



**VIRTUAL**

INSTRUCTIONAL  
**LEADERSHIP**  
CHALLENGE

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TRANSCRIPT

MODULE 4

# What Are Instructional Frameworks?

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Welcome to module four of the virtual instructional leadership challenge. I'm Justin Baeder, and in this module we're going to dive in deep to one of the most powerful tools that you have at your disposal for improving professional practice. What we call instructional frameworks. Now you no doubt already have a number of frameworks at play in your school already, from your teacher evaluation system to expectations that you may have pulled from a curriculum that you use to trainings that you've done in the past.

And while you may have quite a few of these in place already, in almost every school there's an enormous opportunity to get clearer and more specific about our shared expectations by articulating them in the format of an instructional framework which I'll share with you as we go through this module. And what I often find when I talk with schools about their instructional frameworks is that shared expectations are articulated in some way but in a format that's not especially helpful, or they're mostly implicit. They're at the level of a buzzword like differentiated instruction. And they're not laid out in the way that I'm going to show you in this module.

So with that in mind, let's jump right in and talk about instructional frameworks. Now in every feedback conversation, as we talked about in module three, really there are three participants. If you're talking one-on-one with a teacher, it's not just you and the teacher who are in the room there's also a third party, a third participant in the conversation. And that is your instructional framework. The set of shared expectations that gives you a common ground on which to evaluate practice.

So that when you're talking about evidence, you're talking about what you saw in the classroom or what you're seeing in a teacher's virtual practice. It's not you who is setting the expectation and setting the bar and saying, "This is good, this is not good." And so forth. It's that third party of the framework. And we want the framework to do that job because it reduces defensiveness on the teacher's part. It saves you from having to be the bad guy, and it allows you to partner with the teacher in having an honest evidence-based conversation about practice.

And that framework as we'll see in this module, gives the teacher a roadmap for improvement. So let's jump into a formal definition of what an instructional framework actually is. I define an instructional framework as a set of shared expectations serving as the basis for conversations about professional practice. A good framework creates a roadmap for improving practice by articulating clear levels of performance in specific areas. Now throughout this module, we'll talk about how to break down an area of practice into specific sub areas, and then how to identify levels of performance for each of those specific areas.

And I'm actually going to share with you some training that you can share with teachers if you'd like them to do this in teams, which can be very, very fruitful. So we've got our definition here, at a minimum though the way I want you to think about instructional frameworks is simply as vocabulary for talking about practice. a shared lexicon, a shared understanding of what good practice looks like. And again, the challenge often in schools is that we think we're on the same page. We think we have a shared vocabulary, but different people can use the same term and mean totally different things.

So it's not quite enough to just have a shared vocabulary. We actually have to have a shared understanding, and the best way to do that is by developing rubrics as you will see in this module. So there are four specific places where you may want to look for ideas about what instructional frameworks are already in place, or if you're developing your own where you might get the expectations and the language for those rubrics.

A great starting point is your teacher evaluation criteria. And as you'll see very soon, one of the best examples of an instructional framework is Charlotte Danielson's framework for teaching. It's been in development for decades, it's been in use for decades. And it's actually the law of the land in much of the United States that teachers are evaluated based on the Danielson framework. So look at what you're working with currently. You may already have your school's, custom built evaluation framework. Perhaps your school district did something in house or if you're in an independent school, perhaps you developed your own evaluation tool. That's certainly one place to start.

You can also look at any practices that you have implemented organization-wide that are maybe unique to your school or at least valued in your school that you've talked about. That you've done professional development around, that you've provided feedback around. Those are a great place to start as well. When it comes to expectations that are more useful to teachers. Often, we want to be more specific to the grade level and the subject area that teachers work with because that's where they're going to find more of the value versus some of those general evaluation criteria. So looking at your curriculum and looking at specific trainings that people have been to can also be a very valuable source.

So ideally, what we're going for here is a full-on rubric. Rubric that describes teacher practice in specific areas with ideally four levels of performance like the Danielson framework has, and rich qualitative descriptions for each level of performance in each specific category. So we're going to break something down into its components and then describe each of those components with a leveled rubric. Now some of those rubrics as we mentioned, are going to apply to everyone like the Danielson framework.

Other rubrics are going to apply just to teachers of certain grade levels or subject areas. And typically, the more specific we can be the more useful that rubric is going to be to those teachers in that particular area. So we'll call those broad versus narrow frameworks, that distinction between frameworks that apply to everyone versus those that apply just to a particular department or team. So broad and narrow, you might think of that as a kind of school-wide focus versus a departmental focus. Obviously, the narrower the focus, the more useful it is to the teacher, and the harder it's going to be for you as a leader to develop that framework and use it with a wide variety of teachers. As leaders, it's typically more convenient for us to use broader rubrics that meet the needs of everyone but in a less fine tuned way, right?

The Danielson framework it can be used to evaluate a kindergarten teacher, or a 12th grade orchestra teacher, but since their job is so different. Their work is so different. The level of specificity that we can get into with a broader framework is just not there compared to some of those teacher developed rubrics that we can develop with a narrower focus. So whatever types of frameworks you choose to develop, I want you to see some of the big advantages that can come from getting more specific, because in most schools there are shared expectations. There is shared language, but it's simply isn't written down or if it is written down, it's not specific enough. And it may not exist at all in any form other than buzzwords.

So if we have buzzwords that we're using, we're talking about formative assessment or differentiated instruction, or the whole child. Or we're talking about restorative practice, we have all these different things, trauma informed, all these different things that we could have a buzzword for. I want you to ask yourself, do we have a rubric for that? Do we know what that actually looks like in practice in specific areas and at specific levels of performance? If not, that's normal, but it means we have an opportunity there and we're going to fully take advantage of that opportunity in this module of the virtual instructional leadership challenge. So let's jump into the three problems that we tend to have with most shared expectations.

As we said, often they're tacit. They're not written down or they're not written down in enough detail. And even when they are written down with some detail, often they're designed in somewhat misguided instrument. We take an expectation and we turn it into a checklist and then we use the checklist to do classroom walkthroughs. And then teachers say, "Well, wait where did you get that checklist? That checklist doesn't describe my practice at all. That's not what we're even trying to do in our department. Why are you observing me with this checklist?" We can run into a lot of problems when we use a poorly designed or ill-conceived instrument. And yet most of the instruments out there are missing some of the key characteristics that you'll see in this module. So we have to get the design right.

As we've been talking about, we have to get the specificity right. We have to provide enough detail that we can distinguish between levels of performance and we can actually know what we're looking for. And then we also have problems with usage. The way that those shared expectations are used. And often these problems are around evaluating too early in the process. Making judgments like scoring something or writing something based on just a tiny bit of evidence in a brief window of time. I believe that we can use these instruments evaluatively. We can use them to score, practice on a rubric. That is one of the things you can do with a rubric, but we have to make sure that we're not doing that prematurely. And long before we come up with a score we have to use the rubric to have a conversation.

