The Four Foundations
of Great Teaching

Bryan Lynch
Veritas School

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Introduction

Teaching is an art. By art I don't mean that it can be pursued merely by intuition or inspiration. Like all great artists, the teacher must seek out, master, and apply the foundational principles of their craft to be successful. In the following pages I make clear what those foundations are and how they're applied. I reveal the 'secrets' of great teaching—which, of course, aren't secrets—all great teachers use these in their classrooms, whether they know it or not. These four foundations—content planning, assessment, instruction, and classroom culture and management—are the essentials of excellent classroom teaching. In the following chapters I outline each foundation and provide specific examples for how they can be applied. The goal of this book is to equip teachers with what they need to become great classroom teachers, which means that their students will learn better and retain their learning longer.

Before we look in more detail at these principles it would be well to first understand what we mean by education and by teaching. While the wording and emphases can vary, true education, as opposed to mere training, is at heart the cultivation of wisdom, virtue, and godliness, to the glory of God. Education is something that students cooperate in receiving, or even, though rarely, do on their own, but it is not something that they can receive passively. Student activity is critical.

It follows, then, that teaching is the communication of understanding (toward wisdom, virtue, and godliness) from one person to another or the process whereby one person helps another understand. This communication cannot be a one-sided activity. Telling is not teaching, and listening is not learning. Great teachers do not merely present information. Rather, they help students come to a clear understanding of the concept or skill. The focus is always on the student, not on the content, as important as that clearly is.

Great teachers excel at implementing four foundational practices:

1. Content Planning
   - Learning targets/goals/objectives are planned *first* and shared with students
2. Assessment
   - Frequent checks for understanding are built into daily lessons
3. Instruction
   - All students are actively engaged in the learning, doing most of the work
4. Class Culture/Management
   - Consistency, respect, and support characterize the classroom

These are pillars of every successful classroom, where true learning takes place because true teaching is thoughtfully and deliberately present. Without these the 'building' collapses. There is much more that could be said about each of these than can be included here—indeed, entire libraries seem to have been generated with these in mind. And, of course, the successful implementation of these skills is not all there is to being a great teacher. Great teachers are not just great practitioners, but they are inspiring and caring people also, as we'll begin to discuss in foundation four. Who you are as a teacher is every bit as important, if not more so, as what you do—but what you do cannot be ignored.

It's important for readers to understand that what I'm proposing here is consistent with and supportive of the principles found in John Milton Gregory's outstanding work on teaching, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*. In each chapter I make specific connections to Gregory's insights. Gregory's reputation is well-deserved and all teachers should become familiar with his excellent book.

It should also be pointed out that while I do borrow on occasion from secular (perhaps even progressive) sources, I have made use of them in a way that supports a Christ-centered understanding of education. If I have taken ideas "born among and nurtured by the Gentiles of Egypt and Greece" (says Tasso of philosophy), it is to make them serve the truth. I have plundered, as Augustine says, in order to devote to proper use.

The following framework provides teachers and administrators with a common understanding and vocabulary of the elements of excellent teaching. It will assist teachers and administrators as they work together, over time, consistently, to strengthen classroom instruction in a way that supports the mission of the school. Better teaching, and thus better classical, Christian schools, is only possible if there is an on-going process of growth within schools, the result of a collaborative effort between teachers and administrators. Personal reading, attendance at conferences, speakers, and on-line courses are all of great value, but wide and lasting growth will only come through faculties and administrators working together *at the school level* toward common goals.

This booklet is intended for those interested in refining their understanding and application of effective fundamental practices. It is my desire that through this brief discussion the teaching in classical Christian schools will be strengthened, since teachers are the key means through which all of our philosophical and curricular commitments are made real. Our schools are only as strong as our classroom teachers.

There isn't space in this short work to explore all the assumptions, philosophical and theological commitments that underpin what follows. It will hopefully be sufficient here to say that I'm working from within the understanding of God, the Christian faith, humanity, the world, and learning as expressed in the principles of the Association of Classical Christian Schools (ACCS). A look at the recommended resources and readings should give a clear of idea of where I'm coming from and what I've left to others to say far better than I am able to do.

With these things in mind, let's explore the four foundations of great teaching. I'll discuss what each foundation is and why it's so important. Along the way I'll include some resources that will help you sharpen your understanding, and also implement the practice right away in your classroom.

I have included at the end a partial list of additional sources on classical and Christian education, and on the art of teaching. Also included are documents that provide additional information.

Bryan Lynch
Veritas School
Newberg, Oregon
Revised April 4, 2022
www.classicalteaching.com
blynch@veritasschool.net

Foundation One: Content Planning

Content Planning Checklist

- ✓ Units are planned 'backward'
- ✓ Daily lessons are also planned 'backward'
- ✓ Learning targets are clear and focused on student learning
- ✓ Learning targets are shared with students
- ✓ The teacher demonstrates expertise with content, is able to make adjustments on the move, to redirect questions, to state concepts in different ways
- ✓ Review is built into the lesson
- ✓ Connections to future learning are made at the end of the lesson

Planning Backwards

John Milton Gregory in his classic, *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, addresses the importance of having clear goals for teaching in at least two of his laws. The first law of teaching, the Law of the Teacher, encourages teacher to "find the natural order and connections of the several facts and truths in the lesson" (42). In the fourth law, the Law of the Lesson, Gregory writes, "all teaching must advance in some direction…study the steps so that one shall lead naturally and easily to the next" (87).

Effective planning, as Gregory points out, is critical to successful classrooms. Excellent teachers keep in mind to plan the goals *first*, as the starting point, and to remember that what matters is what students learn, not what teachers do. Student learning is the focus, not favorite activities, and especially not teacher activity.

Content is obviously central to the classroom. The concepts or skills to be taught direct the work of the classroom. When planning, effective teachers start with the goal. They plan units and daily lessons 'backwards', that is, they consider what the end goals are for the learning and then design the lessons to support those goals. As teachers write daily lessons they need to be sure to construct them with student learning and action in mind. What matters in the classroom is not what the teacher does but what students will do and learn.

As teachers, our tendency sometimes is to think about the great and enriching activities we can provide for our students. We all have favorite lessons or projects we think students will enjoy or get something valuable from, and so we plan with these things in mind. The danger of this is that it's often not very clear to us or to our students just what learning is supposed to take place and why. As a result, we're often not sure how to assess whether students have learned what we hoped they would.

While these are important, the activities must be working toward something specific that is clear in our minds, and then made clear to students. So, learning targets for the lesson are written with student learning as central. And we must keep in mind assessment, as well. Both teacher and students need to be clear where we're going (learning target) and how we'll know when we get there (assessment), before heading off down the road (activity). Notice that in

Figure 1 below, we move from learning targets or objectives (from unit plans, Essential Questions, etc.), then to assessment. Planning activities is *last* in our thinking, not first.

Figure 1- Backward Planning Template: Unit*

Learning Targets and Goals	
Curriculum Goals and Objectives:	
Learning Targets: Students will be able to…	Essential Questions:
Assessments	
Primary Tasks:	Other Evidence:
Lesson Plans	
Activities:	

(*adapted from *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design,* C. Tomlinson and J. McTighe)

A sure sign of a weak learning target is lack of clarity about how it will be assessed. If I can't think of just what (and *how*) I'm going to assess during or after a lesson, then it's a safe bet that my target isn't clear and I've been focusing on an activity and not on student learning. I need to move from my activity-orientation to a goal-orientation. Here's how:

1. Begin with the end in mind. Start with the goal or target, and think of it in terms of what students will learn or do. Knowing where you want students to be in the end is more important than knowing what activity they'll do. Activity is not our goal--learning is. We need to know where we're going, not just what we'll do along the way.

2. Once the target is clear, then plan how you will assess the learning, both during and after the learning. Checking for understanding is critical to teaching and learning, and assessments should flow naturally from clear targets. (See Foundation Two: Assessment, below.)

3. Once the target is clear and the assessments are in place, activities can then be designed or adapted to teach the desired learning. Interestingly, by starting with the goal we sometimes discover that a favorite project or activity isn't so great after all. It may have served a purpose once, but now we just don't get as much from it as the students need. Thinking about the target first may lead us to create a more effective learning activity. Working this way holds true whether we're planning units or daily lessons.

Activities are very important, of course, and are at the heart of learning. Targets and activities are not mutually exclusive, rather, well-designed activities deliver on the desired learning targets.

Another benefit of starting with the student learning goal is that it tends to push us away from teacher-focused activities toward student-focused activities. Students should do most of the thinking and intellectual work in the classroom. Keep the student-learning goal central and this will be more likely to happen.

We want students doing interesting and challenging work in our classrooms, but we want them doing this toward some well-defined end. Beginning with the end goal in mind will help this occur consistently.

An example of a unit plan can be found on page 46. A sample daily lesson plan template using the same backward planning principles is on page 47.

Learning Targets

Learning targets are clear, unambiguous statements of what students will learn during the period of instruction. In *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, in the Law of the Learning Process, Gregory emphasizes that "learning is thinking into one's own understanding a new idea or truth (23)" and "the learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired (124)."

These learning targets (unit or daily) should be student-learning focused and specific. The focus of the classroom is the students in the room learning. Teaching and learning are about the development of understanding of the students. So, in this very limited sense, effective teaching should be 'student-centered', that is, student-learning centered. Teacher activity and even content are not the central point. They are immensely important, of course, but not of first importance.

So, for example, 'The causes of the French Revolution' might be an important topic, but it is not an effective statement of student learning. Something like, 'Students will be able to explain the causes of the French Revolution' is what we're looking for. Beginning with student learning helps focus the actions of the teacher and the students, including activities and assessments.

A quality learning target or objective is specific and assessable. For example, "describe" is better than "observe", and "explain" better than "appreciate". The key is that the teacher and the students will all know what learning looks like and are able to assess it as specifically as possible.

Figure 2- Learning Targets: Stronger and Weaker Examples

Stronger The student will be able to…	Weaker The student will be able to…
…label the bones of the hand	…know the bones of the hand
…define what the term worldview means	…be clear about what worldviews are
…recall the causes of the French Revolution	…think about the causes of the French Revolution
…solve and graph inequalities with two variables	…work with inequalities with two variables
…apply the elements of beauty to a new piece of art	…appreciate a work of art
…summarize the impact of the French Revolution	…study the effects of the French Revolution
…describe the causes of the French Revolution	…be clear about the causes of the French Revolution …seek to understand the causes of revolution
…analyze the roles of the key figures in the French Revolution	…see the importance of the leaders of the French Revolution
…explain why a work of art is worthy of praise	…be inspired to admire the work of an artist …marvel at God's creation
…evaluate the justice or injustice of the actions of the leaders of the French Revolution	…notice that there were warnings long before the outbreak of the French Revolution

Bloom's taxonomy (below) is a good place to find specific, student-learning-focused verbs for writing clear learning targets.

Bloom's (old)	Key Verbs	Example Learning Target *The student will be able to…*
Evaluation	appraise, assess, compare, conclude, contrast, criticize, discriminate, evaluate, judge, justify, support	**evaluate** the justice or injustice of the actions of the leaders of the French Revolution
Synthesis	combine, compile, compose, construct, create, design, develop, devise, formulate, integrate, modify, organize, plan, propose, rearrange, reorganize, revise, rewrite, tell, write	**compose** an original sonnet using the Petrarchan rhyme scheme

Analysis	analyze, associate, determine diagram, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish estimate, infer, order, outline point out, separate, subdivide	**analyze** the roles of the key figures in the French Revolution
Application	apply, arrange, compute construct, demonstrate, discover, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, use	**apply** the elements of beauty to a new piece of art
Comprehension	classify, convert, describe explain, extend, give examples, illustrate, interpret paraphrase, summarize, translate	**describe** events leading up to the French Revolutions
Knowledge	cite, define, identify, label, list, match, name, recall, recognize, produce, select, state	**label** the bones of the hand

Learning targets should be shared with students as often as possible, as this provides context for learning, which makes learning more lasting and effective. Effective teachers also keep an eye on the kinds of targets they write to be sure that classroom objectives reach the full range of academic and intellectual work. This ensures that students are challenged, appropriate to their age.

