Element 19: Helping Students Practice Skills, Strategies, and Processes

A teacher’s growth in using instructional strategies can be tracked along the developmental scale. Coaching and growth needs vary for each developmental category on this scale. A teacher at the “beginning” level on the development scale has very different needs than a teacher at the “applying” level. Therefore, in order to track a teacher’s growth in using this strategy, it is important to begin by pinpointing his/her current level of use.

Monitoring for the desired effect of a strategy is a critical component addressed in the developmental scale. Monitoring is the teacher act of checking evidence for desired student learning of critical content during instruction, which includes student action and teacher witnessing of that action.

For this element, when the content involves a skill, strategy, or process, the teacher engages students in practice activities that help them develop fluency and alternative ways of executing procedures.

The desired effect of this element states that students develop automaticity with skills, strategies, or processes by engaging in appropriate practice activities.

**Developmental Scale**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Beginning</th>
<th>Developing</th>
<th>Applying</th>
<th>Innovating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Uses strategy incorrectly or with parts missing.</td>
<td>When content involves a skill, strategy, or process, engages students in practice activities, but the majority of students are either not monitored for or not displaying the desired effect of the strategy.</td>
<td>When content involves a skill, strategy, or process, engages students in practice activities and monitors for evidence of the extent to which it increases fluency or deepens understanding for the majority of students.</td>
<td>Adapts and creates new strategies for unique student needs and situations in order for the desired effect to be evident in all students.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The following scale has been enhanced to demonstrate common mistakes, examples and non-examples, along with ideas for scaffolding and extended learning.

**BEGINNING** – Uses strategy incorrectly or with parts missing.

Some common mistakes include:

- The teacher employs strategies that are not aligned to the students’ developmental level such that the students are unable to increase fluency with the skill, strategy, or process.
- Practice is too massed, or presented in too short a period of time such that the practice doesn’t increase fluency.
- Practice is too distributed, or practiced over too long of a period of time such that the practice doesn’t increase fluency.
- The teacher asks students to continuing practicing the same skill, strategy, or process after automaticity has been reached.
- The teacher does the practice and has students copy the work rather than practice independently.
- The teacher does not correct mistakes during practice sessions.

**DEVELOPING** – When content involves a skill, strategy, or process, engages students in practice activities, but the majority of students are either not monitored for or not displaying the desired effect of the strategy.

Some examples of typical, correct use of the strategy include:

- The teacher models correct practice or provides correct examples of the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher structures and paces activities at the appropriate developmental level allowing students to develop fluency with the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher varies the practice such that if they experience success they can attempt more difficult skills, strategies, or processes.
- The teacher provides frequent opportunities to practice discrete parts as well as the entire skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher asks students to monitor their own ability, or that of partners, to increase success and fluency during practice.
- The teacher uses “worked examples.”
- The teacher engages students in massed and distributed practice activities.
**APPLYING** – When content involves a skill, strategy, or process, engages students in practice activities and monitors for evidence of the extent to which it increases fluency or deepens understanding for the majority of students.

At this point in development, the teacher uses the strategy with increased accuracy and fluency while staying focused on student outcome, or desired effect. At the “applying” level, the teacher must provide opportunity for students to demonstrate that the strategy is having the desired effect – in this case, students develop automaticity with skills, strategies, or processes by engaging in appropriate practice activities. Planning for the implementation of this strategy allows the teacher to identify how he/she will monitor for the desired effect. Some examples of monitoring may include:

- The teacher listens and observes as students work with a partner to ensure that they are able to successfully practice a skill, strategy, or process at an appropriate pace and developmental level.
- The teacher observes and interacts as students practice to ensure that it is improving students’ fluency and automaticity in the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher examines and provides feedback on student work that captures evidence of the use of the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher asks students to demonstrate their fluency of a skill strategy or process and identifies which students haven’t reached the level of automaticity.
**INNOVATING** – Adapts and creates new strategies for unique student needs and situations in order for the desired effect to be evident in all students. In order to do this, the teacher scaffolds, extends, and/or creates a macrostrategy as necessary. As a result of this, **ALL** students develop automaticity with skills, strategies, or processes by engaging in appropriate practice activities.

Examples of providing unique support to meet the individual needs of all students include:

- The teacher provides an alternate method of practice that can increase fluency at the developmental level of the student.
- The teacher guides students in a small group demonstration and gradually releases control back to students.
- The teacher pairs experienced students who can provide extra support and guidance with inexperienced students in a partner activity.
- The teacher scaffolds work such that students have more structure and guidance to be able to increase fluency.
- The student alerts students to challenges or obstacles they may encounter and provide tips as to how to overcome them.
- The teacher helps students create a series of small goals to help them experience success.

Examples of extension include:

- The teacher allows more independence and/or less structure for the students as they practice.
- The teacher asks students to explore other ways they can practice the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher asks students to create their own practice examples of the skill, strategy, or process.
- The teacher asks students to track their progress and determine when they think they are ready to move to varied practice.