

**AF’s Essentials of Instruction**

**Purpose of the Essentials:**

* Clearly define great instruction at AF
* Provide a framework – the five key questions – for every observation, PD, discussion of instruction, etc.
* Support teacher growth and effectiveness
* Measure the quality of instruction
* Provide a strong framework for Teacher Career Pathway observations

**Intentional Design:**

* Championing Joyful Rigor
* Alignment to the Common Core and AP, especially the shifts toward increased rigor and deep student thinking
* Include both “foundational” (e.g., tight classroom or kids on task) and excellence (e.g., investment and deep student thinking) criteria
* Keep 1-5 scoring for consistency
* Reduce the number of Essentials in half; 1 page per Essential, 5 pages total
* Focus more on student actions. We believe that student outcomes are the ultimate measure of instruction, so we are focused less on individual teacher inputs and more on the impact of these inputs

**Scoring Guidance:**

* Determine what rating BEST answers the big question for the Essential: ineffective, emergent, solid, strong, or exemplary. The evidence does not need to meet every single indicator as the overall score is not an average of the indicators beneath it; it is more about the rating of the preponderance of evidence.
* The indicators are listed in order of importance, so if someone is especially weak or strong on indicators towards the top of the page, it should influence the overall rating.
* A score of “3 – Solid” indicates that the teacher is meeting the bar for effective instruction. Scores will be out of 25 (5 possible points per Essential) and may not translate exactly to the previous Essentials Rubric. We will reevaluate observation minimums needed for stage advancement.
* A score of “5 – Exemplary” means that all the level 4 indicators are present and the level of instruction matches the descriptors of “5 – exemplary.” To reach a 5, there may not always be evidence of all of the exemplary criteria, but there cannot be evidence that goes against them.