Back to the beginning of this section, where we talked about the three parties in a feedback conversation. We have to, remember that this is a feedback conversation not an exercise in filling out paperwork. It is a conversation first and foremost. So if we're going to develop shared instructional frameworks, if we're going to go beyond those buzzwords, we're going to get specific. We have to design our tools effectively. We have to avoid some of the pitfalls of those ill-conceived observation tools and prioritize the conversation. It really all does come down to the conversation.

So that is the design problem, the specificity problem where we don't get detailed enough and we don't take the insider's view of practice. We have to really be careful when it comes to specifics about identifying specifics that are obvious to us as observers, what we call observability bias earlier in this program. And we've got to instead take the insider's view of practice. And then finally, again, we've got to make sure that we are using instruments in those shared expectations properly, engaging teachers in conversation first and foremost, and then only over a very long period of time attempting to make summative judgements.

So that's it for the intro here to module four, if you would go ahead and get out your journal and reflect on these three questions at the beginning of the module four, section of the journal. First, what broad frameworks are already in place in your organization? What do you use for teacher evaluation? What's been your focus in terms of feedback, and what narrow frameworks?

Second, what narrow frameworks have you encountered either in your school or in a past school, or perhaps in your teacher or administrator preparation program? What specific and narrow frameworks have you worked with in the past? And when it comes to your current situation, looking at the opportunities that are in front of you in your current school, what problems among the three that we identified of specificity design and usage problems with shared expectations come to mind for the frameworks that you've been thinking about? Take a few moments to reflect on that in your journal. And when you've done that, you're ready to move on to the next section.

# Qualitative Rubrics and Their Inferior Substitutes

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Let's talk now about what a good instructional framework looks like. The gold standard is what we call a qualitative rubric. And in this section, we're going to compare and contrast that gold standard qualitative rubric with some of the inferior substitutes that seem to keep popping up in our profession. So first things first, let's get one thing clear, that an instructional framework is a rubric. It is not simply a list of strategies. It is not simply a list of characteristics of effective teaching. And it's not simply a list of buzzwords.

It's actually a rubric that is organized into components and levels of performance. And when it comes to making expectations clear and more specific, we have to be very careful that we don't take our expectations and turn them into an instrument that we use for observation, or evaluation, or whatever purpose that has unintended negative consequences. So the big challenge in using shared expectations that we're going to address in this section, and then we'll address the others in upcoming sections, is this challenge of design.

There is a risk that when we design an instrument with expectations for teaching, that it will miss the point or that it will send us in the wrong direction and distract us from the improvement work that we could be doing if we design a well-thought-out instrument. So again, the gold standard for those types of instructional frameworks is what we call a qualitative rubric. And what I thought we would do in this section is compare each of these, and I'll give you several examples, both real world examples, and I have a made up example just for fun, so that you can see the differences between qualitative rubrics, what we call frequency and extent rubrics, checklists, and rating scales.

So kind of going from best to worst here. So let's jump right in to the first type, the gold standard instructional framework which is a true rubric. And if you use an evaluation system like Danielson's Framework for teaching, or perhaps Kim Marshall's Teacher and Principal Evaluation Rubrics, or perhaps something that was developed by James Stronge, or perhaps something that was developed within your district, or based on a modification of one of the above, you've probably seen some pretty high-quality true qualitative rubrics. And I think the Danielson Framework is probably the best known example. It's used in the majority of states, I think, across the US, and definitely is the number one framework for evaluating teacher practice. And it's broken into four domains, each of which has five or six components. And really any one of these domains, or even any one of these components, could be considered an instructional framework by itself. And any work that you and your teachers do to design your own frameworks is of course not going to be this ambitious. It's not going to cover this much ground, and it doesn't need to.

So we're going to look at just a small piece of the Danielson Framework as an example of the kind of rubric that you may want to develop for specific expectations within your school. So if we zoom in to Domain Three, which is Instruction. I know this is too small to read here, but the components of the domain for instruction are, A, Communicating With Students, B, Using Questioning and Discussion Techniques, C, Engaging Students in Learning, D, Using Assessment in Instruction, and E, Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness. And again, this is just one page of the rubric. It's got very small text and it has a lot of text in each column for the different levels of performance. So we've got Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished. And notice that typically, Distinguished, has more text in it, right. There are more layers that are being added when we get up to

that highest level of performance. And that will show up in a number of different ways as we talk about the distinctions between these different types of instruments. So in a true qualitative leveled rubric, really there is a qualitative difference between the levels of performance. It looks different. It feels different. It has different characteristics. And it's not just more or less of the same as you go from one column to the next. Teachers aren't just doing more, or more consistent, or more often, of those same practices. They're actually engaging in different practices at different levels of performance.

For example, if we look at 3a: Communicating with Students, it says in the Proficient column that, "The instructional purpose of the lesson "is clearly communicated to students "including where it's situated "within the broader learning." But in the Distinguished column it says, "The teacher links the instructional purpose "of the lesson to the larger curriculum "when it comes to anticipating misunderstandings." That's not mentioned at all in the Proficient column, but it is in the Distinguished column.

And also added in the Distinguished column is the sense of student ownership. You know, that "Students contribute "to extending the content "by explaining concepts to their classmates." And that's a theme throughout the Danielson Framework is that in the Distinguished column, we've added on this layer of student ownership, and not everything is teacher-directed anymore because that's been handed over to students. That is to Danielson a big characteristic of level four distinguished practice. So that qualitative difference is going to be incredibly useful to us in feedback conversations because we can see it in a moment. I can't be present for every lesson that a teacher teaches, but I can be present for one lesson and then talk about what I saw. And if I know what qualitatively the distinction is between basic and proficient and distinguished, I'm going to be able to see that even if I only have one example. I don't have to be there all the time to get a sense of what that teacher's practice is like.

And to illustrate this throughout the remainder of this section, I wanted to share kind of a fun example of a rubric for wearing a necktie. I think it's easy to get zoomed into our specific instructional concerns. So I thought to contrast the differences between these different types of instructional frameworks, we would just do this one as a kind of a fun way to compare them. So if I were to come up with a gold standard qualitative rubric for wearing a neck tie, I would have again, Unsatisfactory, Basic, Proficient, and Distinguished. And in the unsatisfactory category, maybe the necktie's missing entirely, maybe it's ripped, maybe it's stained, maybe it's badly out of style or just does not match the suit. And then as you go up in performance, we have things like it gets cleaner, it's properly tied, it's a modern style that matches the suit in the proficient category, the length and the knot are appropriate. And then in the distinguished category, extremely stylish, the knot is appropriate for the shirt collar and the weight of the tie, which we have not mentioned earlier. So we're adding some additional dimensions into our consideration at the distinguished level of performance, tied perfectly. Pocket square might be an option for distinguished, right? So we can add additional dimensions that we weren't even worrying about at the lower levels of performance.