Sharing learning targets can be as simple as writing them on the board or including them on hand-outs, making sure that students understand at the beginning of the lesson what the target is. This can be done very quickly, and it has the effect, if done consistently, of leading students toward more learning-focus rather than task- or grade-focus. When observing classes I frequently ask students what they're doing. Students should be able to reply with some version of the learning target. Years ago a teacher in our school recounted an incident in her classroom. Students were diligently working on a project to help them learn the history facts of the unit. The teacher, wanting to check whether the students understood why they were doing this activity, asked a student why she was doing it. 'To finish the poster' came the happy reply. The student was content to work away on making a poster, without any clear idea of why she was doing it. At this point the teacher stopped the activity to be sure that everyone understood the purpose behind the project. She was making sure that the learning target was clear.

As appropriate, teachers will revise learning targets to be sure that the language used with students is student-friendly. Sometimes, having students assist in constructing or re-writing learning targets can be valuable. This takes more time, of course, but it can be a very valuable exercise.

Preparation and Planning

Planning for teaching often requires teachers to do additional reading and preparation. Effective teachers don't rely on their previous lesson plans and knowledge but are always seeking to learn something new about their content. This enables them to have flexibility with the content, to make adjustments quickly as needed, to make new applications, to redirect student questions, to restate concepts in different ways, etc.

Finally, pre-teaching planning includes thinking about the beginning and ending of lessons, keeping in mind that these times are often the most memorable for students.

Great teachers build frequent review into lessons, often at the end of a lesson, but taking advantage of any periods of time that might otherwise be wasted. They also take time to make connections for students to future and past learning.

Sequencing of a basic daily lesson plan:

- Warm-up activity, review, introductory check for understanding, artifact, quotation, etc.
- Learning Target shared with students
- Topic/skill introduced
- Modeling
- Guided practice
- Checking for understanding
- Independent practice
- Checking for Understanding, review, reflection, wrap-up

Certain lessons, of course, skip some of the above steps, or move them as needed, e.g., a seminar discussion may involve only a few of the above. The time devoted to the steps will also vary according to the learning target and the amount of practice needed.

Great teachers make this first step of planning with the end in mind a daily priority. They are clear in their own minds, and help students to be clear, about what the learning is, and not just what the activity is. This creates the right framework to focus on the all-important process of assessment of student learning.

How to put this to use now:

1. **Be sure you know what your course, unit, and daily learning targets (objectives) are.**
2. **Plan unit and daily lesson learning targets** *first*.
3. **Write clear, student-learning-focused learning targets for daily lessons.**
4. **Post and share learning targets with students every day.**

Application and Discussion Guide: Foundation One: Content Planning

> ***"If I can't think of just what (and how) I'm going to assess during or after a lesson, then it's a safe bet that my target isn't clear…* "** (7)
>
> What can you do to avoid this problem?

1. What does it mean to plan backward? Why is this important?

2. Summarize the three steps in content planning. (7)

3. What is an additional benefit of starting with student learning goals in planning? (8)

4. Restate the following to make them more student-learning focused:
   A. TSWBAT appreciate the importance of understanding plot elements in literature

   B. TSWBAT learn about the causes of the French Revolution

   C. TSWBAT write a paper on the French Revolution

5. Why is 'label' stronger than 'know'? (9)

6. Why is 'solve' stronger than 'work with'? (9)

7. Why is 'explain' stronger than 'be inspired by'? (9)

8. Why should teachers take the time to share learning targets with their students? (10)

9. Compare a recent lesson plan with the sequence of a basic lesson plan described on page 10. What do you notice?

10. What items from this chapter did you find particularly interesting or helpful?

11. How will you implement the suggestions in the 'use now' box at the end of the chapter?

Foundation Two: Assessment

Assessment Checklist

- ✓ There is frequent and involuntary checking for understanding (formative assessment)
- ✓ Formative assessment is deliberately connected to learning targets
- ✓ Feedback to students is descriptive and specific
- ✓ Students are given time to act on the information from the formative assessment
- ✓ Students have opportunities for self-assessment and goal setting
- ✓ Students are directed to focus revisions on a few items of quality at a time
- ✓ Students are given time for self-reflection about their learning
- ✓ Students are required to track their own learning
- ✓ Students are given opportunities to share their learning

Excellent teachers know that it is not enough to have great plans, interesting content, and engaging activities. Teachers need to check frequently to see if students are understanding the learning, that they are achieving the learning targets for the class. The purpose of this on-going assessment is to help the teacher focus the students on the learning, with the goal that students would become more self-directive. All education is essentially self-education, and teachers can move students toward this goal by giving frequent feedback about where students are with respect to the desired learning, and then showing students how to use that feedback to improve their learning.

In *The Seven Laws of Teaching,* Gregory encourages teachers, in The Law of the Lesson, to "Lead him to clear up and freshen his knowledge by a clear statement of it" (94). Gregory's seventh law, The Law of the Review, is entirely focused on students reviewing, rethinking, reknowing, reproducing, and applying the ideas being taught. Gregory writes that teachers should "count reviews as always in order" (148). Reviewing is not just for quizzes or tests, and certainly isn't made up primarily of graded tests. Assessing student understanding is an on-going process of checking for understanding.

This assessment must be involuntary—that is, teachers need to check on all students, frequently, whether or not these students wish to be checked on. It is not enough to simply ask the class as a whole "do you understand?" or "are there any questions?" Frequently students will not know whether they understand—they may think they do when in fact they don't. Also, some students will cheerfully volunteer to answer every attempt at 'broadcast' assessment. So, teachers need to build in means of checking on all students' understanding on a regular basis. There are a wide variety of quick and easy ways to do this: cold calling, exit passes, summary writing, pair-shares, sticky notes, short ungraded quizzes, white boards and more. Written assignments and more complex assignments also provide opportunities for teachers to check student understanding.

What's important is that this occurs during the learning so that the teacher and the student have time to act on it, to make adjustments or even reteach, if needed. Feedback given at the end of a unit of learning in the form of a test is only minimally useful.

Timely feedback is valuable for teachers, but it is also important for students to receive feedback on where they are in their learning. Teachers should frequently give feedback to students that is descriptive and specific. Expressions like "excellent!" or "good job!", although perhaps gratifying to students, don't tell students what they are doing well and what they need to improve in order to reach the learning target. (Interestingly, praise, when not connected to the learning, can actually hinder learning. Students can get the message that they are 'smart' and that becomes their focus—proving they're smart—rather than maintaining a mindset toward learning that emphasizes taking risks toward growth.) An effective practice is to separate grades from the descriptive feedback as much as possible, as students will often be distracted by the grade and will tend to ignore the comments.

As mentioned above, students should be given time to do something with the feedback they receive. They should be given time and be directed to focus revision on a few items of quality at a time. There should be time scheduled for students to self-reflect about their learning, to set specific goals, to track and share their learning. All of this takes precious class time, time teachers may not think they have for such luxuries. But the long-term pay-off of prioritizing these things is that students will increasingly take responsibility for their own learning, and that is, ultimately, what we're hoping for.

In *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, one of the laws Gregory describes is that learning must move from the known to the unknown. He writes: "Find out what your pupil knows of the subject you wish to teach...This is his starting point" (94), and, "Lead him to clear up and freshen his knowledge by attempting a clear statement of it", and again, "Make every advance clear and familiar, else the next step may be from unknown to unknown--a violation of the law" (95).

Getting feedback from students on their learning, and then also giving to students feedback on that learning, are critical pieces in the process of moving from the known to the unknown. To review, here are a few important things to keep in mind about feedback:

Getting Feedback from Students

1. Teachers should *frequently* seek to find out during the lesson what students are understanding and misunderstanding. There are many means of doing this, from hand signals and white boards to pair-share activities, and more.

2. Feedback from students should be *involuntary.* It's vital to check with all students, not just the eager few who want to answer. Teachers should check frequently with individual students as well as with the class as a whole, not just ask for volunteers. A good ratio would be something like 3:1--three involuntary responses for every voluntary. Remember, it's everyone's turn, all the time.

3. There should be some checking for understanding in every lesson that *involves all students*--no volunteers, no opting out. Feedback should be all-inclusive.

4. These checks should usually be non-graded events. The purpose is to see what students' level of understanding currently is and to adjust your instruction accordingly. The activity can be scored, of course, if a numerical value is of help to you and the students.

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5. Use the results to revise instruction as needed. Again, the purpose of getting frequent, involuntary feedback from all students is so that teaching can be modified if necessary to respond to areas of misunderstanding or partial understanding. In addition, assessment activities also act as a processing opportunity for students that helps to solidify their learning.

Formative assessments should be tied to learning targets. As implied in Figure 1, once objectives or learning targets are established, assessments are planned that seek to get at those targets. Figure 1 is a unit plan, but the same principles hold for daily lessons. The learning target is established for the lesson (e.g. 'the student will be able to recall Aristotle's sources of argument'), and then assessments are planned to check for understanding (e.g. an exit pass asking students to chart the sources of argument from memory). Figure 3 below seeks to connect clear learning target language from Bloom's taxonomy to potential formative assessments.

Figure 3- Bloom's Taxonomy and Formative Assessments

Category	Key Words	Formative Assessments
Knowledge: Recall data or information.	**Key Words**: define, describe, identify, label, list, match, name, outline, recall, recognize, reproduce, select, state.	Hand signals White boards Exit pass Admit slip Think-pair-share Response cards 3-2-1 card
Comprehension: Understand the meaning, translation, interpolation, and interpretation of instructions and problems. State a problem in one's own words.	**Key Words**: comprehend, convert, defend, distinguish, estimate, explain, extend, generalize, give an example, infer, interpret, paraphrase, predict, rewrite, summarize, translate.	Admit slip Exit pass Read-write-pair-share A tell B/B tell A Graphic organizer Confer-compose-clarify
Application: Use a concept in a new situation or unprompted use of an abstraction. Applies what was learned to new situations.	**Key Words**: apply, change, compute, construct, demonstrate, discover, manipulate, modify, operate, predict, prepare, produce, relate, show, solve, use.	Sticky notes Curated discussion Graphic organizer RAFT writing Confer-compose-clarify
Analysis: Separates material or concepts into component parts so that its organizational structure may be understood. Distinguishes between facts and inferences.	**Key Words**: analyze, break down, categorize, compare, contrast, diagram, deconstruct, differentiate, discriminate, distinguish, illustrate, infer, outline, relate, select, separate.	Sticky notes Curated discussion Prioritized list (sticky) 3-2-1 card Exit pass Graphic organizer Confer-compose-clarify

Synthesis: Builds a structure or pattern from diverse elements. Put parts together to form a whole, with emphasis on creating a new meaning or structure.	**Key Words**: combine, compile, compose, create, devise, design, explain connections, generate, modify, organize, plan, rearrange, reconstruct, relate, reorganize, revise, rewrite, summarize.	Graphic organizer RAFT writing Exit pass Sticky notes
Evaluation: Make judgments about the value of ideas or materials.	**Key Words**: appraise, assess, conclude, criticize, critique, defend, describe, discriminate, evaluate, interpret, justify, support.	Take a stand Prioritized list (sticky) Harkness discussion Value lineup Exit pass

Formative Assessment

There are a wide variety of formative assessments, from quick hand signals (e.g. thumbs up, thumbs down) to sticky notes to more time-intensive seminar discussions. All have the same goal of checking student understanding of the learning target. Most can be employed at any time during a lesson, and should be used to adjust instruction, as needed. Figure 4 below lists a number of formative assessment activities.