**The Five Essentials**

** RIGOR** | Are students grappling with content aligned to the College Ready Bar?

** FOCUS** | Are students focused on the work of the lesson from start to finish?

**INVESTMENT** | Would students stay if they had the choice to leave?

** THINKING** | Are students doing the heavy lifting? Does instruction unleash the intellect of scholars?

** FEEDBACK** | Are students rapidly improving the quality of their work based on clear, actionable feedback?

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| **RIGOR of TASK / CONTENT | Are students grappling with content aligned to the College Ready Bar?** | | | | | |
| 5. EXEMPLARY | 4. STRONG | | 3. SOLID | 2. EMERGENT | 1. INEFFECTIVE |
| *All Level 4 descriptors and…*  - The top five students in the class are clearly challenged by the content pitch.  - Students show excitement when the rigor level is increased and/or students actively seek out additional challenge.  - Students sound like writers, scientists, mathematicians, historians, artists, etc.; they use the technical vocabulary and lens of viewing problems appropriate to the discipline. | **College Ready Bar**  - The ENTIRE lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards (pitched at/above Common Core and/or AP and never lower than the bar set by the AF S+S).  - The central question/task is pitched to the college ready bar and designed to maximize thinking and discourse.  **Student Outcomes**  - ALL or ALMOST ALL oral and written responses are top-quality (meet stated criteria and often include many of the following: accurate answer, clear logic, strong evidence, standard grammar, complete sentences, clear, and demonstrate best effort).  **Time Spent in Rigorous Tasks**  - Students engage in frequent higher order thinking – beyond basic remembering (Bloom) or recall and reproduction (Webb).  - Students spend almost all of class time on the most rigorous tasks and questions. The big question drives the class with scaffolding provided when necessary.  **Differentiation**  - Differentiation is leveraged so that ALL or ALMOST ALL students are challenged (e.g., extension activities, individual focus areas, changing independent v. partner v. small group for different students)  - When appropriate, students generate more than two arguable answers or solution pathways to the focus question.  **Word and World Knowledge**  ~~-~~ ALL or ALMOST ALL scholars appropriately and accurately use domain- specific vocabulary and reference strong background knowledge on the topic. | | **College Ready Bar**  - MOST of the lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards (pitched at/above Common Core and/or AP and never lower than the bar set by the AF S+S).  - The central question/task is pitched to the college ready bar and clearly drives the lesson.  **Student Outcomes**  - MOST oral and written responses are top-quality (meet stated criteria and often include many of the following: accurate answer, clear logic, strong evidence, standard grammar, complete sentences, clear, and demonstrate best effort).  **Time Spent in Rigorous Tasks**  -Students engage in ample higher order thinking – beyond basic remembering (Bloom) or recall and reproduction (Webb).  - Students spend most of class time on the most rigorous tasks and questions. The big question does drive the class, but there may be too much scaffolding (or not enough) at times.  **Differentiation**  - Differentiation is leveraged so that MOST students are challenged (e.g., extension activities, individual focus areas, changing independent v. partner v. small group for different students).  - When appropriate, students generate two arguable answers or solution pathways to the focus question.  **Word and World Knowledge**  ~~-~~ MOST scholars appropriately and accurately use domain-specific vocabulary and reference strong background knowledge on the topic. | **College Ready Bar**  - SOME of the lesson focuses on content that advances students toward grade-level standards (pitched at/above Common Core and/or AP and never lower than the bar set by the AF S+S).  - The central question/task is pitched to the college ready bar but is not clearly driving the lesson.  **Student Outcomes**  - SOME oral and written responses are top-quality (meet stated criteria and often include many of the following: accurate answer, clear logic, strong evidence, standard grammar, complete sentences, clear, and demonstrate best effort).  **Time Spent in Rigorous Tasks**  - Students engage in some higher order thinking – though the focus is mostly on basic remembering (Bloom) or recall and reproduction (Webb).  - Students spend some of class time on the most rigorous tasks and questions.  **Differentiation**  - Differentiation is leveraged so that SOME students are challenged (e.g., extension activities, individual focus areas, changing independent v. partner v. small group for different students).  - Students generate only one answer or solution pathway to the focus question (when more than one is appropriate).  **Word and World Knowledge**  ~~-~~ SOME scholars appropriately and accurately use domain-specific vocabulary and reference strong background knowledge on the topic. | **College Ready Bar**  - The lesson DOES NOT adequately focus on content that advances students toward grade-level standards (pitched at/above Common Core and/or AP). The bar is set lower than the AF S+S.  - The central question/task is NOT pitched to the college ready bar.  **Student Outcomes**  - FEW oral and written responses are top-quality (meet stated criteria and often include many of the following: accurate answer, clear logic, strong evidence, standard grammar, complete sentences, clear, and demonstrate best effort).  **Time Spent in Rigorous Tasks**  - Students rarely engage in higher order thinking – focusing instead on basic remembering (Bloom) or recall and reproduction (Webb).  - Students spend little to no class time on the most rigorous tasks and questions.  **Differentiation**  - Differentiation is not leveraged, resulting in FEW or NO students being challenged (e.g., extension activities, individual focus areas, changing independent v. partner v. small group for different students).  - Students generate unclear answers or solution pathways to the focus question.  **Word and World Knowledge**  ~~-~~ FEW scholars appropriately and accurately use domain-specific vocabulary and reference strong background knowledge on the topic. |