Now, a great example of a rubric that does this pretty well but also exhibits some characteristics of the next kind of framework that we're going to talk about is Kim Marshall's rubric. And Kim actually makes these rubrics available open source on his website at [marshallmemo.com](http://marshallmemo.com), and they're excellent rubrics. But I wanted to share this particular example of Domain A, Component A, Knowledge. If you read along the top line here around teacher knowledge, "Is expert in the subject area." And then we'll go straight to the next column, "Knows the subject matter well." And

then in the third column, by the way we're going the opposite direction here, so we're going from best to worst. In the third column, Improvement Necessary, it says, "Is somewhat familiar with the subject." And then in the lowest category, Does Not Meet Standards, the top row says, "Has little familiarity "with the subject matter." And what we're starting to see here is that this is to some extent, what we call a frequency and extent rubric. And what's really happening here is that we're not describing true qualitative differences between levels of performance.

We're describing the extent to which one expectation is met, or perhaps how often that expectation is met, or perhaps to some extent how many characteristics are expected. And this is where the boundary gets a little bit fuzzy between frequency extent rubrics and those true qualitative rubrics. You know, you have to do a little bit of that kind of how many dimensions do we pay attention to description. But the thing we have to be careful about is not just packing the rubric with checklist items. That's what we want to avoid to make a truly useful high quality rubric.

Another example rubric when it comes to teacher evaluation is Jim Stronge's rubric from Stronge and Associates. And again, this is a pretty good high quality rubric. You've got a performance standard at the top. You've got performance indicators. But then look at the rubric. You've got Effective in the purple row. Effective is the expected level of performance. And then if you go over to the left and look at Highly Effective, it says, "In addition to meeting the requirements for Effective, "the teacher also does these things." And again, it's okay to add layers as you go up in higher levels of performance.

But if you look at Partially Effective, what's the difference between effective and partially effective? Well, it starts out, "The teacher is inconsistent "in the use of the state standards, "the school's curriculum, data, "or strategies and resources "to meet the needs of all students." So inconsistency is a legitimate problem, so I respect the fact that Stronge has included that here. But inconsistency is also very difficult to observe. So if we want to have an evidence-based conversation, we're going to have some challenges. Now that's not always a challenge, if the purpose of the rubric is simply for teacher self-reflection. For example, this is a rubric from the Responsive Classroom curriculum.

And if you are thinking about your own practice, you can reflect on how consistent you are with something or how often you do that. And that's okay, so this can be useful. But we have to be careful about defining the differences between levels of performance solely in terms of frequency or consistency. Because when we're observing, when we're using our observations as evidence for a discussion, for a conversation with the teacher, or ultimately for a high stakes decision, we have to keep in mind that we may not actually have very much evidence about frequency, or extent, or consistency.

For example, in the top row of this rubric, the highest level of performance says, "Teacher always uses calm respectful voice." The middle level, which is three out of five. I guess it's actually a five point scale, "The teacher sometimes uses a calm, respectful voice." And then the lowest level of performance actually does have some qualitative differences. It's not just about inconsistency. There actually is a qualitative difference here. So this one's kind of in between too. It says, "Teacher often speaks "with raised, angry, sarcastic, pleading, or rushed voice." So again, this one has some elements of both the qualitative and the frequency extent rubrics and that's true for many rubrics. You may come up with one and realize that it's kind of a combination.

The more you can get the differences between levels of performance to be truly qualitatively dif-



ferent, the easier it's going to be to use that rubric in conversation and have evidence that backs your kind of assignment of what you saw to a particular category.

So let's look at what that might be for our necktie example. What would it be like to have a frequency extent rubric for a necktie? We might say level one is never wears a tie. Level two is sometimes wears a tie. Level three is consistently wears an appropriately styled and tied tie. And level four is always.

But here's the problem with that kind of language about sometimes, consistently, always, never. It's not always about that, right. More, doing something more often is often not the point. And we risk entirely missing the point of the improvement opportunity in front of us. So we've already mentioned that it can be hard to document frequency and extent. I don't know how often the teacher uses an appropriate voice or uses an inappropriate voice. That's very difficult for me to document as an observer.

And when it comes to improvement, we wanna make sure that there's actually a vision for what better looks like. And in a qualitative rubric, you have that vision. You just look over in the next column and it's described crystal clear so the teacher knows what to do. With a frequency extent rubric, the takeaway for the teacher is often, "Well, try harder at that," or, "Do more of it, or, "Be more consistent." And that's not always the path to improvement, just as the path to better tie wearing is not to wear a tie 24 hours a day, or to wear a bigger tie.

More is not always better. And that becomes even more apparent when we get down to the next type of a framework that we're going to talk about in this section, the checklist. So we're getting lower and lower in quality here. Checklists can be useful. They can serve a purpose, especially around data collection, if you just want to know, you know, to what extent are we using these particular practices?

For example, this is from a school district in Texas that was interested in collecting data on the use of Teach-Like-a-Champion techniques in their classrooms. You can of course go around and observe and mark off which strategies you're seeing in different classrooms. But we're probably not going to get very far in an improvement conversation using a checklist. And again, if we explain by way of analogy, the items on our checklist might be correct and they might even be exactly the same as the items on our high quality rubric, like necktie is clean, it's not inappropriately, it matches and so on.

But again, we risk missing the point. And often when it comes to improvement, how is more important than whether, or to what extent, or how often. When it comes to improvement, we want to know how a teacher is making decisions so that we can improve that decision-making, we can have an impact on the teacher's practice in terms of quality, not just frequency or quantity. When it comes to any kind of improvement or evaluative purpose, we miss out on the path to growth if we reduce our rubric to just a checklist.

And we have to be really careful about the risk of gaming the system, right? If the teacher knows, you know, we have to have the objective written on the board, and there has to be a Turn and Talk, you know, all these things, these little checklist kind of things that we're looking for, they can cram all of those checklist items into a lesson that's still not a good lesson, right.

We can entirely miss the point. And we can be even less helpful in that if we get very arbitrary about what we're looking for. I heard an example just the other day that I remember was a problem in my school district a decade ago around using Turn and Talks, right? There had been an expectation in this district that teachers would use Turn and Talks as an engagement strategy. And principals were looking for Turn and Talks. And teachers knew that principals were looking for Turn and Talks and collecting data on how often their teachers were doing Turn and Talks.

So lo and behold, teachers happen to always do a Turn and Talk when there was an administrator watching. Now we can ask ourselves how much we can really conclude from that if it becomes this kind of gamed response to an expectation. Is it really helpful? I'm going to guess that it's not. And the more arbitrary we are with what goes on our checklist, the more destructive this gets in terms of the quality of our feedback conversations.

For example, if I become very picky about my expectations and say, "You know what, it's not enough "to have a properly tied knot. "It has to be a Half-Windsor. "And it's not enough to have a stylish tie. "It has to be a black silk tie and not too wide. "Has to be skinny 'cause that's what I like." That sounds ridiculous, but we do that with teaching strategies. And we'll talk later in this module about pet strategies and the danger of overemphasizing certain pet strategies and not really looking at the big picture of teacher decision-making.