While the number and variety of methods in the chart can be overwhelming, most are quite simple and require only seconds or at most a few minutes to perform. The benefits from these far outweigh the time commitment. Teachers receive information about students' level of understanding, students have another opportunity to think through the concepts, and students themselves often receive some specific feedback on their understanding.

Excellent teachers find ways to build frequent formative assessment into their daily lesson plans because they know that routinely checking for understanding is critical to ensuring student learning.

(For additional information on applying formative assessments see my presentation for the ACCS Foundation of Classical Christian Excellence series on the ACCS website, https://mrc.classicalchristian.org/accs-foundation-of-classical-christian-excellence/)

Figure 4- Formative Assessment: From Hand Signals to Harkness Discussions	
Quick Checks	**Sticky Notes on Board, cont.**
Hand Signals	Comparison/Contrast
White Boards	
Response Cards (e.g., A for one concept, B for another)	(e.g. character of Pericles & Antony in Shakespeare plays
Writing Prompts	-2 groups, one for each character
Admit Slip	-using orange stickies for positive traits and blue stickies for negative, students write a separate trait on each note for categories: Birth, Education, Achievements
Prediction	
Exit Pass	
Pretend a classmate was absent from class today. Tell them what was most important from today's lesson.	-place on board and discuss as class; similarities, differences, etc.)
What is the most important thing we learned today?	
What concept has been most difficult or confusing in this lesson/section/reading?	
Write down one question you have about today's lesson.	Curated Discussion
	(-e.g. three OT crimes, three groups—one crime for each
Write down one thing I can do to help you.	-each do poster/chart of the answers to the Aristotle questions
What do you need to do to prepare for tomorrow's discussion?	-post their chart
How did today's discussion go? What do you need to do to improve for next time?	-mix the groups so that there is at least one member from each group in the new groups
If you were writing a quiz over today's material, what are two questions that you would include?	-those members are then the experts and present, lead discussion as move from poster to poster
Write down two things you learned today.	-discuss as whole class any lingering questions, comments, connections
Yesterday's News (review previous learning)	
Think-Pair-Share (A tell B, B tell group)	
Read-Write-Pair-Share	**Graphic Organizers**
A tell B/B tell A	Circle Map (context)
Ungraded Quiz Entry Pass	Bubble Map (attributes)
3-2-1 Cards (key points, questions, connections, confusing, agree, disagree)	Double Bubble Map (comparing/contrasting)
RAFT (role, audience, format, topic)	Tree Map (inductive/deductive)
Summary Writing	Flow Map (sequences, order, steps, timeline)
Sticky Notes on Board	Multi-Flow Map (cause and effect)
Prioritized List (e.g. most important, key ideas, etc. in order) in groups, then as class	Bridge Map (analogies)
	Discussions
Items for Organization (e.g. causes in one color, effects in another)	Value Lineup
Arrange as Class, or Small group, or Individual (e.g. key dates on separate sticky notes; timeline on board (take volunteers, then rotate in new students to fix problems if needed, etc.)	Confer-Compose-Clarify
	Directed Discussion (small student groups with assigned student question/leader)
Discussion Items from Section of Text -in groups have students take a different part of discussion -write on different colored stickies: (e.g. Group A- 3 connections, Group B- 3 most important ideas/themes, Group C- 3 excellent questions, Group D- 3 most interesting facts/points); discuss as class, prioritize, add to, etc.	Harkness Discussion

Teaching to the Test?

Tests are a type of assessment, though they're generally summative (for a grade at the end of a section of learning) rather than formative. How can teachers be sure that their tests assess what has been taught? Is it okay to 'teach to the test'? Not only is it okay, it should be our consistent practice. We want our students to be able to trust that we have prepared them well for tests in our classes. Here are some ways to make sure this happens:

1. Make sure that all test items are derived from the course curriculum and unit objectives.
Test items and class lessons should reflect the unit objectives, and these should flow specifically from the course goals. Teachers should continually check their assignments and tests to be sure that what they're teaching, and what they're testing, are in alignment with the school's curriculum goals.

2. Construct tests in *advance* of teaching the unit.
Having a clear idea of what will be tested *before* teaching a unit will focus learning targets and lesson plans toward this learning.

3. Share the unit plan with students in advance, including the main skills or knowledge that will be assessed.
Sharing with students what the learning will be for the unit will help to give them a clear idea of where they are going, which is important in taking the mystery out of what the desire learning will be. The more students know about the goals of the unit the greater their potential for learning them will be.

4. Be sure that daily learning targets are based on the unit plan.
Daily learning objectives are expressions of the larger goals of the unit plan. Daily objectives support and build up to the unit goals. Again, share these daily targets with students.

5. Be learning target-focused in daily lesson planning.
Learning targets should drive lesson planning. Not teacher activity or even student activities, but the student-learning objectives for the lesson. Teachers who focus student activities and assessments on learning targets are more likely to ensure that students will acquire the desired learning.

6. Use frequent, involuntary and un-graded formative assessments to check for understanding of the targets.
Checking for understanding using brief, frequent, ungraded assessments allows the teacher to know if students are on track in learning what they are supposed to be learning.

7. Offer frequent descriptive feedback to students.
Make sure students know how they're doing by giving them descriptive and frequent feedback.

8. Adjust teaching as necessary, based on the results of formative assessments.
With the end learning goals in mind, teachers can re-teach or adjust instruction based on what the formative assessments tell them.

9. Construct test items to reflect the relative importance of the skill or knowledge taught in the unit. Teachers should be sure that the balance of learning required on any test reflects the balance of the learning targets.

10. Make sure that students have had frequent practice with every skill or knowledge that is included on a test, with frequent formative assessment and feedback.
It's pretty simple, really: If it hasn't been taught, and taught thoroughly, don't test it.

Remember that a test is as much (if not more) an assessment of the teacher's work as it is of the students'. *If the student hasn't learned, the teacher hasn't taught.*

Giving Feedback to Students

Getting and giving effective feedback helps both teacher and students stay focused on the learning and what students may be misunderstanding or only partially understanding. Without feedback teachers don't really know how students are doing, and students don't really know how they're doing. Teachers who plan to frequently check all students for understanding, and who give descriptive, specific and timely feedback to students, will be able to ensure that their students are learning what they want them to learn, and that their students will increasingly take responsibility for their own learning. Below are some principles for teachers to keep in mind as they communicate with students about the progress they are making.

1. Feedback to students must be *descriptive*, not merely a number or a grade. In fact, as every teacher knows, when a piece of work is returned with comments and a grade students generally focus on the grade and largely ignore the fine and helpful comments teachers have given them. Find ways to separate any grade (if one is necessary) from the descriptive feedback so that students will concentrate on responding to improving their performance.

2. Make sure feedback is *specific*. Again, comments like 'good job' or even 'excellent', while meant to be encouraging, are not effective feedback. Students need to hear specifically where their work is excellent and where it needs to be better. Tying specific feedback to previously introduced rubrics will allow students to know more exactly what they need to do to improve. This will also help them to take more responsibility for their own learning.

3. Feedback should be *frequent* and *timely*. Students need to receive frequent feedback on how they're doing. There should be many opportunities for them to express their understanding, with feedback coming back to them in a timely way so that they can act on it and improve their learning.

4. Students should use feedback to revise and track their learning. Time should be planned for students to use the feedback to make changes in some way, as needed. They may need to revise an essay, or rework a math problem. Students should also be giving the time to

track their progress, again using the feedback they receive from classroom assessments and assignments.

(See pp 50-51 for a summary of Jan Chappuis' *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning.*)

Self-Assessment and Goal-Setting

An important part of the assessment process is student self-assessment and goal-setting. Students should have frequent opportunities to assess their own work against clear rubrics and models of strong and weak work. The process of self-assessment helps students to gain a clearer understanding of what quality work is. This is another step towards encouraging students to take more responsibility for their own improvement and their own learning. And, again, it shifts the student's focus from the grade to the quality of work.

Along with self-assessment, students should frequently track their progress on their learning, and set goals for their future learning. Figure 5 below is an example of a simple tracking sheet used in a high school class for students to track the feedback they receive on Harkness (seminar) discussions. It is also the place where they set goals for their next discussion. This form could be used for all kinds of feedback, including teacher generated, peer, and student self-assessment. Notice that the feedback is connected to language from the scoring guide or rubric, which was previously introduced to students and reinforced frequently through written and verbal feedback. Students who consistently participate in this process of self-assessment come to consciously understand what quality work is, and, typically, perform better. A chart like that in Figure 5 can easily be adapted to fit any age or subject.

Figure 5 - Feedback Tracking and Goal Chart

Student:_____

Date	Topic(s)	Grade	Key Rubric Phrases	Goal(s) for next time
9/10	*The Prince*/*Utopia* harkness discussion	9.5/10	-Referred frequently to text -Asked questions that sought the meaning of the text	-Make connections to previous learning

For all its seeming complexity, making effective use of assessment is really very straight forward. In order to truly know if and to what degree students are understanding the learning targets teachers must *plan* to frequently check for understanding during the learning, and then act on the information gained, adjusting instruction as needed. Formative assessments act like a sort of GPS in that they allow the teacher, and the students, to know if they are going where they want to go.

How to put this to use now:

1. **Plan *daily* and *frequent* formative assessments that check student understanding of the learning targets.**
2. **Be sure that formative assessment is *involuntary* and *all-inclusive*.**
3. **Give frequent feedback to students that is *specific* and *descriptive*.**
4. **Begin planning for students to track their progress and set goals.**

Application and Discussion Guide: Foundation Two: Assessment

"Formative assessments should be tied to learning targets." (16)

Why is this important?

1. What is the purpose of assessment?

2. Why should teachers make sure that assessment is involuntary?

3. What are five principles of getting feedback from students? (15-16)

4. Assignment: Over the next several days, practice using several new methods of formative assessment, as found in Figure 4. Which worked best? Why? (18)

5. Is it okay to teach to the test? Why or why not? (19-20)

6. How can your students learn what you plan to assess? (19-20)

7. What are four principles of giving feedback to students? (20)

8. Why is it important for students to track their own learning and to set goals? (21)

9. What items from this chapter did you find particularly interesting or helpful?

10. How will you implement the suggestions in the 'use now' box at the end of the chapter?

Foundation Three: Instruction

Instruction Checklist

✓ Students are required to do most of the work during the lesson.
✓ *All* students are consistently involved in class activities
✓ Activities are meaningful, that is, challenging and thoughtful, at the appropriate level
✓ Models of strong and weak work are used to make the elements of quality clear
✓ Rubrics or scoring guides are clear and communicated in advance of the learning (students may help in designing)
✓ The teacher employs I Do, We Do, You (all) Do, You (individual) Do steps when introducing a new skill
✓ The teacher uses a variety of strategies to deepen student thinking (e.g. wait time, cold call, follow-up questions, open-ended questions, student summaries, etc.)
✓ The teacher's movements in the classroom support instruction and classroom management

In *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, Gregory emphasizes (in the Law of the Teaching Process) that "teaching is arousing and using the pupil's mind to form in it a desired conception or thought" (23). Our work as teachers is to "excite and direct the self-activities of the learner, and tell him nothing that he can learn himself" (100). Further, "the learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired" (124). In a statement that should echo in the back of the minds of all teachers, Gregory says, "…a too talkative teacher is rarely a good teacher" (77). It is the students who must do the learning. Teachers will lead the process, of course, but the teacher's task is to make sure that students are actively engaged in their learning.

