important – not just the content, but the core purpose of the activity that would serve the true nature of the discipline. Each year may have differences in discussion and content, so the test may need to be adjusted to the emphasized shifts for that year.
  - Categories: Tests of fact vs. knowledge vs. understanding; tests of isolated skill vs. tests of proficiency vs. tests of mastery
  - Caution: In assessment, like in many activities in teaching, teachers may tend toward that which is easiest to produce, to deploy, to process.
  - Exhortation: The art of crafting questions on assessments is not all that different from framing questions in instruction: “every question ought to elicit knowledge of a unified portion of the subject covered and bring out what the teaching has aimed at over and above factual underpinnings” (Jacques Barzun)
- b. **Timing:** understand long-term vs. short-term assessments
  - Pre-test: pre-unit; baseline tests - primarily defines the work ahead
  - Short-term - formative: reflective of current work and strongly informs work ahead; skills and facts are often best tested in the short-term (e.g. math facts, spelling tests, calculation, reading quizzes, etc.)
    1. *Exit Ticket (TLC 190-193)*
    2. *homework, quizzes, short writing assignments; daily batting practice*
    3. *Dynamic Testing (Make It Stick) – determining the state of expertise, refocusing on areas of low performance; following up with testing to measure learning and increase expertise*
  - Long-term: summative - primarily reflective but does not give up future improvement. The more expansive the exam, the more it should point to the most essential content and goals of a course
    1. exams, essay
    2. Note: The final exam, then, acts as closure to the current articulation of study. It provides a solidifying of understanding and celebration of what is known/experienced/loved at the moment. *The most important things to assess within a discipline may not be assessable on a singular final exam.*
  - *Interleaving (Make It Stick) - alternate the study of different problem types and two or more topics for longer learning; varying the order of concepts helps develop the ability to transfer learning (the ability to apply what you have learned in new settings)*
  - *Elaboration, generation, and reflection questions (Make It Stick)*
  - *Testing effect – stronger, lasting learning from spaced out testing*
- c. **Formatting:** Form Matters



- The benefit of vs. limitations of formats: multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, matching vs. essay, open-ended, solving a new problem ([Resource](#))
  - Students must be prepared for and comfortable with the format so that it does not distract from the aim of the assessment.
  - Great assessments will often capture why students made certain decisions or gave certain answers – what the thinking behind it was.
  - Assessments are opportunities to challenge various levels of students
  - Sometimes less is more – both for students and for the teacher. An informal assessment (such as through participation) may be more appropriate than taking time out for a graded written assessment.
3. **Reflecting and responding.** Define what you will do with the information gathered through that assessment – how much weight you will give to a single data point – and how that contributes to an assessment (and progression) of the whole. When setting up a gradebook, this should happen early in the process.
- a. **Short-Term Grading and Feedback: past and future-looking**
    - We must find the mean between the two extremes of a) teacher as merely calculator and b) teacher mere subjectivist judge (“Feels like a B”)
    - Student assessments (particularly through paper and pencil tests) do not tell the whole story –but they have a significant contribution in the story.
    - First things first
    - Assessments should not point to finality or judgment regarding the student
    - Timely assessments (knowing student progress with time to re-teach)
    - Tied to the goals
    - Feedback must be specific and selective; honest/candid, oriented toward the Good, and rooted in love
    - Own and Track (TLC 77-79) - students correct and revise work – though we are careful about the practice of “trade and grade”
  - b. **Formal Evaluations of Students**  
*C.f. [GH Philosophy of Grading](#)*
  - c. **Determine next steps:**
    - An excellent teacher is rarely surprised by the results of an assessment.
    - When reviewing the results, teachers will have more feedback not only on students’ progress but also on the assessment itself as to whether the assessment was a good one. This may results in adjustments of a teacher’s daily actions and future assessments.
    - To reteach or not: There are times that poor performance on an assessment does not mean re-teaching (e.g. particular student not mastering but developmentally ok; student effort the issue; assessment was faulty). Other times assessments do tell us to reteach – because students prove to need just a bit more time on something.

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