So we've got to not miss the point when it comes to defining our expectations. And of course we can even further miss the point with a rating scale, which like a checklist may describe different areas of performance but without that rich description that's present in a rubric. For example, this is the ELEOT 2.0 observation tool. And if you read some of the descriptions, they sound fine. You know, "Learners engage "in differentiated learning opportunities "that meet their needs. "Learners have equal access to classroom discussions. "Learners are treated in a fair, clear "and consistent manner."

Those are all good things. I don't have any argument with any of those criteria. The problem here is the rating scale itself. What does it mean to be a level four, or a level three, or a level two? I don't know. We don't have any kind of calibration here in terms of what evidence should lend itself to a particular rating, so it becomes kind of arbitrary on the observer's part. And we can try to calibrate our observations. You know, we can do these observations together. We can train everybody to watch the same video and give the same rating. But if it's not really evidence-based, and if there's no description in a rubric of what level two, or level three, or level four practice looks like, we're missing that roadmap to growth that we would have if we were using a true qualitative rubric.

And of course in our necktie example, we could come up with a rating scale that has the same criteria as that rubric. But if we're missing the description, we're not really going to know, what does style mean? If I am a teacher who is, you know metaphorically wearing an unstylish tie, what do I do to improve? That often is the missing piece in our feedback conversations. We know there's a problem, we know we're not happy with what we're seeing, but we don't know what to tell the person to do differently, right. So those rating scales are pretty common.

It's great to see rating scales get replaced by higher quality rubrics in a lot of cases like with the Danielson Framework's growing popularity. But when we're missing those descriptions, we're really kind of hamstrung in our ability to help teachers grow through that feedback conversation. So the gold standard again, is a leveled rubric with clear qualitative differences between each level

of performance, not just varying degrees of the same thing. And that's true whether we're talking about a framework or an instrument that's been developed by your state, by your province, by your district, or something that you make in-house.

And what I'd like to ask you to do now is get your journal out and reflect on these two questions. First, thinking about your teacher evaluation instrument, what you officially use to evaluate teachers, is it a true qualitative rubric, the gold standard? Is it a frequency and extent rubric? And often it will be a combination of those two. Is it a checklist, or is it a rating scale? I find that many schools that develop their own in-house teacher evaluation system start with a checklist or a rating scale because frankly they're much simpler to develop. So there may be an opportunity there to flesh that out into a more robust rubric. Not a project you have to take on right now, but just something to think about long-term. And as you think about developing smaller rubrics for more targeted improvement work, how can you make that rubric fit the definition that we talked about in this section of a true qualitative rubric?

And then the second question, what other shared expectations do we use that fit these descriptions? Are there other look-fors, or rubrics, or protocols, or observation instruments, or walk-through instruments, or rounds protocols, that you use in your organization? And if you can identify those, then you can identify an opportunity to move to a higher quality instrument. That's it for this section. So when you've filled out your journal, you're ready to move on.

# Making Frameworks More Specific

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Let's talk now about how to make shared expectations more specific. Now, in the last section we talked about how to deal with the design problem that we often face with shared expectations, that those expectations get turned into a misguided instrument. In this section we're going to tackle the challenge of specificity, the challenge that in too many cases we have an expectation but it's not detailed enough to really give people guidance as to what to do to improve their practice.

So we're going to talk in this section about how to provide that detail and actually put those shared expectations in writing with enough specificity that they're useful. So, to make your framework language more useful in those feedback conversations, the key is of course to make it more specific, to go beyond something like a buzzword, like a student engagement, this year we're focusing our walkthroughs on student engagement, we really wanna see more student engagement while you can repeat the buzzword engagement all day long but it's not going to lead to a lot of improvement if nobody knows what you mean by that. Or if everyone thinks they know what you mean by it but everyone has their own definition and you're really not on the same page.

You can repeat until you're blue in the face, we're focusing on assessment this year. But if nobody knows what you truly mean by assessment and everyone has their own definition, it's not going to get us anywhere. We could do the same thing with instructional purpose. If we don't know what we mean by that if we're not specific enough, it's not going to lead to improvement. But if you have started with a buzzword that's a perfectly great place to start. If purpose or assessment or engagement is your starting point, you're in the right place and you can move forward. And what we're basically going to do here is go from a buzzword, you know, a single term to more of a specific shared definition and ultimately to a leveled rubric. And in the last section, we talked extensively about the characteristics of a high quality instructional framework that takes the form of a leveled rubric. And we contrasted that to other ways of describing shared expectations. And you saw just how powerful it is to have a true leveled rubric where the distinction between different levels of performance is obvious even if you're only observing once, even if you have limited evidence to work with, you can see it because the description of what you're looking for for that level of performance is so clear.

So, here's what I'd like to ask you to do for some big improvement priority that you have in mind. Maybe you are working on purpose or engagement or assessment, or, you know, some buzzwords, some priority for improvement. Rate the specificity of your shared expectations at the moment. Is it a pure buzzword where there's really, you know, we've said that it's a priority but we haven't really said what it means? Is there a shared meaning kind tacitly people know what you mean but there may not be a formal definition? Is there a formal written definition that would be a three on our scale here? Is there a rubric?

If you've already gone as far as to develop a rubric, then you're in great shape and finally level five, is that rubric a true qualitative rubric? Like we talked about in the last section with clear, qualitative distinctions between the levels of performance. It's not just, you know do the same thing at the previous level, but more often, or to a greater extent, there's actually a tangible difference between those levels of performance. So, being more specific is going to pay off because it's going to give people a roadmap to improvement. So, rather than say, "Well, I got a two and I don't like that I wish

I was a three” People can actually look at the rubric and say, “Here’s where I need to go next.” That detail is built in to the rubric. So, to get more specific before we talk about how to do that, how to get more specific, I wanna talk about what we don’t need to worry about.

And I see often when districts are using low quality instructional frameworks, they’re using low quality instruments that focus too much on a score and focus too much on inter-rater reliability, what they try to do is they try to say, “Well what does it look like to the observer?” We call this observability bias. What does good practice look like to the observer and then how can we get all of our observers to score that same practice in the same way? And again, we can practice with video, we can get people watching the same video and trying to score it the same way and then if there’s disagreement people can talk about it and try to get on the same page in terms of their score. I wanna suggest that that is actually a colossal waste of time because what’s missing is the clarity of understanding with the teacher.

If the rubric itself has nothing but one, two, three, four on it, it doesn’t have the descriptions of a true qualitative rubric, then we’re missing the opportunity for improvement that we would have if we built those in and created that roadmap for growth. So, I think we’ve really got to get away from this idea of scoring a brief observation. I don’t know where we got this idea that teaching is like a reality show or as a singing competition that can just be scored as a discreet performance.

