



Silver Strong & Associates

Thoughtful Education Press

It's All About the Learning

**Cornerstones for Building Effective and
Engaging Learning Environments**



Silver Strong & Associates
Thoughtful Education Press



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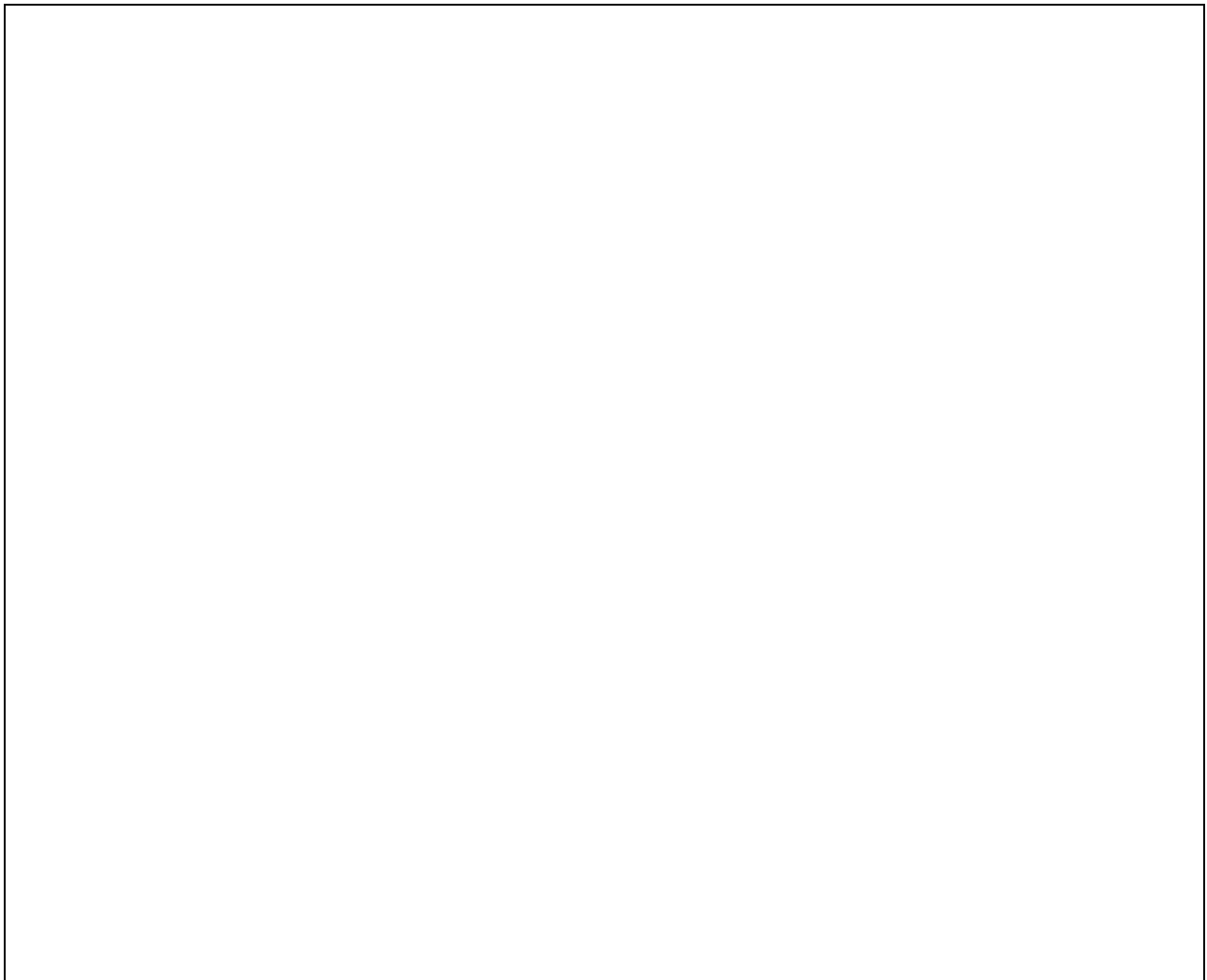
Essential Questions

1. What critical foundations do all successful classrooms share?
2. How do we build these critical foundations in our own classrooms?
3. What are some of the key challenges associated with each cornerstone and how do specific tools address these challenges?
4. How do we grow our practice?

Think of a Time

Think back for a moment on that school year, your very favorite year as a teacher—that year when you came home each night exhilarated, just raring to get back into the classroom tomorrow.