Effective teachers make sure that classroom activities engage all students. There are some students in every class who would love to answer every question and do every demonstration. Their hands are constantly in the air, enthusiastically waving. It's tempting to let this enthusiasm have its way, and, of course, there are many other students in the room who would be content to have it so. This must not be. All students need to know that all of them will be expected to participate in class. Cold calling is one way to do this. The best procedure is to ask a question, pause for all to consider, and then call on a student by name. (Some teachers will do this through drawing a stick with student names. If using sticks, they should be placed back into the holder so that students don't think they're finished.) Teachers should set up all individual and group activities in such a way that all students must participate. One example is to have all students write three review questions, then have students work in small groups to refine their questions down to a few. This way all students are engaged. Making sure that activities are meaningful and challenging is another way to encourage engagement.

In effective classrooms students are required to do most of the work. A book I came across a few years ago was titled *Never Work Harder Than Your Students*, and that really says it all. Teachers should constantly monitor the ratio of talking or other work done in the classroom. Students should talk more and teachers talk less. When teachers must talk, they should look to employ more questions, helping to guide students to understanding. They should use other

students, as well, drawing in the class when possible for the solution, rather than jumping in to supply the answer.

I have observed many classrooms over the years where the teacher put on an impressive and interesting display of their knowledge—and the students contentedly observed in quiet, with virtually nothing expected of them but to write an occasional note. Of course, there are times when the teacher will instruct directly, but the general rule is that students should always work harder than the teacher.

It's important to remember, as Gregory says, that "the work of education, of acquiring knowledge, is the work of the pupil and not that of the teacher" (124).

Avoiding 'Batting Practice'

When I played baseball as a little-leaguer, the most tedious (and longest) part of practice was batting practice. This generally consisted of one player taking cuts at the pitches thrown by the coach, with the rest of the players scattered throughout the field chasing the occasional hit. Most of this time was spent standing and watching as one player after another took their allotted cuts, and one player fielded a ball.

As I got older some of my coaches began using the time much more effectively by breaking players into smaller groups to practice hitting whiffle balls, bunting, working on pitching, etc. while only a few players collected the balls from batting practice. The difference was that all the players were engaged in some worthwhile practice. There was no standing around. We were involved with something useful all the time.

One of the most important characteristics of an effective classroom is that *all* students are engaged in learning *all the time*. This can be challenging in situations where group instruction focused on one student at a time is thought to be most useful. In any whole-class learning we want to avoid the 'batting practice' scenario above where one student is engaged in learning (answering questions, giving a speech, reading, working at the board, etc.) and other students can tune out. Or, think of a DMV line--one person actively engaged and many others waiting passively for their turn.

So, how do we avoid neglecting a class of students while we engage one or a few at a time? It isn't enough to just have them 'follow along' or 'pay attention' to what's going on. We want them to be mentally engaged with the learning at all times. Below are a few things that teachers can do to get started thinking about this very real challenge.

- have students correct their own work, fill in blanks on a study guide or fill in a graphic organizer
- have students use a grading sheet or rubric to assess student presentations or speeches
- stop occasionally and have students write three questions they have, or summarize the main point; or have them tell how they did the process differently, or would do it differently
- stop and have A tell B, and a few Bs tell the class a main idea, question, or point of difference

- if reading aloud is being used, have students not reading use active reading marks; have them show their marks occasionally to you or to another student

The items above are just a few of the strategies teachers can use to be sure that all students are engaged all the time in class. There are many ways to do this, of course. The main point is that we need to be sure that we don't have students 'standing in line' waiting for their turn or standing in the outfield staring at the clouds while a few students do something meaningful.

Classical Teaching Methods: The Trivium and Three Column Teaching

You may be wondering at this point, 'what do I actually have students *do?*' In the classical, Christian school context we embrace an understanding and application of the 'trivium' of grammar, logic, and rhetoric to correspond generally to ages of students and classroom methods. In grades K-2, what might be called 'pre-grammar', the emphasis in on developing basic skills and tools that will support the grammar stage. This will involve lots of exploring, discovering, and hands-on activities, as well as beginning literacy. In the grammar stage (roughly grades 3-6) we concentrate on developing students' memory as a tool, as well as on the acquisition of factual information and skills to be used later. In the logic (dialectic) stage, generally grades 7-9, the emphasis is on students' analytical skills. In the rhetoric stage (high school), teaching methods and student activities are designed to bring all of what they've learned in previous grades together, and to polish their persuasive speaking and writing abilities.

The above is a very general discussion, and there is a great deal of debate about the nuances of how this is to be interpreted and applied. This is not the place to enter into that discussion, and many wiser minds have sought to clarify the issue. (The reader will want to consult several sources, including: The Association of Classical Christian Schools web site; *The Case for Classical Christian Education*, Douglas Wilson; *Wisdom and Eloquence*, Charles Evans and Robert Littlejohn; *The Liberal Arts Tradition,* Kevin Clark and Ravi Jain; *Norms and Nobility*, David Hicks. There are many others, of course.)

Trivium methods in the grammar stage generally emphasize hands-on work, recitations, songs, memory practice, games, and other means of having students work to learn and memorize basic facts in math, history, geography, theology, and other curriculum areas. In the logic stage, students are taught formal logic and classroom methods tend to require students to debate, give reasons for their thinking, analyze plots and characters of books, examine cause and effect in history, etc. Students in the rhetoric years spend significant time in seminar discussions, preparing and delivering speeches, researching and writing papers, integrating their learning, and using the skills of memory and analysis they've acquired to apply them to worldview thinking, literature, and advanced math and science concepts.

Some teachers have adopted a model of instruction promoted by Mortimer Adler and the Paideia group in recent decades. It consists of three main approaches, Didactic Instruction, Coaching, and Socratic Questioning. (The later I have revised to emphasize seminar discussions as well as socratic teaching because I want the work increasingly to fall on the students.) This model roughly corresponds to the trivium in that didactic instruction emphasizes the acquisition

of factual knowledge by means of direct instruction, texts, and other aids, such as facts lists. In coaching, similar to the trivium's logic stage, the development of intellectual skills and skills of learning predominates, by means of supervised practice. Seminar discussions and socratic questioning, so prevalent in the rhetoric stage, are meant to encourage and equip students toward enlarged understanding and integration, assessment, and evaluation of ideas.

Figure 6 below incorporates these two approaches, with the solid vertical lines meant to indicate that as students grow older the proportion of the method of teaching should shift increasingly to discussions, and didactic and coaching, relatively more important in younger grades, reduce. This figure is, of course, only approximate. Text books and subject facts don't disappear in high school, and elementary students frequently practice public speaking (book reports, poetry recitation, class assemblies, etc.). Students read excellent and complete works of fiction and non-fiction (not anthologies) beginning in the youngest grades.

Figure 6- The Trivium and Three Column Teaching: Methods and Relative Emphasis

	Didactic (direct instruction)	Coaching (practice, models, imitation)	Discussions and Questioning
Rhetoric Stage	*Tools of Learning Emphasis:* **Presentation of ideas, worldview discussion and application;** *Methods:* Seminar discussions of books; oral presentations; research with synthesis of ideas; papers, essays, speeches, debates; worldview discussion/written papers; progymnasmata exercises		
Logic Stage	*Tools of Learning Emphasis::* **Develop logical thinking and analytical skills;** *Methods:* Timelines, charts, maps; debates, persuasive speeches; drama, reenactments, role-playing; evaluate, critique; formal logic; oral/written presentations; progymnasmata exercises		
Grammar Stage	*Tools of Learning Emphasis::* **Development of memory, acquisition of basic facts and skills:** *Methods:* Lots of hands-on work, projects; field trips, drama; collections, displays, models; integrate subjects through above means; teach and assign research projects; recitations, memorizations; drills, games; oral/written presentations; progymnasmata exercises		

(Much of the above is adapted from Tom Garfield's 'Lost Tools' chart.)

Using Models of Strong and Weak Work and Rubrics

Great teachers use frequent models of strong and weak work. These examples help students to come to hold a similar understanding of quality that the teacher has. When students, working individually and in small groups, apply rubrics and scoring guides to the models this makes this understanding even greater. Excellent teachers use (anonymous) examples of previous student work as models to help students practice using rubrics. The point of this practice is that students will understand in advance of doing their own work what quality work looks like. This will not only save time and effort by avoiding potential wrong turns, it will serve

to shift responsibility for learning from the teacher to the student. The student will have a greater insight into what is excellence and how to achieve it. A bit of the mystery behind grades and good work will be removed. Students should always know, before doing the work, just what the purpose is and what good work looks like, and practicing with samples will move them toward this goal. As Gregory writes in the Law of the Learning Process, "help the pupil to form a clear idea of the work to be done, in its several parts and stages." (132)

Rubics can focus on one item of quality or the entire process, they can be very simple or quite complex. What's important is that the rubric makes explicit what quality work looks like ahead of students actually beginning the work. Many teachers engage students in the process of developing rubrics for assignments. This has the effect, again, of shifting responsibility for learning to students as they are given greater understanding of what is happening and why.

If time were not a factor every assignment that students did would be preceded by developing a rubric and practicing with sample student work until the elements of quality were thoroughly understood. Of course, time is a major factor in our work as teachers and is our most precious and limited resource. So, teachers may want to start with larger assignments and activities (e.g. writing assignments, projects, graded discussions, etc.). But as much as possible students should have the opportunity to understand and work with what the teacher considers strong work.

Below is an example of a simple rubric used to assess the thesis statement of an essay:

Figure 7- Essay Thesis Statement Rubric

Elements of Quality	Weaker (0-1)	Mixed (2-3)	Stronger (4-5)
Thesis statement addresses question	**may be non-existent or not address the question.**	**may address the question, but is ambiguous.**	**clearly addresses the question.**
Thesis statement provides specific direction	gives no or very limited information about the direction of the essay or mere restatement of question	may be largely a restatement of the question or vague or unspecific position.	is specific, showing exactly what the essay will prove.

This rubric identifies two specific areas of quality that the teacher wants to be sure the students keep in mind as they write their own thesis statements for their essays. The rubric then breaks down each of these into general categories identifying characteristics of stronger, mixed, and weaker work. (While simplistic, just consider if all your students consistently did these two things in all of their writing!)

At this point, many students will not have a clear idea of the differences between, for example, a thesis statement that is "ambiguous" and one that "clearly" addresses the question.

Just what makes a thesis statement "specific"? It's up to the teacher to clarify these items, and the best way to do that is to provide samples of what these look like.

Using models of past student work or samples gleaned from other sources or created by the teacher, will give students opportunities to understand more concretely what the rubric statements mean. Also, students typically enjoy the process of being the 'grader', of applying the standards to actual samples.

In a sense, it's like solving a puzzle: which items fit into which categories? What is this? Is it more or less like that? This is a different kind of thought process and it causes the students to approach the assignment from an unusual perspective. Rather than being faced with a task that they have to complete, they are put more into the place of a discoverer or investigator of truth. The learning process involves analysis, synthesis, evaluation and application. Using models and rubrics allows students to begin thinking about a task by first asking questions about the task itself and then looking carefully at how others have attempted to solve the problem, what has worked and what hasn't. From there they are much better equipped to begin the work themselves because they more thoroughly understand what the task is and how to solve it.

For example, in my Humane Letters class students write an essay comparing and contrasting the impact of Martin Luther and Henry VIII during the Reformation. (See Figure 8 below.) One of the teaching points of this essay, which comes early in the school year, is to reinforce the importance of having a clear thesis statement.