When you go into a classroom what you are observing is a lesson, you know, it is a... To some extent a self-contained microcosm of the teacher’s practice, but it’s not really self-contained. What you are seeing in any given observation has a great deal to do with what the teacher did at the beginning of the year, what the teacher did at the beginning of the unit, what the teacher did at the beginning of the week and it doesn’t really make sense to evaluate an individual lesson completely by itself and give it a score. It only has meaning within a larger context.

And it’s only by talking with the teacher that we can get a sense of what that context is and then make decisions about where to focus next to help that teacher improve. So, I really dislike the idea of inter-rater reliability because I think it treats teaching too much as these discrete performances like, you know, singing a song on American idol or, you know one of those other reality shows where there’s a brief performance and that’s all you’re judged on and you’re judged with a score and there’s not necessarily a rubric or any kind of evidence-based alignment between that score and the actual performance.

We’ve got to get away from that paradigm because it is the wrong paradigm for teaching. And instead what we’ve got to do is look for the insider’s view of practice. We don’t need to worry so much about what it looks like to an observer to have exemplary practice, we need to look at what it looks like to the teacher from the inside. If we’re going to focus on teacher decision-making and improve teacher decision-making, we’ve got to let go of that observability bias focus. So what does it look like from the inside? What are the key dimensions of the practice and then within each key dimension, or as we said in the Danielson’s framework, the components of each domain, what are the various levels of performance?

I thought I would give an example of sticking to a pacing guide here of both the outsider’s view and the insider’s view. If we’re thinking about teachers sticking to the pacing guide from an observer’s standpoint, from an administrator standpoint, maybe a central office administrator standpoint, we want teachers to follow the pacing guide that the district has established and we’re

focused on our needs as that outside observer. So, we might think something like, well, teachers just keep up with the district pacing guide so that, you know, they don't fall behind and of course they need to make sure that every student masters the essential knowledge and skills, you know, bring everybody along, use assessment, don't leave anybody behind but really you've got to stick with the pacing guide.

That's the outsider's view and teachers have that outsider's view of course but they actually have a much more nuanced and detailed view because to make the decisions that they have to make, they have to consider more factors. So the insider's view of a pacing guide might go something like this: "Well, I need to finish up this unit by Friday to stick with the pacing guide, I need to finish up this lesson by the end of the period but I'm not quite ready to move on. If I move on from this activity right now I'm gonna lose some of the students who really aren't getting it yet and I think I can get them there."

So, that teacher in that moment has to make a very real decision of do I give some more examples and work with students on this concept more or do I move on? It is a very real dilemma and if we oversimplify it with our outsider's view and just say, "well, you need to stick to the pacing guide," We're missing the real crux of teaching practice and trying to bypass that crucial set of decisions the teacher is making. So, if you want to develop an insider's view of a particular practice like pacing, ask yourself what are the key dimensions of the decision that the teacher is making and what would be some good and bad examples of decisions that teachers could have made?

One of the easiest ways to develop your rubrics and to develop your shared expectations, is to look at what people are doing and make notes to yourself of, you know, what makes sense that people are doing and what seems kind of dumb that people are doing? If you see people doing things that make a lot of sense, those are probably going to be your higher levels of performance and the things that don't work so well that seem kind of illogical or kind of ill-conceived to you probably are going to be your lower levels of performance.

So, you don't have to think these up on your own, look at what people are actually doing and look for ways to operationalize and define and clearly describe the best of what you see as well as the worst of what you see and that can go in your lower categories. So, if we were to break the topic of pacing down into some key dimensions, I might come up with things like, you know, the deadline, when do I need to be done with this? Whereas the majority of my class, so, what's kind of the average understanding? Who are the exceptions to that average, you know, my students who are ready to move on fast or who need a lot of extra time to get it, we might break that down into the dimension of interventions and you know, what we can do to target attention on students who need more assistance. And consequences. Like what happens if we move on and don't close all the gaps for a particular student, is that gonna come up later? Or is this kind of a peripheral topic and we can let it go?

Teachers are probably thinking of all or most of those things when they're making a pacing decision. So, if we look at the insider's perspective, it's far more detailed and nuanced than that outsider's view of are you sticking with the pacing guide or not? And of course, teachers will be happy to share their insider's view in your feedback conversation. So, feedback conversations are a great way to get a sense of what teachers are already thinking are the key dimensions of a particular practice. But when you make that thinking public, when you put it in writing, when you articulate it into a rubric and share it with everyone, the opportunities for improvement go through the roof.

So, this is an incredible opportunity for us to start by seeing what the current state of practice is, you know, look at positive and negative examples and then break that down into those specific categories and specific levels of performance. So, let's look at some maybe real world sounding examples of what we might notice in terms of pacing that work and that don't work for each of these components.

So, first for the deadline, when do I need to move on? Some bad examples, time runs out, teacher abruptly ends the activity or extends the unit by a week because you know, a few students need some more time. Now, if we're kind of blunt in our approach to making those deadline decisions it's not gonna be very effective. In the middle here I have teacher checks for understanding with 10 minutes remaining. Okay, that's probably a good practice and these don't have to be perfect or things that the teacher should do all the time, they're just positive and negative examples that you're gonna note as you observe and talk with more and more teachers about say their pacing.

When it comes to the dimension of where the average understanding of the class is, of course, simply asking everybody if they understand is not going to be a very effective check for understanding, using a quiz or assessment would be more effective. And of course, relying on students to just kind of raise their hand if they know the answer, or if they don't understand, that's not gonna give us reliable evidence, reliable information.

And for, let's see, and then for a final example, moving on from pacing, What if we were to consider the practice of reaching non-responsive students? And we'll leave this one as a little bit of a thought exercise here. If you are currently engaging in virtual schooling, right? If school is closed or you have some students who are learning from home and just are non-responsive, you have students who are not logging in, not doing their work, you're not hearing from them. What are the key dimensions of teacher decision-making, when teachers are thinking about how to reach those students who aren't participating in virtual learning?

Think for a second about how you would break that down into specific areas or components of that practice. And then think about what you've seen teachers do already this year in terms of effectively reaching or of failing to reach their non responsive students. This is how you can start to get more specific with a framework.

So, you might start with simply the title of reaching non-responsive students. You might say, "Hey, everybody we really need to focus this month on how we're going to engage our students that we're not hearing from at all." So, it starts with a kind of an undefined expectation just a single word, a buzzword, a statement, a title, and then we get more specific about that. We break that down into components and then we start to look for examples of varying quality, both good and bad, and then we can start to arrange those into a rubric. Make sense?

This is doable, this is doable fairly easily and fairly casually. You do not have to have a committee for it. You can start right away in your feedback conversations. I did want to make a little side note here about specific teaching moves because I see this happening a lot when instructional leaders really believe strongly in particular teaching practices. It's not that any specific practice is inherently good or inherently bad, you know, there are some practices that just often are a bad idea and others that are often a good idea. But really it's about context and quality, right?