Or, if you're a new teacher, imagine what that school year will be like. What would you see? What would you hear?

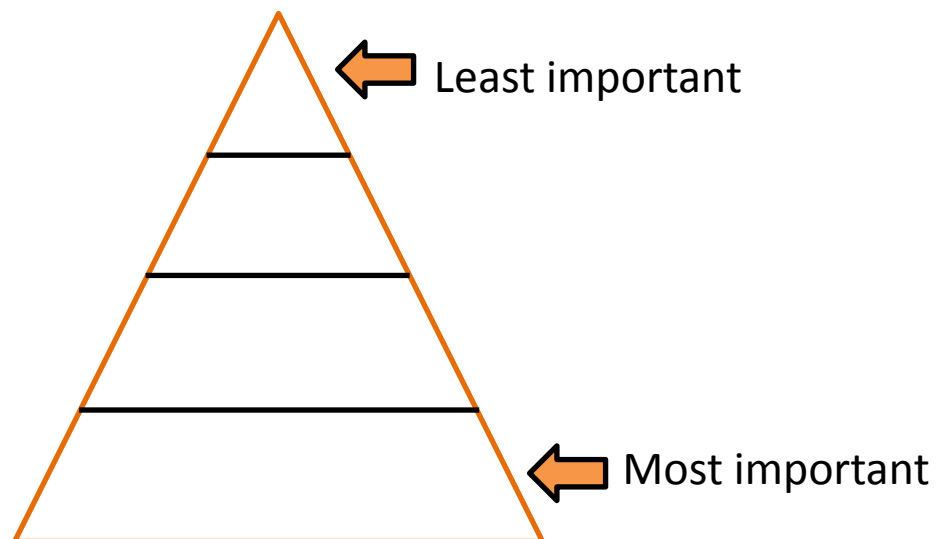
A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for the user to write their response to the prompts above.

The Four Cornerstones

<p>Organization, Rules, and Procedures</p> <p>How do you organize your classroom to enhance learning and establish rules and procedures that clarify expectations?</p>	<p>Positive Relationships</p> <p>How do you build meaningful relationships with your students and among students to promote learning?</p>
<p>A Culture of Thinking and Learning</p> <p>How do you develop a classroom culture that promotes serious learning and sophisticated forms of thinking?</p>	<p>Engagement and Enjoyment</p> <p>How do you motivate students to do their best work and inspire the love of learning?</p>

What Are Your Priorities?

Use the priority pyramid to decide which cornerstones are most important to you. Put the cornerstone that you think is *most important to you for starting the school year* at the base. Then, place the remaining cornerstones in the pyramid, with the one you believe is *least important for starting the school year* at the top.



Rules to Live and Learn By



Remember. *It's all about the learning!*

Have your students complete this question stem:

Learning means_____.



What would be two indicators (one for each rule) for our workshop?



Think: How can you learn as much as possible? What would make our workshop a great place for everyone to learn?



Jot down your thoughts.



Share your thoughts with a neighbor.



Discuss your ideas with your group.

Other Tools for Building Cornerstone One: Organization, Rules, and Procedures

Tool:
What is the tool? (Briefly describe it)
What challenge does the tool address?
What are its benefits?
How is it used in the classroom?

Hand of Knowledge

1. Meet with a neighbor.
2. Take turns discussing your Hand of Knowledge. While your partner is presenting, listen carefully and try to learn as much as possible about your partner.
3. Partners should ask questions about each other's Hands of Knowledge to learn more about each other and how each prefers to learn.
4. Discuss how you would use the information you learned about your partner to teach him or her effectively.

Pinky Finger—When you have free time, what do you do for fun?