We discuss the elements of a strong thesis statement and develop a rubric (see Figure 7). Then I will give students examples from past student essays—again, being careful that these are anonymous. We will usually do one example together as a class with me leading the assessment, so they understand how to proceed. Then students work together in small groups sorting the fifteen or so examples into stronger, weaker, and mixed categories. They then further distinguish within these categories, ranking the examples—is this a mixed '2' or a mixed '3'? Is this one closer to weaker or closer to stronger? These kinds of questions help them to internalize more fully what makes a strong thesis statement, and what to avoid, as well.

After they've completed their group work we discuss their results as a class. Typically there is general agreement, though sometimes there is an opportunity for a good debate on some items. I provide any direction or correction needed, but because we developed the rubric in advance students will usually be able to see the larger divisions, at least. More subtle distinctions will be clear by the time we've finished the group discussion.

Figure 8 - Martin Luther/Henry VIII Essay Thesis Statements

Compare and contrast the motives and actions of Martin Luther in the German states and King Henry VIII in England in bringing about religious change during the Reformation.

I. Stronger (Clear and specific thesis)

"Luther began his reform movement because of his objections to the Catholic Church, and he sought to reform the church. Henry VIII, however, broke away from the Catholic Church in order to gain more personal power..."

"The ways in which each brought about the rise, however, are very much different. Henry VIII's motives were based in selfishness, and Martin Luther's in goodwill."

II. Mixed (Non-specific thesis)

"Martin Luther and King Henry VIII were both very important figures in the Reformation and, while they had a few similarities, they also had many differences."

"While both these men cut ties with the pope, how they went about doing it and why it was done is of such difference that they can hardly be compared."

"Both the motives and actions of Luther in Germany and Henry VIII in England were quite different."

"...both were key figures during the reformation [but] their motives and actions in bringing about such a reformation were very different."

III. Weaker (Restatement of question)

"...both Martin Luther, A German monk, and Henry VIII, the king of England, played significant roles in bringing about religious change."

"The Reformation was brought about by various motives and actions of Martin Luther and King Henry VIII."

The process above also provides an example of how best to approach a new skill. In this case, a thesis statement is not a new idea, but the steps we take are similar. Excellent teachers employ a version of 'I do, We do, You (all) do, You (individual) do' when teaching a new skill to students. In the first step the teacher will demonstrate how to do the skill. Then, the teacher will lead the class as a whole in doing it. Next, the students will take on the skill as a class or in groups. Finally, the individual students will practice on their own. This gradually moves from demonstration to guided practice, to partner or small group practice, to individual practice, all with feedback along the way from the teacher or other students.

While this process seems obvious and simple, it can be easy to forget in our haste to get through the curriculum or on to the next unit. Being deliberate about making the process clear, saves time in the end since students are better equipped to complete the skill or task successfully.

Strategies to Extend Student Thinking

Effective classroom instruction is built around student thinking. In recitations, discussions, and other means of checking for understanding, excellent teachers make sure that

students are doing the thinking and supplying answers, making connections, correcting errors, etc. The invariable temptation of inexperienced teachers is to rescue temporarily stymied students or class discussion. In the interest of student feelings, or in impatience to get on with the lesson, teachers may plunge in and either give the answers to their own questions (or worse, fail to even ask questions), or focus only on the students they know will give timely and correct answers. This will move the class along, but it will give a probably false impression that the class as a whole understands the learning.

Excellent teachers instead use many of the following to move past easy answers or awkward silences:

- Remember wait time
  Provide at least three seconds of thinking time after a question and after a response
- Utilize 'think-pair-share'
  Allow individual thinking time, discussion with a partner, and then open up for class discussion
- Ask 'follow-ups': Why? Do you agree? Can you elaborate? Tell me more. Can you give an example?
- Withhold judgment
  Respond to student answers in a non-evaluative way to solicit further discussion
- Ask for summary
  To promote active listening, frequently ask students to summarize
- Survey the class
  "How many agree with…?' Use 'follow up' questions.
- Play 'devil's advocate'
  Require students to defend their reasoning against different points of view
- Ask students to 'unpack' their thinking
  'Describe how you arrived at your answer'
- Call on students randomly
  Not just on those with raised hands
- Student questioning
  Let or require students to develop their own questions
- Cue student responses
  'There is not only one correct answer for this question. I want you to consider alternatives.'

Effective classroom instruction requires thoughtful planning and great flexibility. While keeping the learning targets central, and checking for understanding frequently, excellent teachers focus their efforts on making sure that all students are engaged all the time, that students and not the teacher are doing most of the intellectual work in the classroom. Great teachers use a variety of means to stretch, challenge, scaffold, support, and encourage students. (See the summary chart of *Teach Like a Champion* techniques in the Resources section.)

Teach Students to Ask Good Questions

In the Law of the Teaching Process Gregory asserts that "questioning is not, therefore, merely one of the modes of teaching, it is the whole of teaching" (115). At all ages good questions stimulate thinking, which is the goal of teaching. Even when the emphasis is on memory, the better a student understands what they are memorizing the more useful that memory work will be to them in their later education.

As Figure 6 implies, older students are increasingly engaged in discussions of various kinds. Great teachers give students the tools to lead these discussions as much as possible. A major task is asking good questions. Below are some question prompts for student-led discussions based on Bloom's taxonomy. These could be reviewed with students, and even given as a hand-out for reference. With students new to doing this, teachers may want to assign certain students to ask particular kinds of questions during discussions.

Knowledge
What do you remember about _____?
How would you define_____?
Can someone describe what happens when_____?
Why did_____?

Comprehension
How would you compare_____? Contrast_____?
What can you infer from_____?
How can you describe_____?

Application
What other way would you choose to_____?
How would you change_____?
How would you alter _____ to _____?

Analysis
How is _____ connected to_____?
What are causes of _____?
What are the effects of _____?
What are the pros and cons of _____ ?
How would you explain _____?

Synthesis
What would happen if_____?
What alternatives would you suggest for_____?
What changes would you make to revise _____?

Evaluation
What is your opinion of _____?
What choice would you have made?
What criteria would you use to assess_____?
How could you verify_____?
Is _____ true or not true?
Is _____ right or good?

Teacher Movement

Great teachers are aware of the students in their room. Being alert to the sounds and movements, and responding accordingly, will help keep students focused on learning and will minimize distractions. Excellent teachers, for example, do not teach from their desk. They circulate to check on students, they give instructions from different places in the room, they shift their presence. They do this to reinforce class discipline, and also to be available to students as needed. Great teachers *move*.

How to put this to use now:

1. **Make sure all students are consistently involved in all class activities. Plan activities that require full involvement and don't allow eager students to dominate or passive students to hide.**
2. **Begin collecting (or making) models of strong and weak work, and have students use rubrics to assess them.**
3. **Make sure students talk (on task, on topic, as directed) more than you do in class.**

Application and Discussion Guide: Foundation Three: Instruction

> **"One of the most important characteristics of an effective classroom is that all students are engaged in learning all the time."** (25)
>
> What makes this challenging in your classes?

1. What are some ways to be sure that all students are engaged in your classroom activities? (25-26)

2. What are some way to avoid 'batting practice'? (25)

3. Briefly summarize what is meant by grammar, logic, and rhetoric. (26-27)

4. What are some of the teaching methods used at each stage? (26-27)

5. Why use models of strong and weak work?

6. What are some of the ways to extend student thinking? (30-31)

7. Why is it important to teach older students to ask good questions? (32)

8. What items from this chapter did you find particularly interesting or helpful?

9. How will you implement the suggestions in the 'use now' box at the end of the chapter?

Foundation Four: Class Culture/Management

Class Culture/Management Checklist:

- ✓ The teacher's interactions with students are mutually respectful
- ✓ The teacher communicates predictability and support to students
- ✓ The teacher has carefully thought through and clearly communicated expectations for behavior, routines and transitions
- ✓ Students practice classroom routines
- ✓ The teacher is consistent in enforcing school and class rules in such a way that students know that the teacher is on their side, wanting them to be successful
- ✓ The teacher does not take conflicts personally
- ✓ The teacher communicates frequently with parents, and works together with parents on behavior and character issues

In many ways, this foundation is the most important of the four. Establishing a joyful classroom where God is loved above all, learning is valued and virtue is nurtured, and all are respected is the chief foundation of all the others. This practice is more about who you are and less about what you do—although, of course, who you are determines what you do, and practicing excellent habits will impact who you are.

Excellent teachers create a culture of both high expectations for all (academic and behavioral) and high support for all. This is not about setting a high bar and then demanding high performance, but about creating classrooms where the teachers do all they can to help students learn at a high level of excellence.

Some may object to the term 'classroom management', as it may imply that students are so many workers to be managed or objects to be trained, as if the classroom were an exercise in behavior modification. And it is true that some approaches to classroom management rely heavily on training student responses and actions without appealing to or addressing the hearts and minds of students. There is truth in this criticism, and that's why the title of this chapter is somewhat ambiguous. As teachers we want to create a particular culture in the classroom not merely manage behavior. Still, we do have to manage movements and routines, and for some teachers, especially in younger grades, it can seem like much of their day is taken up by transitions and moving people and projects. So, part of developing an excellent classroom culture is the careful management of time and other resources.

All education is ultimately self-education, but teachers play a critical role in not only guiding students' learning but in providing an orderly and gracious place where learning can best happen. Classroom environment has often been described in terms of managing the behavior and actions of students, and while this is necessary, it isn't a substitute for teachers creating a class culture of mutual respect and a love of learning.

In an effective classroom, the teacher's interactions with students are professional and respectful, warm and loving. These will be expressed differently, of course, accounting for differences of temperament of both teacher and student. But the character of the effective classroom is one of kindness and respectfulness. Certainly teachers must be the undisputed authority in the room, but this doesn't mean that the classroom is a cold place. Warm and courteous relations are the norm in the effective classroom. Students think better and are more successful in classrooms that are consistently emotionally secure and where student success is assumed and supported.

As the tone-setter in the room, the teacher can help students to fit comfortably into this culture by carefully thinking out in advance, and communicating clearly to students, the expectations they have for routines and movements. Students need to know what is appropriate to say, how to move, what to do, how to ask for help, etc., for each activity and transition. Again, the point isn't control but a classroom that runs smoothly so that students can get on with learning. The fuzzier the expectations are, or the less consistently they are applied, the more potential trouble the teacher is encouraging in the room. This is very detrimental to learning. Teachers who don't clearly communicate expectations or who don't consistently enforce them are, in effect, training their students to disregard them. If there is turmoil in this classroom, the problem is much more with the teacher than the students.

Figure 9 - Who You Are: Character of the Teacher

- Practiced in modeling love, joy, peace, spiritual maturity and Christ-likeness before students and the school community
- Practiced in actively pursuing growth in understanding and application of the philosophy of classical education, increasing content knowledge, and knowledge about current teaching theory and practice
- Practiced in establishing meaningful emotional/psychological engagement with all students, displaying the qualities of predictability and supportiveness
- Practiced in supporting and contributing to a professional, mission-focused sense of community, including colleagues, staff, students and parents.
- Practiced in establishing proactive communication with, and service to, each student's parents

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Effective teachers take time to practice routines and transitions early in the year, particularly with younger students. While this will take class time up front, experienced teachers know that in the long run much more time is gained since students will move quickly and efficiently between activities. Teachers who are too concerned about curriculum to teach necessary routines will experience frustration as the year goes on.

Teachers who do these things well also consider the arrangement of the room and how even the furniture will best support learning and classroom culture. Wisdom is required here, since classes of students vary from year to year or class to class, and what might work very well for one group of students might be inviting trouble in another.