| C:\Users\GennaWeinstein\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Word\FOCUS_ICON_BLACK.PNG **FOCUS | Are students focused on the work of the lesson from start to finish?** | | | | | |
| 5. EXEMPLARY | | 4. STRONG | 3. SOLID | 2. EMERGENT | 1. INEFFECTIVE |
| *All Level 4 descriptors and …*  - Students demonstrate a sense of ownership of behavioral expectations and intellectual effort by self-correcting and cueing each other to fix behavior.  - Students immediately and politely insist that other students demonstrate habits of effective discussion, when applicable.  - Students assume responsibility for transitions, routines, and procedures and ALL students execute them in an orderly and efficient manner, requiring no direction or narration from the teacher.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students demonstrate a palpable sense of urgency in starting and completing both routines and academic work, by assessing their own understanding of the task and asking questions immediately if confused. | | **On Task**  - Off-task behavior has no material impact on the classroom climate or the learning of others.  - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students follow directions the first time they are stated.  - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students fix their behavior immediately and in a professional manner when corrected.  **Tight Routines**  - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students execute efficient and clear transitions, routines, and procedures according to the routine Vision of Excellence (VOE) by adhering to expected speed, route, and volume level.  **Scholar Habits**  - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students meet the school’s Vision of Excellence (VOE) for foundational habits by speaking in loud and proud voices, sitting in active learning positions, tracking the speaker, raising confident hands, speaking in complete sentences, listening actively, participating in whole-group or partner discussions, and completing instructional activities.  **Urgency**  - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students sustain their focus during the entire learning activity, adjusting their pace, if necessary, to complete the activity within the designated amount of time. - ALL (or ALL but ONE) students who finish a task early ”assign themselves” quality work to leverage extra time. | **On Task**  - Off-task behavior is minor and has a minimal effect on the classroom climate or learning of others.  - ALMOST ALL students follow directions the first time they are stated.  - ALMOST ALL students fix their behavior immediately and in a professional manner when corrected.  **Tight Routines**  - ALMOST ALL students execute efficient and clear transitions, routines, and procedures according to the routine Vision of Excellence (VOE) by adhering to expected speed, route, and volume level.  **Scholar Habits**  - ALMOST ALL students meet the school's Vision of Excellence (VOE) for foundational habits by speaking in loud and proud voices, sitting in active learning positions, tracking the speaker, raising confident hands, speaking in complete sentences, listening actively, participating in whole-group or partner discussions, and completing instructional activities.  **Urgency**  - ALMOST ALL students sustain their focus during the entire learning activity, adjusting their pace, if necessary, to complete the activity within the designated amount of time. - ALMOST ALL students who finish a task early ”assign themselves” quality work to leverage extra time. | **On Task**  - Off-task behavior moderately affects the classroom climate and the learning of others.  - MOST students follow directions the first time they are stated.  - MOST students fix their behavior immediately and in a professional manner when corrected.  **Tight Routines**  - MOST students execute transitions, routines, and procedures according to the routine Vision of Excellence (VOE) by adhering to expected speed, route, and volume level.  **Scholar Habits**  - MOST students meet the school’s Vision of Excellence (VOE) for foundational habits by speaking in loud and proud voices, sitting in active learning positions, tracking the speaker, raising confident hands, speaking in complete sentences, listening actively, participating in whole-group or partner discussions, and completing instructional activities.  **Urgency**  - MOST students sustain their focus during the entire learning activity, adjusting their pace, if necessary, to complete the activity within the designated amount of time.  - MOST students who finish a task early “assign themselves” quality work to leverage extra time. | **On Task**  - Off-task behavior significantly affects the classroom climate and the learning of others.  - SOME, FEW or NO students follow directions the first time they are stated.    - SOME, FEW or NO students fix their behavior immediately and in a professional manner when corrected.  **Tight Routines**  - SOME, FEW, or NO students execute transitions, routines, and procedures according to the routine Vision of Excellence (VOE) by adhering to expected speed, route, and volume level.  **Scholar Habits**  - SOME, FEW or NO students meet the school’s Vision of Excellence (VOE) for foundational habits by speaking in loud and proud voices, sitting in active learning positions, tracking the speaker, raising confident hands, speaking in complete sentences, listening actively, participating in whole-group or partner discussions, and completing instructional activities.  **Urgency**  - SOME, FEW, or NO students sustain their focus during the entire learning activity, adjusting their pace, if necessary, to complete the activity within the designated amount of time.  - SOME, FEW, or NO students who finish a task early ”assign themselves” quality work to leverage extra time. |