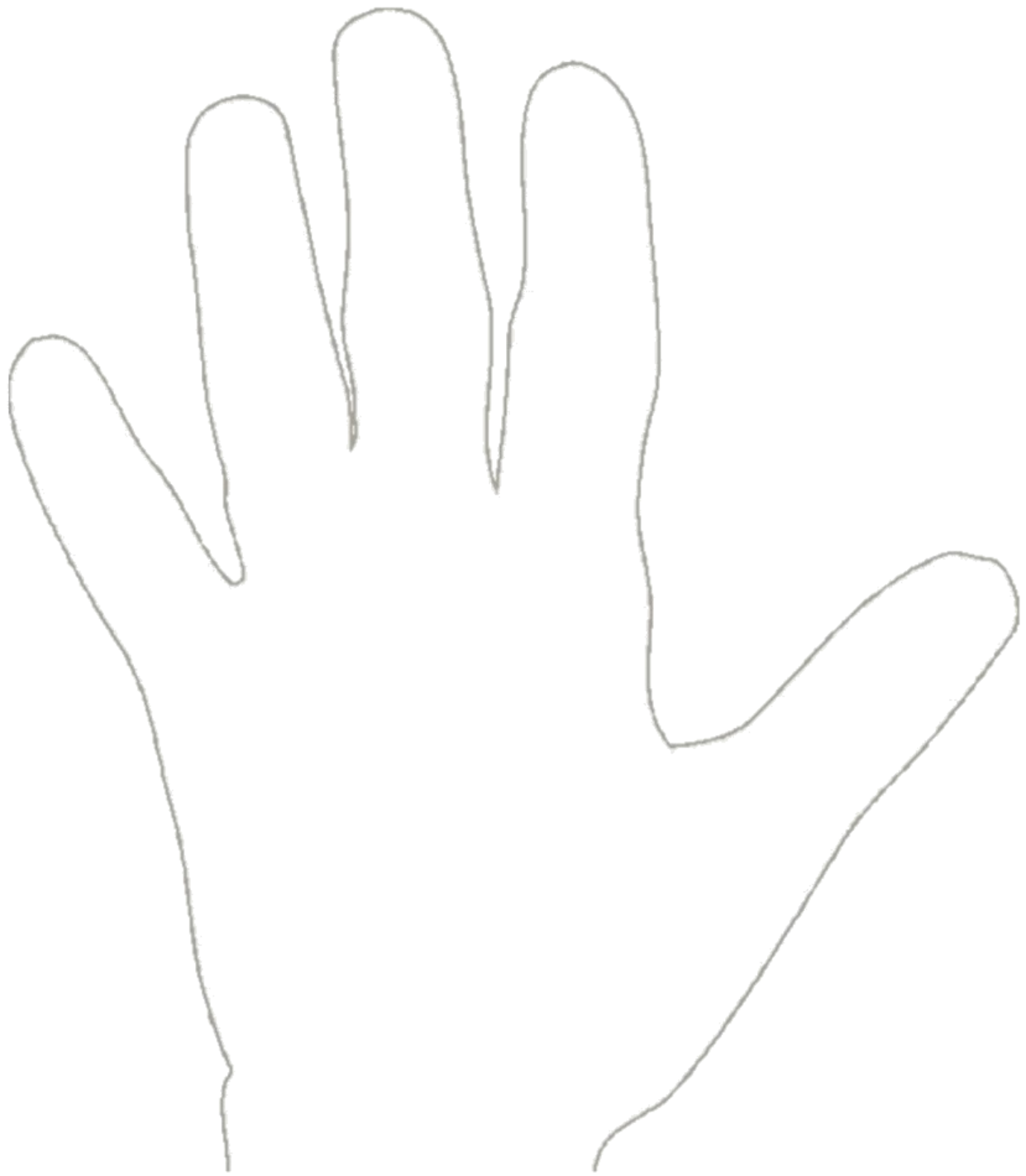
Ring Finger—What is something you're really good at?

Middle Finger—When school is hard, what makes it hard?

Index Finger—Think about something interesting that you learned outside of school. What is it and how did you learn it?

Thumb—What is a dream that you have for your future?

Palm—What word or phrase best characterizes you as a learner?



Community CIRCLE

Create a prompt that invites students to share personal knowledge, experiences, or opinions

“Think of a time when your attitude has either helped or gotten in the way of your success. What were you doing? How did your attitude affect your success?”