When it comes to enforcing classroom or school rules, effective teachers know how to do this in a way that communicates to the student that the teacher is 'on their side'. The consequence (whatever it may be) is necessary and is, in fact, for the student's good. Teachers who stay calm

and who doggedly refuse to take disobedience personally are in a much better position to communicate graciously (if firmly) to the student.

When conflicts happen (and they will) effective teachers are able to avoid a mere behavior modification approach, which can work for the short term, but rather are able to get to heart issues with students. This is the only way to make classroom discipline gospel-centered. What is needed is internal motivation rather than external conformity. An effective classroom culture should be one that explicitly and implicitly teaches and supports the cultivation of wisdom, virtue, and godliness of students and teachers.

Classroom management is essentially about having clear expectations, communicating those expectations clearly to students, and then following through with student training and consistent implementation. Teachers frequently undermine their classroom culture through a lack of clarity in their own minds as to what they expect from students and why, by failing to communicate this clearly to students, and, most of all, by failing to follow-through. Fatigue, busyness, disorganization, pressure of time, and any number of other distractions can lead teachers to inconsistency. This, of course, sends the message to students that the expectations are negotiable or not valued by the teacher. This confusion rarely results in a happy, productive classroom.

Strong and Weak Examples

Gregory reminds us in the Law of the Learner that gaining and keeping attention is of first importance in teaching. "Never begin a class exercise till the attention of the class is secured", (62) he says—and this means full attention of 100% of students. Just implementing this habit alone will set the tone for all the work of the class.

Teachers need to develop an awareness of what is happening in and around the classroom, to detach a bit from time to time from the lesson itself and pay attention to their surroundings. "Watch keenly against all sources of distraction", Gregory writes, "such as unusual noise and sights, inside the class and out' all contacts and motions discomforting or diverting." Paying attention to these things will help to keep the focus on learning.

Below are two lists that our teachers at Veritas developed as part of our faculty's discussion of classroom management. They are the result of us asking ourselves, 'what would you see in a classroom with a strong class culture, one that was managed well?' And, 'what would you see in a classroom that was not managed well?'. While not exhaustive or sequential in any way, they give a good idea of the difference between strong and weak classrooms.

Examples of Strong Work
- Students ready when lesson starts
- Quick transitions
- Automatic transitions and actions
- A "do this now" is frequently present
- "Bell ringer" activities
- Students have a "to" in transition (specific task in transition times, given *before* the transition occurs)
- Focus on next subject/activity

- Routines completed independently without distracting others
- Entry work—students know exactly what to do when they enter
- Kindness
- Cues for attention
- Succinct, consistent instructions
- Schedule on board—notated
- Teacher sets clear expectations
- Teacher provides clear directions and expectations
- Organized copies
- Respect for others in words and actions
- Reprimands are quick, consistent, and unemotional
- Crisis happens: teacher flexibly switches tasks or lesson

Examples of Weak Work
- Students unprepared when class starts
- One student interacts with teacher, all the rest tune out
- Unclear instructions
- Inconsistency in procedures
- Students are dependent on teacher repeating routines
- Random thinking without clear purpose
- Tasks done sloppily, slowly
- Teacher often reminds
- Coats, pencil sharpeners, water bottles clutter the floor
- Disorder
- Students are not held accountable for their own materials
- No plan for what students do when they arrive to class
- Teaching without attention
- Students interrupt
- Students are not sure of routines and cause distraction
- Teacher waits for students to transition
- Noise
- Routines change often/not followed
- No plan for transitions (lack of clear direction)
- Frequently heard in the classroom: "what do I do now?"
- Inconsistent correction of behavior
- Crisis happens: class grinds to a halt until resolved

What Great Teachers Do Differently

Successful teachers strive to develop strong professional judgment by observing other teachers and being brutally honest about their own practice. Through these practices teachers can develop their 'situational awareness', allowing them to anticipate problems or distractions before they arise and head them off accordingly.

Great teachers distinguish themselves from average or even good teachers by their consistent application of key practices. Some of these are described in Figure 10 below. (There are many such lists, of course, and perhaps this points to a *sixteenth* thing great teachers do—they borrow great ideas from other teachers.)

Figure 10 - Fifteen Things Great Teachers Do	
Great teachers…	
1. **never stop learning. They look to learn from others and ask for help when needed.**	Great teachers maintain a growth-mindset about their own learning, personally and professionally, and model this to students. They learn from other teachers—in the classroom next door, or from centuries past. Great teachers are always on the look-out for those who can help them grow as teachers.
2. **are masters of their subject.**	John Milton Gregory's first law of teaching is that a teacher must know the truth or art to be taught. Great teachers keep learning their subjects throughout their time in the classroom. (*But keep in mind #13!*)
3. **have a sense of their mission and the mission of their school.**	Some days are better than others—great teachers keep in mind the big picture, which helps make those not-so-successful days less disappointing.
4. **take joy in their calling.**	Teaching is too difficult and too important a calling to pursue unless you really love it. Great teachers love teaching.
5. **have clear, student-learning focused objectives.**	Great teachers keep students and student learning firmly at the center of their teaching. They 'plan backward' from there to assessment to learning activities.
6. **are flexible and consistently cheerful.**	Life in a school community is always challenging, with schedule changes, sick children, snow days, vacationing families, etc. The planning and detailed organization sometimes must go. Great teachers take it in stride, cheerfully focusing on the mission and not their own inconvenience.
7. **adapt to the students in their classrooms while maintaining fidelity to the curriculum.**	The curriculum is to be taught to students, so great teachers learn to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their classes, what works best and what doesn't, and they have a variety of methods at their disposal.
8. **are predictable and supportive.**	Great teachers are first and foremost interested in helping students to learn and to grow in wisdom, virtue, and godliness. They strike a balance of support and consistency.
9. **expect all students to succeed.**	This isn't about demanding performance. Great teachers set high expectations and create a classroom where they do all they can to help all students to learn at a high level.
10. **use praise genuinely and specifically, connecting it to student growth.**	Great teachers are encouragers, always with an eye on the learning. Indiscriminate or un-earned personal praise may actually be counter-productive.
11. **are reflective about their work and about themselves.**	Great teachers think constantly about their teaching and themselves as teachers. They are aware of their strengths and their weaknesses.

12.	**communicate with parents and are not threatened by them.**	Great teachers seek out and welcome partnership with parents, and proactively communicate frequently with them, both the positive and the negative.
13.	**are comfortable with uncertainty.**	Great teachers know that they don't know everything. They model for students how to approach the unknown or the uncertain.
14.	**are organized and prioritize planning.**	Great teachers make the most of their teaching time by carefully planning and preparing.
15.	**don't take student apathy or conflict personally.**	Confident in who they are, great teachers don't look for their sense of worth in their students' performance or attitudes. They know it's not about them!

(adapted from www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/features/25-things-successful-educators-do-differently/; 2013, Julie DeNeen)

There are a great number of excellent resources on additional details of classroom management. Practices such as the use of teacher and student hand signals, frequently repeated commands, procedures for collecting and distributing papers, etc. are explained and discussed. Among the best of these resources is *Teach Like a Champion,* (see summary on pages 56-62) and both the books and the web site are highly recommended. Any teacher will benefit from implementing the practices described in these excellent works.

How to put this to use now:

1. **Be clear in your own mind what expectations, routines, and movements you need to have and communicate to students for each lesson or activity.**

2. **Never begin teaching without the full attention of all students.**

3. **Establish (and practice, if needed) an entry routine, communicate clear transitions between activities, and require 100% compliance with all instructions.**

4. **Plan to observe other teachers and take note of how they communicate with and manage their classes.**

5. **Don't take things personally!**

Application and Discussion Guide: Foundation Four: Class Culture/Management

> ***"Classroom management is essentially about having clear expectations, communicating those expectations clearly to students, and then following through with student training and consistent implementation."*** (38)
>
> Why is this so important? What make this so difficult for some teachers?

1. In what ways is this area the most important? (36)

2. Why practice classroom routines early in the school year?

3. How do some teachers often undermine their class culture? (38)

4. What do the examples of strong work on pages 38 & 39 have in common?

5. What do the examples of weak work have in common?

6. Of the fifteen things great teachers do, which do you consider most important and why? (40-41)

7. What items from this chapter did you find particularly interesting or helpful?

8. How will you implement the suggestions in the 'use now' box at the end of the chapter?

Conclusion

Greatness is consistent, excellent performance under pressure. Great teachers consistently deliver excellence in their classrooms, under the pressure of time constraints, student difficulties, parental expectations, administrator expectations, and their own desire to see their students learn and thrive. Great teachers have learned, through experience and, too often, painful trial and error, that the foundational practices described above are the indispensable starting points for successful classrooms.

Of course, great teachers frequently make it look easy, as they flawlessly and, seemingly, effortless move through their lessons. Those mere mortals among us shouldn't be discouraged as we seek to grow in our understanding and practice of teaching. It is a fulfilling and important, life-long process, that will involve days of disappointment and, hopefully, many more of great contentment. It's my desire that this small work will in some way assist in helping in that process.

Resource List
Books

Philosophy

Recovering the Lost Tools of Learning, Douglas Wilson

The Case for Classical Christian Education, Douglas Wilson

The Liberal Arts Tradition, Kevin Clark and Ravi Scott Jain

John Milton: Classical Learning and the Progress of Virtue, Grant Horner

Wisdom and Eloquence, Robert Littlejohn and Charles Evans

Classical Education: The Movement Sweeping America, Andrew Kern

On Education, Formation, Citizenship and the Lost Purpose of Learning, Joseph Clair

The Improvement of the Mind, Isaac Watts

Johann Sturm on Education, Lewis W. Spitz and Barbara Sher Tinsley

The Great Tradition, Richard Gamble, ed.

Quintilian on the Teaching of Speaking and Writing, James Murphy, ed.

The Art of Teaching, Gilbert Highet

The Paideia Proposal, Mortimer Adler

The Abolition of Man, C.S. Lewis

The Classical Trivium, Marshall McLuhan

Milton Among the Romans, DuRocher

Practice

The Seven Laws of Teaching, John Milton Gregory, Veritas Press, 2004

Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning, Jan Chappuis

Teach Like a Champion, Doug Lemov

Integrating Differentiation and Understanding by Design, Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe

Checking for Understanding, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey

Teaching with the Brain in Mind, Eric Jensen

How to Give Effective Feedback to Your Students, Susan M. Brookhart

Web sites

Association of Classical Christian Schools: www.accsedu.org

Bryan Lynch's web site: www.classicalteaching.com

Unit Plan Example: Nationalism

Learning Targets and Objectives
Curriculum Goals and Objectives: -Demonstrate an ability to integrate concepts from the disciplines of literature and history in discussions -Apply Christian world view thinking to ideas of the period, analyzing and evaluating -Apply skills of rhetoric in discussion and writing -Demonstrate effective use of primary sources

Learning Targets:	Essential Questions:
Students will be able to… 1. Explain that nationalism is a relatively modern movement and is largely associated with the modernism of the 19th and 20th centuries 2. Describe how modern nationalism differs in important respects from the older pride of country (patriotism, loyalty to monarchy, etc.) 3. Describe how nationalism contributed to the destructive imperialism and world wars of the late 19th and 20th centuries 4. Analyze the ways in which the assumptions of nationalism are under increasing strain in 21st century Europe (e.g. Great Britain, Italy, Spain, etc.) 5. Describe the steps toward unification in Italy and Germany 6. Explain the forces--political, intellectual, social, economic, etc.—that fostered the unification movements 7. Explain why national strength and pride became nearly synonymous with national unity 8. Explain the ideas of Marx and others who sought to radically alter the social and economic order	1. What is more important, the group (in this case the nation) or the individual? 2. What is the best foundation for a nation? 3. Is there a difference between nationalism and patriotism? 4. What is history? Are there alternative ways to explain the shape of human society? How do we know which is correct, if any?