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| **INVESTMENT | Would students stay if they had the choice to leave?** | | | | |
| 5. EXEMPLARY | 4. STRONG | 3. SOLID | 2. EMERGENT | 1. INEFFECTIVE |
| *All Level 4 descriptors and…*  - Students create as well as participate in the joyful rigor.  - Students authentically celebrate each other and name the values and contributions each other bring.  - Students fully own classroom rituals and character goals and play active leadership roles in the classroom in ways that reflect a deep commitment to their teacher, each other, and their learning.  -There is a palpable zest for learning. | **Joy**  - The tone of the class is very positive. ALL or ALMOST ALL students project happiness and enthusiasm in facial expressions and body language.  - There is more than one moment of joy, wonder, or laughter.  **Curiosity & Challenge**  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students demonstrate motivation to answer questions and solve problems. (Evidence includes extending the conversation, taking strong notes, searching sources for evidence, raising hands to engage, staying on topic during partner and small group discussions, actively tracking and nodding).  ~~-~~ ALL or ALMOST ALL students demonstrate a willingness to take risks by sharing their thinking even when they’re not sure that they’re right (this sounds like: “I’m not sure, but my best thinking is…” or “I’ll take a stab here…” OR a teacher or student celebration of a risk taken).  **Respect & Care**  - ALL students respond respectfully to the teacher and each other.  - There are MANY moments where students encourage each other to take risks (e.g., giving snaps and smiling at each other without prompting). | **Joy**  - The tone of the class is positive. MOST students project happiness and enthusiasm in facial expressions and body language  - There are one or more moments of joy, wonder, or laughter.  **Curiosity & Challenge**  - MOST students demonstrate motivation to answer questions and solve problems. (Evidence includes extending the conversation, taking strong notes, searching sources for evidence, raising hands to engage, staying on topic during partner and small group discussions, actively tracking and nodding).  ~~-~~ MOST students demonstrate a willingness to take risks by sharing their thinking even when they’re not sure that they’re right (this sounds like: “I’m not sure, but my best thinking is …” or “I’ll take a stab here …” OR a teacher or student celebration of a risk taken).  **Respect & Care**  - ALMOST ALL students respond respectfully to the teacher and each other.  - There SOME moments where students encourage each other to take risks (e.g., giving snaps and smiling at each other without prompting). | **Joy**  - The tone of the class is neutral. MANY students do not appear happy or enthusiastic in facial expressions and body language  - Some students appear bored.  **Curiosity & Challenge**  - SOME students demonstrate motivation to answer questions and solve problems. (Evidence includes extending the conversation, taking strong notes, searching sources for evidence, raising hands to engage, staying on topic during partner and small group discussions, actively tracking and nodding).  ~~-~~ SOME students demonstrate a willingness to take risks by sharing their thinking even when they’re not sure that they’re right (this sounds like: “I’m not sure, but my best thinking is …” or “I’ll take a stab here …” OR a teacher or student celebration of a risk taken).  **Respect & Care**  - MOST students respond respectfully to the teacher and each other.  - There are FEW to NO moments where students encourage each other to take risks (e.g., with snaps and smiles). | **Joy**  - The tone of the class is negative. Several students appear overtly bored, unhappy, or angry in facial expressions and body language.  - Many students appear bored. There are NO moments of joy or wonder.  **Curiosity & Challenge**  - FEW or NO students demonstrate motivation to answer questions and solve problems. (Evidence includes extending the conversation, taking strong notes, searching sources for evidence, raising hands to engage, staying on topic during partner and small group discussions, actively tracking and nodding).  ~~-~~ FEW or NO students demonstrate a willingness to take risks by sharing their thinking even when they’re not sure that they’re right (this sounds like: “I’m not sure, but my best thinking is …” or “I’ll take a stab here …” OR a teacher or student celebration of a risk taken).  **Respect & Care**  - SOME, FEW, or NO students respond respectfully to the teacher and/or each other.  - Students discourage each other from taking risks (e.g., rolling eyes or snickering in response to mistakes or comments). |