Invide students to sit in a circle and share their responses

Review key ideas by having students summarize each other’s responses

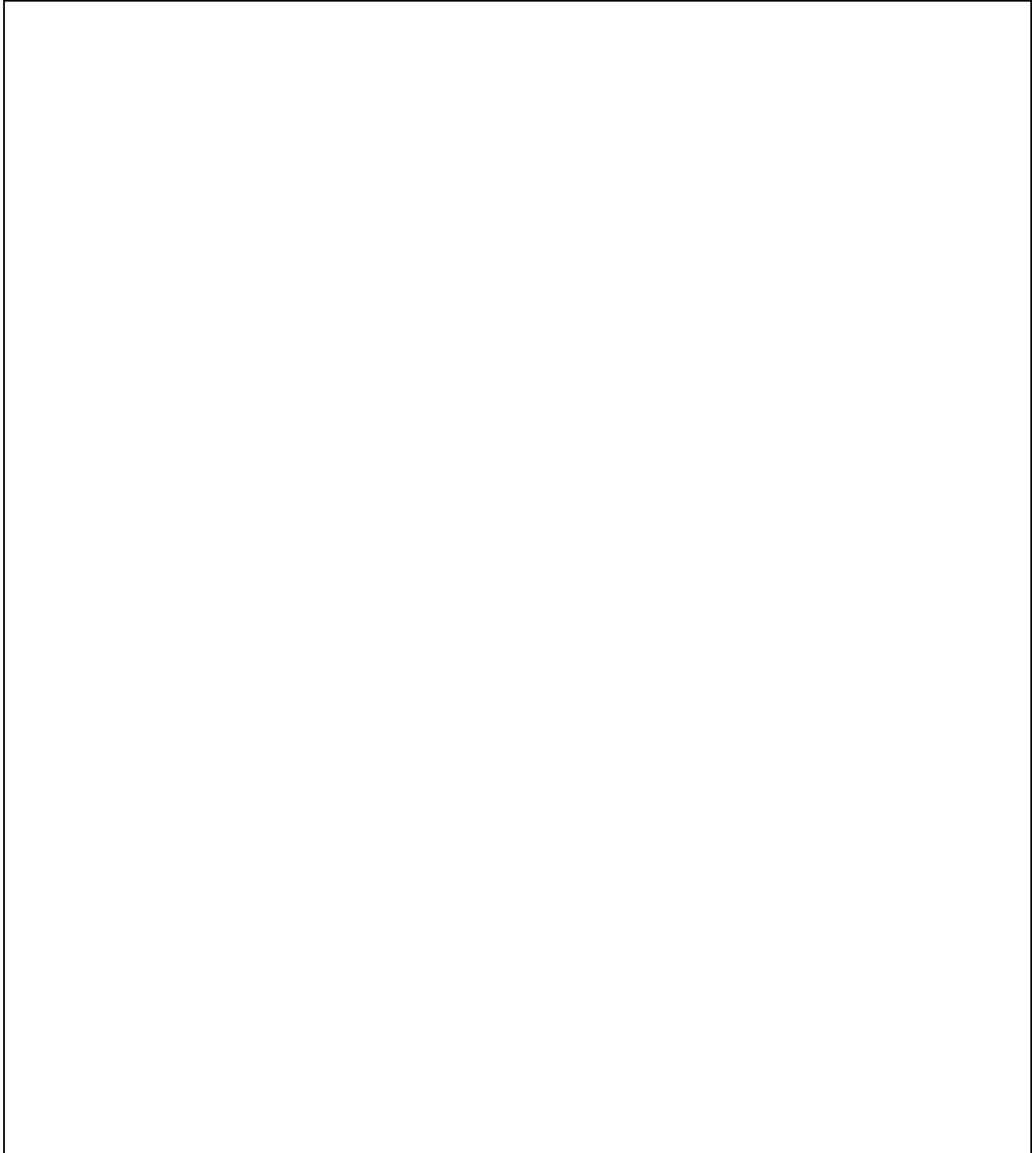
Compare responses

Look for patterns

Extend student thinking

Application Task

Using what you've learned, work as a group to create a poster for your classroom. Your poster should help your students understand the power of attitude and how it affects achievement.





A large, empty rectangular box with a thin black border, intended for students to create a poster. The box occupies most of the page below the instructions.

Other Tools for Building Cornerstone Two: Positive Relationships

Tool:
What is the tool? (Briefly describe it)
What challenge does the tool address?
What are its benefits?
How is it used in the classroom?

Questioning in Style

1. Review the four types of questions.
2. Decide which question style best reflects your own personal style.
3. Meet with others who have chosen the same style of question.
4. Discuss what your choice tells you about the style of learning and questions that you are most engaged by.
5. Each team should identify a set of characteristics that you believe represents the group and its style of learning.

<p>Are you a <u>Who</u>, <u>What</u>, <u>Where</u>, or <u>When</u> question?</p> 	<p>Are you a “<u>So what</u>” or a “<u>You</u>” question? (e.g. How would you feel? What would you do?)</p> 
<p>Are you a <u>Why</u> or <u>How</u> question?</p> 	<p>Are you a “<u>What if</u>” or “<u>How</u> many possible ways” question?</p> 

Questions in Style for *My Brother Sam is Dead*

Let’s try it out. On the screen, you’ll see a brief passage from the young adult historical fiction novel, *My Brother Sam is Dead* by James Lincoln Collier and Christopher Collier.