You can use a great technique effectively or poorly, and when it comes to improvement, what we really need to be focused on is the teacher's thinking and decision-making and how they're im-

plementing that strategy. Our big opportunity for school improvement is largely around teacher judgment.

If we can improve teacher professional judgment when we are in the classroom and are talking with the teacher, that's going to have huge carryover effects when we're not in the classroom. And then just a final evidence point, we can't really assess how often something happens when not there so we don't need to focus too much on frequency.

When it comes to specific techniques, often these are introduced from professional development or from professional reading and, you know, great books like "Teach Like A Champion", you know, there are lots of great specific techniques that we could emphasize as instructional leaders and you probably have some strategies that you prefer, that you're always suggesting the teachers try and nudging them to use more, but we have to keep in mind that there is always more than one way to accomplish a given instructional purpose. And if teachers choose a different way than you do, that is okay. What we want to look at is what the deeper practice truly looks like and that insider's view of practice.

So, to get more specific in our frameworks again, we take that insider's view. What does it look like from the inside, not what does it look like to an observer who may not be able to see a lot of the assessment and the thinking and the planning that the teacher's doing, you know, some of those kinds of beneath the iceberg, beneath the surface of the water dimensions of practice. What are the key dimensions of the practice and then what might some different examples of different levels of performance look like?

Now, when you are breaking a practice down into its components or the key dimensions, I wanna be clear that we're not talking about steps. We are not talking about step one, write The purpose on the board, step two, pass out the papers. Like we're not talking about the steps that teachers go through because that's kind of behind us. Like teachers have already moved past that point when we're talking about these, you know, these improvement opportunities and what different levels of practice look like.

So, if we're talking about the characteristics of a practice like using appropriate instructional groupings we might think about components like the structure of, you know, the number of students in a group and how that fits the instructional purpose. We might think about the grouping method, we might think about what data we're using to group students, we might look at how the teacher is changing groupings as student needs change and new assessment information becomes available. And we might look at how the teacher explicitly teaches students how to work in specific types of instructional groupings. But what we're not going to do is say here is step one for having students work in groups, here's step two, here's step three because that of course is going to vary and it's probably not what teachers need from us. We really need to be looking at the quality distinctions. So, we first break it into components and then we look at the levels of performance which we'll talk about in the next section.

For now go ahead and get your journal out and reflect on these two questions. First, how have goals such as scoring, observability and inter-rater reliability prevented us in your organization from getting at the insider's view of practice? In almost every organization that has made any attempt at instructional leadership, there has been an attempt that has been to observe our focus and has perhaps suffered from observability bias rather than taking that insider's view of prac-



tice. So, push yourself to see if you can think of an example in your organization's recent history.

And then second, think of a current priority in your organization either your district or your school, how specific are your shared expectations right now? And wherever you are is fine because now you know where to go next. Is it just a buzzword, There's really no shared understanding at all, it's just a label? Is there a shared meaning that's been established through conversation but maybe nothing has been put in writing? Or is it already in writing and ready to be turned into a rubric? Or maybe you already have a rubric that describes different levels of performance and you're ready to turn it into a rubric that has true qualitative distinctions between those levels of performance, and take it beyond just the frequency or extent kind of rubric.

Reflect on a particular priority and rate that according to that five point scale there. And when you've done that you're ready to move on to the next section.

# Levels of Performance In Instructional Frameworks

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Now we're ready to talk about levels of performance in your instructional framework. We've talked about breaking an expectation down into specific components and describing those components in some detail. Now we're going to focus on how to actually turn those expectations with their components into a leveled rubric which is the gold standard for an instructional framework. And when we do that, we gain the ability to situate a particular practice that we're seeing on that developmental continuum. We see practice in the classroom or in the virtual classroom, and we intuitively and immediately know where that practice falls on our rubric if we've done the work to develop a high quality qualitative rubric.

We can also figure out growth steps for the teacher when we see where the teacher is based on the evidence and the alignment between that evidence and the rubric it's obvious what the teacher should do to move to the next level of performance. And then finally, if we do want to apply a rating, if we need to give a score in terms of a teacher's skill in a particular area, we don't want to do that prematurely but we do have the ability to do that once we've gathered enough evidence if we're using a high quality rubric. What we need to be very careful about before we talk anything, say anything else about scoring is that we need to not score in the short term.

An individual lesson should not be scored, should not be rated. We should think of that as our basic data collection opportunity, our basic opportunity to gather evidence that really we need to talk about first, really we need to put into context before we try to apply a score. Because if you look at your rubric and at your evaluation system, what you're really scoring is not an individual lesson or part of a lesson, it teachers overall practice over the course of the entire year, but scoring at the end of the year is going to be much easier if we're using that framework language in our documentation and in our conversations with teachers and in our post-observation write-ups all throughout the year because it's going to allow us to immediately zoom into a particular level of performance when we're ready. But if we jump too quickly to the rating, we're gonna miss a lot of our best opportunities.

So how can we get to good levels of performance? How can we take that expectation, break it down into specific areas and then develop a specific categories and levels of performance for a given expectation. As we saw earlier in this module, we want to avoid the approach of the frequency or extent rubric, because it's too reductive, right? We don't just wanna say, you know, always uses appropriate instructional groups, consistently uses appropriate instructional groups, sometimes never, et cetera. That's not the key distinction here. You know, a teacher who sometimes uses appropriate instructional groups doesn't need to just do that more. They need to actually gain skill and see what it means to use appropriate instructional groups.

So this rubric is not particularly helpful because it's a frequency or extent rubric. We need to have a true qualitative rubric. We also need to be careful about enforcing pet strategies. You know, like if you just think triads are the best groups of three, where students work together in groups of three you know, and put that in your rubric where the the level four teacher always has students work in triads and the level one teacher never uses triads, and level one and two are in between that's gonna kind of miss the point as well because context and you know how a teacher uses a particular strategy matter a great deal. And we have to be careful not to overlook that.

We also have to be careful about rubric inflation. And if you're developing your own rubrics, it's very tempting to look at what you do and say, well, hey that's a level four and people who aren't as good at me, maybe they're a level three or level two but I'm a level four. And if teams are working together on a particular rubric, like let's say you have your kindergarten team or your biology department work together on a rubric they are going to describe their average practice as level four. And that's going to kind of hamstring your ability to outline a path to growth.

What people are already doing probably should not be a four, right? It should be a two or three. And I describe each of these levels of performance as follows, really level one should be the kind of teaching that you had when you were a kid and what you learned from your teachers before you learned anything about teaching officially you know on your own.

Level two should be where you're really trying to implement a better practices. You're trying to implement what you learned in school, what you're learning in professional development and level three should be the best teacher on the team. The best example that you have locally. So we need to avoid this temptation to say level three is kind of what the worst teacher is doing and the rest of us are fours and then, you know, some of us are strong force, like that is rubric inflation. We are not going to create opportunities for people to grow if we just try to flatter everyone and say that they're doing better than they are.