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| **THINKING | Are scholars doing the heavy lifting? Does instruction unleash the intellect of scholars?** | | | | | | | |
| 5. EXEMPLARY | 4. STRONG | | 3. SOLID | | 2. EMERGENT | | 1. INEFFECTIVE |
| *All Level 4 descriptors*  - The class functions effectively with student facilitation. The teacher could step away, and the students could lead the class and push deep thinking on their peers (prompting each other to ‘stretch it,’ ‘prove it,’ and/or explain their logic).  - Students actively revise their own thinking in light of other students’ responses and annotate and jot down new ideas without prompting.  - Students actively push back when the teacher or another student is over-scaffolding. This looks like students saying the following: “I’ve got this. Wait. Let me try.” or “Let’s give Andre a chance. He can do this.”  - Students make natural connections to previously learned topics or other subjects to answer the focus question/master the objective. | **Heavy Lifting**  - Students complete ALL or ALMOST ALL of the cognitive work during the lesson (at least 80% of the time), by reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, computing, or problem solving.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL discourse activities are student-to-student interaction v. student-to-teacher-to-student interactions.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students are prepared to answer the question when cold called, turning and talking, or writing.  **Evidence**  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students provide meaningful evidence to support their thinking in discussion and in writing (≥ 80%). This may occur after teacher prompts, but the majority of scholars do so unprompted.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students explain the logic of their thinking (how evidence supports the claim). This may occur after teacher prompts.  **Discourse**  - Discourse engages the ENTIRE class (e.g. speaking, note-taking, active listening, etc.).  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students evaluate and build on their peers’ thinking.  - When appropriate, students FREQUENTLY answer ‘stretch it’ questions (e.g., how, why, more precise, tell me more, apply in different context).  **-**Discourse results in thinking that is FULLY coherent, insightful, and precise/accurate.  - Discourse fully underscores ALL of the key points of the lesson. | | **Heavy Lifting**  - Students complete MOST of the cognitive work during the lesson (at least 60% of the time), by reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, computing, or problem solving.  - MOST discourse activities are student-to-student interaction v. student-to-teacher-to-student interactions.  - MOST students are prepared to answer the question when cold called, turning and talking, or writing.  **Evidence**  - MOST students provide meaningful evidence to support their thinking in discussion and in writing (≥ 60% of time). This may occur after teacher prompts.  - MOST students explain the logic of their thinking (how evidence supports the claim). This may occur after teacher prompts.  **Discourse**  - Discourse engages MOST of the class (e.g. speaking, note-taking, active listening, etc.).  - MOST students evaluate and build on their peers’ thinking.  - When appropriate, students OFTEN answer ‘stretch it’ questions (e.g., how, why, more precise, tell me more, apply in different context).  - Discourse results in thinking that is MOSTLY coherent and precise/accurate.  - Discourse fully underscores MOST of the key points of the lesson. | | **Heavy Lifting**  - Students complete SOME of the cognitive work during the lesson (at least 40% of the time), by reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, computing, or problem solving, but the teacher completes more of it.  - SOME discourse activities are student-to-student interaction v. student-to-teacher-to-student interactions.  - SOME students are prepared to answer the question when cold called, turning and talking, or writing.  **Evidence**  - SOME students provide meaningful evidence to support their thinking in discussion and in writing (≥ 40% of time). This may occur after teacher prompts.  - SOME students explain the logic of their thinking (how evidence supports the claim). This may occur after teacher prompts.  **Discourse**  **-** Discourse engages SOME of the class (e.g. speaking, note-taking, active listening, etc.).  - SOME students evaluate and build on their peers’ thinking.    - When appropriate, students SOMETIMES answer ‘stretch it’ questions (e.g., how, why, more precise, tell me more, apply in different context).  - Discourse results in thinking that is SOMEWHAT coherent and precise/accurate.  - Discourse fully underscores SOME key points of the lesson. | | **Heavy Lifting**  - Students complete LITTLE of the cognitive work during the lesson (less than 40% of the time), by reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, computing, or problem solving.  - FEW or NO discourse activities are student-to-student interaction v. student-to-teacher-to-student.  - FEW or NO students are prepared to answer the question when cold called, turning and talking, or writing.  **Evidence**  - FEW or NO students provide meaningful evidence to support their thinking (< 40% of time), even if teacher prompts.  - FEW or NO students explain the logic of their thinking, even if teacher prompts.  **Discourse**  - Discourse engages only a FEW students in the class (e.g. speaking, note-taking, active listening, etc.).  - FEW or NO students evaluate and build on their peers’ thinking.  - Students RARELY answer ‘stretch it’ questions (e.g., how, why, more precise, tell me more, apply in different context).  - Discourse results in thinking that is incoherent and imprecise/inaccurate.  - Discourse fails to underscore key points of the lesson. |