Read the passage carefully. Then, we’ll respond to four styles of questions about the passage.

- a) If this argument was a kind of weather, what kind of weather would it be?
- b) Summarize the passage.
- c) If you were Tim (the narrator), what would you say to your brother and father to help them deal with their strong feelings so that they could listen to each other?
- d) This segment is a study in _____. (Pick one: generational differences, loyalty, myopia, freedom). Collect evidence to support your position.

Which style of question is each question above?

Mastery Question	Interpersonal Question
Understanding Question	Self-Expressive Question

How does each question increase engagement and your depth of understanding?

Does one particular question appeal more to you?

Questioning in Style Planning Form

MASTERY QUESTIONS

ask students to *remember facts and procedures*:

- ✓ Recall facts and formulas
- ✓ Observe and describe
- ✓ Locate, organize, or sequence
- ✓ Perform procedures/calculations with accuracy
- ✓ Define, restate, or summarize

My questions:

INTERPERSONAL QUESTIONS

ask students to *relate on a personal level*:

- ✓ Share their feelings, reactions, and opinions
- ✓ Draw connections to their own lives
- ✓ Assist or advise other people
- ✓ Put themselves in someone else's shoes
- ✓ Consider personal preferences and values

My questions:

UNDERSTANDING QUESTIONS

ask students to *reason, analyze, and explain*:

- ✓ Compare and contrast
- ✓ Explain, reason, or understand why or how
- ✓ Give reasons, evidence, and examples
- ✓ Analyze, interpret, evaluate, or conclude
- ✓ Classify or categorize

My questions:

SELF-EXPRESSIVE QUESTIONS

ask students to *create and explore possibilities*:

- ✓ Speculate (what if?), hypothesize, or predict
- ✓ Generate and explore alternatives
- ✓ Create or design something original
- ✓ Represent concepts visually/symbolically
- ✓ Develop and explore similes

My questions:

Other Tools for Building Cornerstone Three: Engagement and Enjoyment

Tool:
What is the tool? (Briefly describe it)
What challenge does the tool address?
What are its benefits?
How is it used in the classroom?

Using the Eight Cs to Engage Students

Since our initial work explores the connection between style and engagement, we have continued this investigation by using the *Learning Style Inventory for Students* (Silver & Strong, 2004) and teacher observations to identify students who show a particularly strong preference for each of the four styles. Then, through interviews with the students and their teachers, classroom observations, and analysis of the work students produced, we were able to identify a set of reliable motivators, or “levers” that teachers could pull to engage the drives that are indigenous to each of the four styles. We call these motivators the “Eight Cs of Student Engagement,” and they are identified below.

<p>We can engage Mastery learners’ drive to succeed through...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Competition and Challenge</p>	<p>We can engage Interpersonal learners’ drive toward relationships through...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Cooperation and Connections (to student’s lives, feelings, and experiences)</p>
<p>We can engage Understanding learners’ drive to make sense of things through...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Curiosity and Controversy</p>	<p>We can engage Self-Expressive learners’ drive toward originality through...</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Choice and Creativity</p>

So how do we use the Eight Cs of Engagement to increase our students’ commitment to learning? Here are some quick ideas to get you started.

The Eight Cs	Description	Examples
Competition	To maximize the motivational power of competition, focus classroom activities around mild and friendly forms of competition that allow everyone to experience success.	Use tried-and-true gaming formats like Teams-Games-Tournaments, Vocabulary Baseball, and Jeopardy to help students shore up gaps in their comprehension and prepare for tests.
Challenge	Many students love a challenge. Encourage them all to strive for excellence.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use strategies like Graduated Difficulty and Graduated Warm-Ups, which allow students to select tasks at the appropriate level of challenge • Communicate expectations and goals clearly and enthusiastically. Encourage all students to “go the extra mile” in pursuit of learning goals.
Curiosity	<p>Look for opportunities to puzzle your students, to engage them in solving mysteries associated with your content.</p> <p>Provoke students to go beyond the obvious with “Yes, but why?” questions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you ever wonder how Renaissance artists were able to carve so much detail into solid rock using only basic technology? Let’s find out. • How did a ragtag militia of untrained soldiers defeat the most powerful army in the world? (American Revolution unit) • Yes, $5^0 = 1$, but why? • Why have comic books gotten so dark? What happened to the “comic” element?
Controversy	Our content areas are loaded with controversies, arguments, and intellectual disagreements. Invite students into that controversy by challenging them to take and defend positions on hot-button issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do the Beatles deserve to be studied alongside Beethoven, Duke Ellington, and other giants of Western music? • Is Algebra a discovery or an invention? • Do men and women write differently? • Why do we need insects anyway? Wouldn’t life be easier without them?