Level four should be hard. Level four should be ambitious. It should be a professional model, you know across the profession. Other people should look at a level four teacher and say, wow, I'm really inspired and amazed by what you're doing. You know, if you write a book about what you're doing, you should probably have that exemplary level for practice. And that ambition, that level of difficulty there, I think prevents us from settling for less. So, really be mindful of the temptation to inflate one's own performance when developing a rubric, you know, people are going to try to develop rubrics that paint themselves in a good light.

And I think often we to kind of add a level beyond that to help people see that there are possibilities for even being better than the best person on their team. I wanna give a little example here of the rubric that we just touched on earlier in this module for working with non-responsive students. And as we've said about qualitative rubrics, it's not that you're just doing the same things more often or harder or more consistently, it's that you're actually doing different things.

So, as I read through this, think about the qualitative differences between these levels of performance. The lowest level of what we might think of as unsatisfactory, I post grade assignments, but and I send general reminders to students to do their work but I don't follow up with non-responsive students beyond a single attempt. Now this may be in your organization what the majority of people are doing. You know, check make sure kids do their work, follow up with them once if they don't.

And most people are probably going to think that they're doing just fine and they may not see that they may not have a vision for what they could be doing better. This is the role of that rubric to create that vision and that roadmap. level two attempt to contact non-responsive students using a series of messages within a single communication channel, okay? So the multiple follow-ups could be a big improvement for some people in terms of reaching their non-responsive students who are not doing their work and not participating in virtual learning.

Level three, I work with my colleagues to make persistent attempts to contact nonresponsive students using all available communication channels, including phone, email, and text. So there there's the element of teamwork that's being added. And we said earlier when we talked about qualitative rubrics that often there's a completely new component that's added at those higher levels of performance. It's not just about doing the lower, it's not about sending more text messages, it's about adding a new dimensions to the practice.

Number four, level four, I work with my team and outside agencies to implement an RTI like system of escalating contacts from multiple people who have a relationship with the student and family using phone, email, text, mail, like postal mail and when necessary in person. So we're adding more dimensions as we get up to those higher levels of performance. And we're not just saying, you know do all the other things and then I'll also do some more things. We're not trying to pack this rubric like a laundry list where level four is just loaded with action items and different checklist kind of things because that's not the point, right?

The point is quality. We want the quality of the practice to improve as we go to those higher levels of performance. And we got to recognize that it's going to look different. Teachers are going to be engaged in fundamentally different practices as you go to those higher levels of performance.

So grab your journal and ask yourself in what areas of practice do we need to recalibrate our expectations for what level four performance looks like? Have we been allowing people to see themselves as level four, when really it's more of a level two or level three, and we need to get a more ambitious vision for what our practice could be. We may need to get an outside example. We may need to go need to go see what schools are doing elsewhere to get that vision. In what areas do you think that recalibration needs to take place?

And second in your journal, where might teachers have inflated views of their own performance and how could they develop that more ambitious vision? So think about the areas of practice and think about where teachers might be kind of underselling their ability to improve. When you've reflected on those questions in your journal, you're ready to move on to the next section.

# 3 Key Moments to Use Framework Language

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So we develop these high quality rubrics, we develop these shared expectations,, and we convert those expectations into leveled rubrics that have specific components and different levels of performance, describing them in great detail. So we have all this language that we can use to talk about practice. Well, when do we actually use that language? In this section, we're going to talk about three specific moments when you can use that language to drive improvement. And we're going to tackle the problem of usage, the problem of having shared expectations and using those shared expectations at the appropriate time.

Earlier in this module, we discussed the challenge of design and how it's so critical to have well-thought-out instruments and not checklists or these kind of reductive rubrics that miss the point. We've talked about the specificity challenge and how we need to put our expectations in writing in enough detail that people actually are talking about the same thing and know what to do to improve. And now we're going to tackle this usage challenge of making sure that we're using that shared expectation language formatively enough before we attempt to use it summatively to score teachers and their practice.

So three key moments when you can use that framework language. First, while observing. While you're in the classroom, before you say anything to the teacher or while you're looking at an artifact of remote learning, you can use that language to sharpen your own perception. When you have more specific vocabulary, you can notice different things. Second, while documenting. When you are actually writing down notes about what you see, your descriptions will be richer and more detailed if you have that more specific vocabulary to use. And then finally, while talking with the teacher, you can use that shared language, that shared framework language to describe what you saw and make sense of it in conversation.

Let's talk about each of those three opportunities to use framework language in a little bit more detail. When you are observing, what you may want to do is look at your framework and just see, okay, what are the dimensions of this particular practice? If you're observing in a classroom, and you're thinking about how the teacher is using questioning strategies for example, you might look at your rubrics and say, "Okay, what do we have about questioning? "What are the dimensions of effective questioning?" And a lot of those may have slipped your mind completely as you get immersed in the lesson, right? When you're in the classroom, you're paying attention. You're looking at what the teacher's doing and what the students are doing. And it's easy to lose sight of kind of the big picture of what that practice looks like. So your rubric is a great place to review and remind yourself, what do I need to pay attention to? And what does excellent performance look like? What are the different levels of performance? What might I be missing by being kind of lost in the moment of what I'm seeing?

And that's a real tension that we have to keep in mind that we do wanna be fully present. We do wanna be paying attention to what's really going on and not just focused on documents that are sitting in front of us. So we have to be selective about what we look at. And one of the recommendations that I wanna make to you for doing that is to put your framework language into our Repertoire app. And we will do this for you. If you'd like us to just import any language that you've developed, just send it to us, send us an email with a file attachment or whatever format you have it in. And we can actually import this as Snippets in your Repertoire account so that when you see

something and you think, "Okay, I wanna think about, "let's see, illustrations or student experiences." You can start to type one or two words and those words will be searched throughout your entire Snippet database. And Repertoire will show you your relevant Snippets. For example, I see one here that says, "Teacher consistently uses examples, metaphors or analogies, "or illustrations to link student experiences "and understandings to new content."

All right, that's probably not something that I have perfectly memorized, but I might remember to some extent that it exists and I can easily look it up if I start to type in that Snippet box in Repertoire and I'll get cued with the appropriate language. So now I know what to look for. And when I know what to look for, I'm better able to document what matters. So I can actually take my notes using that language.

Now, I'm not just going to copy the criterion, but I'm going to use some of those same terms in the same way when I'm capturing my evidence. And I can also look at the specific levels of performance. If I see, okay, this really fits the level three description. I'm wanting to make sure I use the specific terms from level three of the rubric. Then moving onto the third moment. When I'm actually talking with the teacher, I can use that shared language to bring specific things to the teacher's attention.