| C:\Users\GennaWeinstein\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary Internet Files\Content.Word\FEEDBACK_ICON_BLACK.PNG**FEEDBACK | Are students rapidly improving the quality of their work based on clear, actionable feedback?** | | | | | | | |
| 5. EXEMPLARY | | 4. STRONG | | 3. SOLID | | 2. EMERGENT | 1. INEFFECTIVE |
| *All level 4 descriptors and…*  - Students independently check and fix their work based on previous feedback they’ve received.  - Students use effective, economized language to give oral and written feedback to each other.  - Students effectively track their own progress and focus their work based on that data. | | **Aggressive Monitoring**  - Especially during the central written tasks of the lesson, ALL or ALMOST ALL students receive clear, actionable feedback on work quality OR several students have extended conferences with the teacher based on areas of need.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students respond matter-of-factly or positively to teacher correction and fix work immediately to meet the Criteria for Success.  **Student Evaluation**  -ALL or ALMOST ALL students refer to clear criteria and evidence when evaluating their work or the work of other students.  - Students have FREQUENT opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of others.    - ALL or ALMOST ALL students respond matter-of-factly or positively to peer feedback and immediately improve their work based on feedback given.  **Progress Monitoring**  - Students have MANY opportunities to debrief common misunderstandings or to practice tricky problem-types or tasks (individually + whole group) based on previous or current areas of difficulty.  - ALL or ALMOST ALL students know / can articulate what they are working on with regard to a critical grade level standard. | | **Aggressive Monitoring**  - Especially during the central written tasks of the lesson, MOST students receive clear, actionable feedback on work quality OR a few students have extended conferences with the teacher based on areas of need.  - MOST students respond matter-of-factly or positively to teacher correction and fix work immediately to meet the Criteria for Success.  **Student Evaluation**  -MOST students refer to clear criteria and evidence when evaluating their work or the work of other students.  - Students have MANY opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of others.  - MOST students respond matter-of-factly or positively to peer feedback and immediately improve their work based on feedback given.  **Progress Monitoring**  - Students have SOME opportunities to debrief common misunderstandings or to practice tricky problem-types or tasks (individually + whole group) based on previous or current areas of difficulty.  - MOST students know / can articulate what they are working on with regard to a critical grade level standard. | | **Aggressive Monitoring**  ~~-~~ Especially during the central written tasks of the lesson, SOME students receive feedback on work quality OR one or two students have extended conferences with the teacher based on areas of need.  - SOME students respond matter-of-factly or positively to teacher correction and fix work immediately to meet the Criteria for Success.  **Student Evaluation**  - SOME students refer to clear criteria and evidence when evaluating their work or the work of other students.  - Students have SOME opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of others.  - SOME students respond matter-of-factly or positively to peer feedback and immediately improve their work based on feedback given.  **Progress Monitoring**  - Students have FEW opportunities to debrief common misunderstandings or to practice tricky problem-types or tasks (individually + whole group) based on previous or current areas of difficulty.  - SOME students know / can articulate what they are working on with regard to a critical grade level standard. | **Aggressive Monitoring**  - Especially during the central written tasks of the lesson, NO or FEW of students receive feedback on work quality during independent work OR no students have extended conferences with the teacher based on their areas of need.  - NO or FEW students respond matter-of-factly or positively to teacher correction and fix work immediately to meet the Criteria for Success.  **Student Evaluation**  -NO or FEW students refer to clear criteria and evidence when evaluating their work or the work of other students  - Students have NO or FEW opportunities to evaluate their own work or the work of others.  - NO or FEW students respond matter-of-factly or positively to peer feedback and immediately improve their work based on feedback given.  **Progress Monitoring**  - Students have NO opportunities to debrief common misunderstandings or to practice tricky problem-types or tasks (individually + whole group) based on previous or current areas of difficulty.  - NO or FEW students know / can articulate what they are working on with regard to a critical grade level standard. |