Assessment	
Primary Tasks: -Harkness discussions of Spielvogel 23 readings -Harkness discussions of Weber readings -Writing on Marx	Other Evidence: -Reading quizzes -CFUs in class

Lesson Plans
Activities: 1. Harkness discussions of readings 2. Spielvogel 23 (old text) and Weber readings 3. Other primary source readings 4. Teacher presentation on unification movements in Germany and Italy 5. Music from the time that illustrates nationalism

Daily Lesson Planner Template

Learning Targets: *What are the objectives for the lesson?* (Remember to <u>share with students</u> during lesson.)
TSWBAT :
1.

2.

| Date: |
| Class: |
| Room: |

What student pre-assessment/modeling is needed?:_____
What scoring guides need to be given in advance?:_____

Lesson Focus: Didactic   Coaching   Socratic

How does this lesson teach or test to the trivium? (Rhetorical: Christian world view application, evaluation, assessment, and expression; speaking and writing; reading and discussing, etc.):

Checking for understanding

Value Lineup, Think-Pair-Share (A-B, B tell teacher), A tell B/B tell A, Read/Write-Pair-Share (redist., pair offer best), White Boards/Response Cards (A-B cards)/Hand Signals, RAFT, Exit Pass, Admit Slip, 3-2-1 Card, Ungraded Quiz Entry Pass, Sticky Notes on Board (ind., group), Graffiti Wall, 3 sentence wrap-up, Confer-Compose-Compare-Clarify, Harkness Review Questions (Quick Quiz), Summary Writing, Directed Discussion (w/SQ), Curated Discussion (mixed groups), Harkness Discussion

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Seven Strategies
Where am I going?
1. Provide students with a clear vision of the learning target
2. Use examples of strong and weak work
Where am I now?
3. Offer regular descriptive feedback
4. Teach students to self-assess and set goals
How can I close the gap?
5. Design lessons to focus on one learning target at a time
6. Teach students focused revision
7. Engage students in self-reflection, tracking and sharing their learning

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Assessment: How does this lesson 'check for understanding' during the lesson? How will you, and students, know when LTs are met?
1.

2.

Artifact/Quote/Anecdote:

Activities: *What are the steps to the LTs?*

1.

2.

3.

4.

Reminders/Assignment/Preparation Questions:

Five general topics of discussion: what is x? (definition);
how is x like/different from y?(comparison); how is x related to y? (relation); what are the circumstances surrounding x?(circumstance); who says what about x? (testimony)
Worldview Questions: What's the narratio? What is the problem? What is the solution? How do we know?

Seven Laws of Teaching
1. A *teacher* must know the lesson to be taught
2. A *learner* attends with interest
3. The *language* is common to both
4. The *lesson* moves from known to unknown
5. *Teaching* is arousing and using pupil's mind
6. *Learning* is thinking into one's own understanding
7. *Review, review, review*

Clear and Fuzzy Objectives/Learning Targets

Circle those objectives/LTs you think are <u>clear</u>, and put an **X** next to those you think are <u>'fuzzy'</u>. A clear objective/LT has a well-defined, measurable student action.

One helpful way to determine whether an objective/LT is clear to ask, 'how will I know that they can do what is asked, and how will students know?'

Know	Realize
Draw	Learn
Apply	Integrate
Notice that	Work with
Marvel	Graph
Admire	Categorize
Be inspired to	Reason that
Be clear about	Summarize
Care	Recall
See the importance of	Label
Show interest in	Begin
Deal with	Evaluate
Intend	Seek
Bear in mind	Demonstrate
Think	Predict
Solve	Consider
Explain	Define
Recognize	Identify
Use	Appreciate
Study	Understand
Interpret	Talk about
	Calculate

Ranking Learning Targets

For each of the following groups, rank from most clearly student-learning focused to least student-learning focused. (Use 1 for most, 2 for next, 3 for least.)

Example

_3_ *bear in mind*   _1_ *label*   _2_ *be clear about*

___ recall   ___ study   ___ think about

___ notice that   ___ see the importance of   ___ summarize

___ explain   ___ appreciate   ___ seek to understand

___ work with   ___ realize   ___ describe

___ care about   ___ evaluate   ___be inspired to

___ categorize   ___ reason that   ___ show interest in

Summary of Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning

In Jan Chappuis' *Seven Strategies of Assessment for Learning**, she identifies a set of tools that teachers can use to make these things happen. These strategies encourage students to consistently consider and answer three key questions:
Where am I going? Where am I now? How can I close the gap?

Briefly, the seven strategies are designed to to develop in students the habits of thought they need to substantially improve their own learning, to move them from being passive recipients of assessment to being actively involved in their own learning.

These seven strategies shouldn't be viewed as a recipe but rather as a set of practices to be used as needed. With that in mind, consider this collection of actions:

1. Provide students with a clear and understandable vision of the learning target.
A teacher once asked one of her students why they were learning what they were that day. The student's response was, "so we can make a poster". At that point the teacher stopped the class to make sure they all understood the purpose of the learning--which, of course, was not to make a poster. The poster was the method of processing and assessing the learning, not the learning itself.

When students understand up front the goals of the learning they are more likely to learn what we want them to learn. Teachers who make a habit of posting and explaining the objectives or learning targets for the day help students to focus on the learning and not on the grade or the activity.

2. Use examples and models of strong and weak work.
Quality work should not be mystery. Giving students opportunities to work with scoring guides or rubrics using actual examples helps them to better understand what they are doing, and, consequently, to begin to take more responsibility for it. Strategy one provides students with clear and understandable goals. Strategy two gives them illustrations of levels of quality.

3. Offer regular descriptive feedback.
With strategy three, we start to ask the question, 'where am I now?' This strategy focuses on students receiving feedback that is specific and descriptive, using language that references the language of the rubrics and learning targets. Grades are not feedback in this sense because they don't describe the quality of work. Praise, as well, is not generally effective in improving learning as it typically addresses the character of the student and not the characteristics of the work or skill.

4. Teach students to self-assess and set goals.
Chappuis describes research that shows that students who are self-monitoring made larger gains in learning than those who weren't. Providing students with opportunities to self-assess and to set specific, challenging goals for their own learning has the effect of shifting responsibility for learning to the student and away from the teacher.

5. Design lessons to focus on one learning target or aspect of quality at a time.
With this strategy students begin to think more about how they can 'close the gap'. Formative assessments reveal gaps in learning, the distance between the learning goals and the actual learning. By focusing on one partially understood concept or incomplete skill students can concentrate on closing those gaps. Teachers should be careful to not have students address too many items at a time, but to use models and examples to highlight those areas to be improved.

6. Teach students focused revision.
Strategy six involves students in revising, with feedback, the items identified and addressed in strategy five. These two work together, with targeted instruction followed by targeted practice, all addressing any incomplete understanding. An example might include have students work in pairs to revise a previously-scored weak model, focusing on one piece of learning at a time. Or, students working alone or in pairs to revise certain elements of their writing, using the rubric.

7. Engage students in self-reflection, and let them keep track of and share their learning.
Finally, when students reflect on their learning, and share observations about themselves as learners, their long-term memory is strengthened.

These seven strategies are meant to encourage students to become more consciously engaged in their own learning, to understand where they are going, where they are now, and how they can close the gap. The ultimate purpose is to move them from passively receiving to actively pursuing their education.

*S*even Strategies of Assessment for Learning,* Jan Chappuis
(A new, 2nd edition features expanded discussion of strategies 5 and 6, with revised strategy names.)
Audio of my 2015 ACCS conference presentation on the seven strategies is available through the ACCS web site.

Using Sticky Notes to Check for Understanding: Example

Sticky notes can be a great tool for checking for understanding. In this particular activity, my 11th Grade Humane Letters students were using the progymnasmata exercise of comparison to evaluate the main characters in the Shakespeare plays, *Pericles* and *Antony and Cleopatra,* which we had just seen at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon.

For this particular activity, I did the following:

- I had students individually consider the characters of Perices and Antony, given a worksheet with the comparison headings of birth, education, and achievements.

- After ten minutes, students then broke into small groups to compare notes.

- On blue and orange sticky notes I asked them to write one or two-word characteristics or traits for both figures, for each area (birth, education, achievements). If the trait was praise-worthy, they put it on an orange sticky. If not praise-worthy, then they put it on a blue sticky. After 10 or 15 minutes they had a collection of notes for each character.

- I put a grid on the board with the three areas horizontal and Pericles and Antony vertically.

- They then put the stickies in the appropriate boxes on the board.

- We then discussed what they thought about each character, considering the areas of comparison and the virtues or vices they had identified. The color-coding made it easy to see at a glance that the students considered that the two characters had similar traits of birth and education, but in achievements Pericles was nearly all orange (virtue) and Antony very blue (vice).

- After further discussion, their exit pass was to write a paragraph comparing the two figures, assessing which was worthy of emulation or a figure to not emulate.

Johann Sturm's Method

Ten Daily Exercises at the Heart of 16th Century Protestant Classical Schools

Johann Sturm was a highly influential German educator during the 16[th]century Reformation. He referred frequently in his writings to schools, advisors, and individual teachers and scholars to 'the method', a collection of exercises he established in his schools and promoted elsewhere. His chief interest was in developing the liberal arts, and particularly the language arts, in his pre-university students. His goal was the training of a "wise and eloquent piety".

To accomplish this he emphasized daily drill in reading, grammar, exposition, writing, and public speaking. Younger students spent most of their time digging deeply into grammar and the meaning of words, while work for older students branched out to include the writing and delivery of frequent public addresses. While significant time in classrooms was no doubt taken up with teacher explanations, 'the method' clearly shows that Sturm placed a premium on students being constantly and actively engaged in a variety of exercises meant to develop their ability to think, to write, to discuss, and to speak truthfully, wisely, and persuasively.

Sturm championed these methods in his role as teacher and leader of the movement to found schools in newly-reformed Protestant cities.

1. Psalms
- singing psalms as a group and as a school
- 3x daily: morning, mid-day, evening
- Sung and 'invoked'

2. Daily Recitations
- students reading aloud
- read the psalms that are sung, and other important pieces (e.g., creeds, prayers, etc.)
- emphasis on pronunciation and improving voice and delivery, including body language

3. **Orations**
- short pieces ('homilies') to be recited or read
- brief, serious (e.g., devotional reading)
- either from written document, or prepared and memorized
- emphasize purity of speech, clarity of meaning

4. Writing
- daily practice: "never lacking a written composition or pen, or minus a pack of paper"
- three-fold writing practice:
  - -hand-writing (elementary grades, mainly)
  - -diaries/journals: note-taking, commonplace books, notebooks for language, words, quotations, examples; these are "the custodians of memory"
  - -stylistic examples: parts of orations and declamations; arguments; well-constructed letters and narratives

5. Declamations

- practice speeches, hypothetical situations; praise, censure, etc. (upper progymnasmata and suasoria exercises)
- emphasize knowledge, custom, and eloquence

6. Disputations: debates and discussions

7. Conversations
- integration of, and immersion into, Latin whenever possible
- during the day, in class, out of class (e.g., breaks, after school)

8. Demonstrations
- didactic and socratic instruction
- discourse and demonstration
- e.g., proofs in mathematics, expositions of literature and poetry, etc.

9. Comedies and Tragedies
- dramatic performances and readings
- recite passages from memory
- work in groups to perform, present

10. Games
- "All the above exercises should be held with games"
- use jests and games
- teach Latin in the games
- field trips: "Get out of cities to view the fields, and gardens, to dig our plants, to ask their names", etc.