The Eight Cs	Description	Examples
Choice	Capitalize on this powerful motivator by giving students more opportunities to make selections and decisions about their learning.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use Learning Centers and Shared Interest Groups (small groups of students working together to learn about a topic of common interest). • Offer choice-based assignments and projects that give students the chance to decide how to demonstrate what they have learned.
Creativity	Give students the opportunity to express their own unique ideas as they explore the content.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use metaphors and similes to explore content: <i>How is a colony like a child?</i> • Encourage divergent thinking: <i>Can you find a different way to represent your thinking?</i> • Use non-routine problem and design tasks: <i>Can you create an interesting logo that includes at least two different transformations?</i>
Cooperation	Allow students to learn with others—as part of a community of learners.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Incorporate cooperative learning activities, partnerships, and small group work into the learning process. • Encourage lots of discussion. • Use cooperative learning strategies such as Jigsaw, Reciprocal Learning, and Collaborative Summarizing.
Connections	Find ways to connect learning to students' values, feelings, experiences, and lives beyond the school walls.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When is rebellion justified? • Have you ever used fractions to settle a dispute? • What do you think of George's decision at the end of <i>Of Mice and Men</i>? Did he do the right thing? • How do advertisers use color theory to influence consumers?

Other Tools for Building Cornerstone Four:

A Culture of Thinking and Learning

Tool:
What is the tool? (Briefly describe it)
What challenge does the tool address?
What are its benefits?
How is it used in the classroom?

How Do You Grow the Four Cornerstones in Your Classroom?

1. What are you already doing to support the Four Cornerstones?

2. Take the Four Cornerstones Assessment Questionnaire. (See pg. 24)

3. Identify a cornerstone that might need more attention and establish a performance goal.

4. Review the tools in that cornerstone and select a tool that you believe will address the goal.

5. Teach the tool to your students. You may want to use Procedural PRO to teach the tool to students. Observe student engagement and how the tool works.
6. Use the reflection form in *Tools for a Successful School Year (Starting on Day One)* (p. 110) to reflect your use of the tool and its impact.
7. When possible work with your colleagues to show student work and discuss what you have learned.

The Four Cornerstones Questionnaire

Organization, Rules, and Procedures	Positive Relationships
<p>Classroom procedures are clear—students understand them and take responsibility for following them on their own.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>Student interaction and collaboration is regular, positive, and leads to better learning and stronger relationships.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>There are clear learning targets and expectations that drive learning, and students assess their progress toward these targets and expectations.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>The classroom is an emotionally safe and comfortable place for students to share their thoughts, feelings, experiences, and attitudes towards learning.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>The classroom is driven by a strong sense of respect—respect for teachers, respect for fellow students, respect for classroom and materials.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>I know what interests and motivate each student, and I strive to make each student’s learning personal and rewarding.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>Students are actively engaged in defining behaviors and learning expectations that make a classroom a great place to live and learn.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>Students in my classroom know how to address and resolve conflicts with respect for each other.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
A Culture of Thinking and Learning	Engagement and Enjoyment
<p>Students in my classroom are expected to use academic vocabulary in their speech and writing.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>My classroom is an inviting, stimulating, and fun place to learn.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>Students consistently back their claims with relevant evidence and in complete thoughts.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>Students have regular opportunities to “stretch” their minds—think outside the box—and engage in a variety of thinking challenges.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>Students are comfortable debating and arguing through ideas objectively.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>Students in my classroom understand that effort and striving to improve are critical to their success.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>
<p>Students recognize that good thinking is slow; they have developed the habit of stopping and thinking before responding or beginning their work.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>	<p>I strive to make even the most challenging tasks and activities active and engaging for my students.</p> <p style="text-align: right; margin-right: 20px;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Absolutely! <input type="checkbox"/> Getting There... <input type="checkbox"/> Are you joking? </p>

What? So What? Now what?

What? What did you do during this learning experience?

So what? What did this experience teach you about yourself or the content?

Now what? How can you apply, extend, or benefit from what you learned?