For more on Johann Sturm, see *Johann Sturm on Education: The Reformation and Humanist Learning*, Lewis K. Spitz and Barbara Sher Tinsley, Concordia Publishing House

'Teach Like a Champion' Summary

Setting High Academic Expectations		
1. No Opt Out	A sequence that begins with a student unwilling or unable to answer a question ends with that student giving the right answer as often as possible even if they only repeat it.	
2. Right is Right	Set and defend a high standard of correctness in your classroom	• Hold out for all the way • Answer the question • Right answer, right time • Use technical vocabulary
3. Stretch It	A sequence of learning does not end with the right answer; reward right answers with follow up questions that extend knowledge and test for reliability	• Ask how or why • Ask for another way to answer • Ask for a better word • Ask for evidence • Ask students in integrate a related skill • Ask students to apply the same skill in a new setting
4. Format Matters	It's not just what students say that matters but how they communicate it. To succeed, students must take their knowledge and express it in the language of opportunity.	
5. Without Apology	The skill of not apologizing for students is critical not only in the introduction and framing of material but in reacting to it.	• Assuming something will be boring • Blaming it • Making it "accessible"
Planning that Ensures Academic Achievement		
6. Begin with the End	Teaching by methodically asking how one day's lesson builds off the previous day's, prepares for the next day's and how these three	

	fit into a larger sequence of objectives that leads to mastery.	
7. 4 Ms	A great lesson objective and therefore a great lesson should be Manageable, Measureable, Made first, and Most important	• Manageable • Measurable • Made First • Most Important
8. Post It	Lesson objective is posted in a visible location – same location every day – and identifies your purpose for teaching that day.	
9. Shortest Path	All things being equal, the simplest explanation or strategy is the best; opt for the most direct route from point to point.	
10. Double Plan	It's as important to plan for what students will be doing during each phase of a lesson as it is to plan for what you will be doing and saying.	
11. Draw the Map	Control the physical environment to support the specific lesson goal for the day	
Structuring and Delivering Your Lessons: I/We/You		
12. The Hook	A short introductory moment that captures what's interesting and engaging about the material and puts it out in front.	• Story • Analogy • Prop • Media • Status • Challenge
13. Name the Steps	Subdivide complex skills into component tasks and build knowledge up systematically.	• Identify the steps • Make them "sticky" • Build the steps • Use two stairways
14. Board=Paper	Students learning how to be good students by learning to take notes and retain a record of their knowledge.	

The Four Foundations of Great Teaching

15. Circulate	Moving strategically around the room during all parts of a lesson.	• Break the plane • Full access required • Engage when you circulate • Move systematically • Position for power
16. Break It Down	In regards to student error or guess, conceptualize the original material as a series of smaller, simpler pieces; build a student's knowledge back up from a point of partial understanding.	• Provide an example • Provide content • Provide a rule • Provide the missing (or first) step • Rollback • Eliminate false choices
17. Ratio	Push more and more of the cognitive work out to students as soon as they are ready, with the understanding that the cognitive work must be on-task, focused, and productive.	• Unbundle • Half-statement • What's next? • Feign ignorance • Repeated examples • Rephrase or add on • Whys and hows • Supporting evidence • Batch process • Discussion objectives
18. Check for Understanding (and Do Something About It Right Away)	Gather data constantly on what students can do while you're teaching and act immediately on that knowledge to inform what you do next and how you do it.	
19. At Bats	Lessons should include as many repetitions as possible.	
20. Exit Ticket	Use a single question or short sequence of problems to solve at the close of a class to check for understanding that provides strong data and critical insights.	
21. Take a Stand	Push students to actively engage in the ideas around them by making judgments about the answers their peers provide.	

Engaging Your Students in Your Lessons		
22. Cold Call	In order to make engaged participation the expectation, call on students regardless of whether they have raised their hands.	• Predictable • Systematic • Positive • Scaffolded
23. Call and Response	Use group choral response – you ask; they answer in unison – to build a culture of energetic, positive engagement.	
24. Pepper	Use fast paced, group-orientated activities to review familiar information and foundational skills	
25. Wait Time	Delay a few strategic seconds after you finish asking a question and before you ask a student to begin to answer it.	
26. Everybody Writes	Set students up for rigorous engagement by giving them the opportunity to reflect first in writing before discussing.	
27. Vegas	A moment during class when you might observe some production values: music, lights, rhythm, dancing.	
Creating a Strong Classroom Culture		
28. Entry Routine	Make a habit out of what's efficient, productive, and scholarly after the greeting and as students take their seats and class begins.	
29. Do Now	A short activity written on the board or on desks before students enter that clearly states what to work on and eliminates excuses leading to distractions.	
30. Tight Transitions	Quick or routine movement from place to place or activity to activity that students can execute	

	without extensive narration by the teacher.	
31. Binder Control	Care enough about and the importance of what you teach to build a system for the storage, organization and recall of what students have learned.	
32. SLANT	Key behaviors that maximize students' ability to pay attention	• Sit up • Listen • Ask and answer questions • Nod your head • Track the speaker
33. On Your Mark	Show students how to prepare for a lesson to begin and expect them to do so every day.	
34. Seat Signals	Develop a set of signals for common needs, especially those that require or allow students to get out of their seats.	
35. Props	Public praise for students who demonstrate excellence or exemplify virtues.	
Setting and Maintaining High Behavioral Expectations		
36. 100 Percent	There's one acceptable percentage of students following a direction: 100%. Less and your authority is subject to interpretation, situation, and motivation.	• Nonverbal intervention • Positive group correction • Anonymous individual correction • Private individual correction • Lightning-quick public correction
37. What To Do	Give directions to students in a way that provides clear and useful guidance – enough to allow any student who wanted to do as asked to do so easily.	• Specific • Concrete • Sequential • Observable
38. Strong Voice	Establish control, command and benign authority that make the use of excessive consequences unnecessary.	• Economy of language • Do not talk over • Do not engage • Square up/Stand still • Quiet power

39. Do It Again	Doing it again and doing it right or better or perfect is often the best consequence.	
40. Sweat the Details	To reach the highest standards, you must create the perception of order.	
41. Threshold	When students cross the threshold into the classroom, you must remind them of the expectations: establish rapport, set the tone, and reinforce the first steps in a routine that makes excellence habitual.	
42. No Warnings	Use minor interventions and small consequences administered fairly and without hesitation before a situation gets emotional is the key to maintaining control and earning student respect	• Act early • Act reliably • Act proportionately
Building Character and Trust		
43. Positive Framing	Make corrections consistently and positively. Narrate the world you want your students to see even while you are relentlessly improving it.	• Live in the now • Assume the best • Allow plausible anonymity • Build momentum and narrate the positive • Challenge! • Talk expectations and aspirations
44. Precise Praise	Use positive reinforcement as a powerful classroom tool	
45. Warm/Strict	At exactly the same time, be both warm (caring, funny, concerned, nurturing) and strict (by the book, relentless, and sometimes inflexible).	
46. The J-Factor	Find and promote the joy of learning to achieve a happy and high-achieving classroom.	• Fun and games • Us (and them) • Drama, song, and dance

		• Humor • Suspense and surprise
47. Emotional Constancy	Model the modulation of emotions (no explosions) and tie emotions to student achievement not the emotions of students you teach.	
48. Explain Everything	Make expectations clear, rational and logical; remind students why they do what they do and ground the explanation in the mission.	
49. Normalize Error	Getting it wrong and then getting it right is the fundamental process of schooling; respond to both parts of the sequence as if they were totally and completely normal.	• Wrong answers: don't chasten, don't excuse • Right answers: don't flatter, don't fuss
Improving Your Pacing		
Change the Pace	Use a variety of activities to accomplish the lesson's objective and move from one to the other throughout the course of a lesson	
Brighten Lines	Make learning activities begin and end crisply and clearly.	
All Hands	Shift rapidly among and involving a wide array of participants.	
Every Minute Matters	Keep a series of short learning activities ready so you're prepared when a two minute opportunity emerges.	
Look Forward	Use mild suspense to create tension, excitement and anticipation	
Work the Clock	Count time down, parcel it out in highly specific increments often announcing an allotted time for each activity.	

The Four Foundations of Great Teaching

Challenge Students to Think Critically		
One at a Time	Ask only one question at a time, not a sequence of them.	
Simple to Complex	Initially engage students' thinking about a topic in contained, concrete ways and then push them to think more deeply and broadly.	
Verbatim (No Bait and Switch)	When repeating a question, be sure to ask it exactly the same way.	
Clear and Concise	Make questions as clear and concise as possible.	
Stock Questions	Use similar sequences of questioning applied over and over in different settings.	
Hit Rate	The rate at which students answer questions correctly should not be 100% (unless reviewing, questions should be harder) nor should it be below 2 out of 3 (there is a problem with how material was presented or the alignment of questions to that material since students are not showing you mastery).	

The Four Foundations of Great Teaching and *The Seven Laws of Teaching*

Planning	Class Culture

1. The Law of the Teacher: A *teacher* must be one who *knows* the lesson or truth or art to be taught.
  -"Find the natural order and connections of the several facts and truths in the lesson."
  -"Prepare each lesson by fresh study."
 	
4. The Law of the Lesson: The *lesson* to be mastered must be explicable in the terms of truth already known by the learner—the *unknown* must be explained by the *known*.
  -"The truth to be taught must be learned through truth already known."
  - "All teaching must advance in some direction…study the steps so that one shall lead naturally and easily to the next."
 	
6. The Law of the Learning Process: *Learning* is *thinking* into one's own *understanding* a new idea or truth or working into habit a new art or skill.
  -"Learning is thinking into one's own understanding a new idea or truth…the learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired."
	2. The Law of the Learner: A *learner* is one who *attends* with interest to the lesson.
	
	  -"Never begin a class exercise till the attention of the class is secured."
	
	  -"Pause whenever the attention is interrupted or lost and wait till it is completely regained."
	
	  -"The highest grade of attention is that in which the subject interests, the feeling is enlisted, and the whole nature attends."
	
	  -"Let the teacher maintain in himself and exhibit the closest attention and most genuine interest in the lesson. True enthusiasm is contagious."
	
	  -"Arouse, and when needful rest, the attention by a pleasing variety, but avoid distraction. Keep the real lesson in view."
	
	  -"Watch keenly against all sources of distraction, such as unusual noise and sights, inside the class and out; all contacts and motions discomforting or diverting."

Assessment	

4. The Law of the Lesson:
  -"Make sure he understands fully the new truth."
  -"Lead him to clear up and freshen his knowledge by a clear statement of it."
6. The Law of the Learning Process: "…the learner must reproduce in his *own mind* the truth to be acquired."
 	
7. The Law of Review: The *test and proof* of teaching done—the finishing and fastening process—must be a *reviewing, rethinking, reknowing, reproducing, and applying* of the material that has been taught, the knowledge and ideals and arts that have been communicated.
 	
  -"Count reviews as always in order."	

Instruction	

3. The Law of the Language: The *language* used as a *medium* between teacher and learner must be *common* to both.
  -"It is the pupil who must talk."
  -"…a too talkative teacher is rarely a good teacher."
  -"When it is necessary to teach a new word, give the idea before the word."
  -"We must master truth by expressing it…"
 	
(4. **The Law of the Lesson** The *lesson* to be mastered must be explicable in the terms of truth already known by the learner—the *unknown* must be explained by the *known*.)
 	
5. The Law of the Teaching Process: *Teaching* is *arousing* and *using* the pupil's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art.
  -"Excite and direct the self-activities of the learner, and tell him nothing that he can learn himself."
6. The Law of the Learning Process:
 	
  -"The learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired."	