I can help them recognize different levels of performance and we can kind of triangulate. "Okay, here's what I saw you doing. "Students were really taking ownership of the discussion. "Where do you see that falling on the rubric?" And the teacher can say, "Oh, well, taking owner, "students taking ownership seems to line up "with level four on Danielson," right? And you can calibrate qualitatively rather than trying to calibrate with some sort of score that it's not really appropriate to give yet. And when you have figured out where someone is on your framework, on your rubric, you have identified the next step. You just look over one more column on your rubric and that's your vision. That is your next destination for that teacher's growth. And if they're already in level four, focus on something else. The teacher's already where they need to be.

So the more we use that framework language in our feedback conversations, the more aligned our expectations will become. And the more we can really get a sense of the insider's view of practice, the more we really talk about the heart of the decisions that teachers are making. But we have to let go of some of those distractions that we talked about earlier about scoring things, about focusing too much on what it looks like to us, and observability bias, and we can let go of inter-rater reliability, and those other kinds of distractions that really miss the point of teacher decision-making and focusing on improving teacher professional judgment.

One final note before we get to the journal here is around this idea of grain size. And grain size is what we use to describe different units of analysis. We have to remember that when we're evaluating teacher practice, we're evaluating it overall, right? We're not evaluating one particular lesson or half of a lesson or 10 minutes of a lesson, even if we're only observing for five or 10 minutes or one period, what we're ultimately evaluating is the teacher's overall practice.

We can use those briefer slices of time to gather evidence, but ultimately we're not judging an individual piece of evidence. We're aligning that evidence with a framework that we'll add to over the course of the year to get a full picture of where the teacher's practice is. So I hope this has been helpful to think about where we use a framework language.

So in your journal, pull that out now, and reflect on these three questions. When do I typically use framework language the most? Where should I start using framework language more? And how can I shift my use of that shared framework language from more summative purposes, you know, saving it till the end of the year, to more formative purposes? How can I use that language earlier in the process? When you filled out your journal for this section, you're ready to move on to the next section.

# Finding The Best Opportunities To Use & Develop Frameworks

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Now that you know how to develop high quality instructional frameworks in the form of qualitative rubrics describing practice, how can you identify the biggest and best opportunities to develop those frameworks for specific areas, right? We can't do everything. We should not attempt to develop a rubric for every single practice. So we wanna be judicious about focusing our attention on the best opportunities. And there are three criteria that you can use to identify those best opportunities.

You want to focus on developing shared expectations for practices that are high-frequency, so practices that teachers use often, perhaps every day, perhaps multiple times per class period. You want to focus on practices that are high impact, right? We're not going to focus on things like, you know how you take attendance or, you know, little, you know which signal is the best for getting kids attention. Like it really should make a big difference to get everyone aligned on that practice and it shouldn't be arbitrary or focused on, you know somebody's kinda pet issue. And finally it should be high variability. There should be a big difference in how different teachers are doing in that particular area. Where some people are doing really well, other people are doing very poorly and therefore there's a big opportunity for improvement that comes from alignment.

If we're missing any of those characteristics of high frequency, high impact or high variability, it's probably not our best opportunity for developing shared expectations and our effort is probably going to be better invested somewhere else, where we do have high frequency, high impact and high variability. Because when we've developed a rubric in one of those high frequency, high impact, high variability areas, we've created a roadmap for growth that's going to actually benefit students.

Teachers are going to get better at something that matters to students a lot and often, and that improvement will yield tangible results for students. So this is something that we talk about a little bit in chapter 20 of *"Now We're Talking: 21 Days To High-Performance Instructional Leadership."* So you may want to review that chapter to help you decide on a particular focus and what particular topics to develop instructional frameworks around first. You may also want to use your observations and your conversations with teachers to help you figure out what those best opportunities are.

And one particular strategy that I wanna share with you that will help bring some of those opportunities to the surface is to cluster your either, one-on-one conversations if you're not able to get into classrooms in-person or your observations if you are able to get into classrooms in person, your classroom walkthroughs, to cluster those by team. Because when you see different teachers in the same grade level or same department or same subject area teaching around the same time you are going to see different patterns than if you just kind of visit people at random.

And this is going to be part of a longstanding pattern that you develop. If you develop a consistent rotation of seeing every staff member on a regular basis, you know like every two weeks or talking with them on the phone every two weeks, if you're in all virtual mode, then you're going to start to see patterns as you visit each team. You're gonna learn a lot that you would otherwise



miss if you're not visiting people by team. So you may want to cluster grade levels. You may want to cluster observations to the same subjects, taught by different people. You may want to visit one department all back to back and you want to do that very close in time. Like if you can observe the same lesson taught by different people in the, you know, the same grade level just all at the same time, just go right from one to the other, you're going to see a lot more that gives you information about some of your best opportunities to develop shared expectations.

So consider doing that. If, you know, if you have been visiting people kind of haphazardly or just kind of how you feel like it you may want to change up the order. And then once you do that, stick with the order so you're not over visiting some people and hardly ever seeing other people, you know. You wanna get a consistent rotation but make sure it's a rotation that you are happy with in terms of its ability to get you into a similar teachers classrooms, kind of back-to-back. You know, same team, same department.

Another place you can look for ideas about fruitful opportunities to develop instructional frameworks is to actually look at your curriculum. And no, I shouldn't have to say this but I feel like I really do, don't be afraid of curriculum. It is not beneath you. It is not above your head. It is squarely your business as an instructional leader to think about curriculum and to engage with teachers on issues of curriculum.

And it breaks my heart honestly, when people become administrators and then they stopped going to curriculum-based professional development. They stopped going to initial use trainings for new curriculum. They stopped going to workshops in particular subject areas just because they don't apply to all staff. And they say, "Oh, I'm only gonna go to things that apply to all staff. I'm not gonna go to anything just for science or just for language arts." Don't make that mistake.

Get yourself to that curriculum specific professional development because on a day-to-day basis that's where teachers are spending most of their energy and attention, right? They're not thinking about teach like a champion techniques or general things that apply to all teachers. K-12 in the Danielson framework. They're thinking about their students and their subject area and their grade level and what subject they teach and you've got to get your head in that game as well.

If you're going to find some of the biggest opportunities to help teachers improve and recognize that they're not going to be the same for every grade level and department. So strive to understand the internal logic of your curriculum. You know, if you have a spiral math curriculum you need to know that and understand what that means for pacing and for, you know, teaching to mastery and things like that.

There's some internal design logic for every curriculum that you've gotta be aware of. And don't be afraid to dig deep and say, okay, what really are our big opportunities here within this particular subject area? And then if you're adding on expectations if you're saying, okay this curriculum accomplishes X, Y, Z but we also need to do these other things to supplement, you've got to at least know what you're adding on to.

For example, when we adopted a new math curriculum, one of the things we chose to keep from our previous approaches to teaching math was a fact, math fact fluency, right? We didn't think the new curriculum had enough emphasis on multiplication facts and, you know, getting those really solid at the upper grade levels in elementary. So we really dialed into that and kept that even

though it wasn't part of the new curriculum.

Another place you might look for where to focus and where to develop your first frameworks is around what students need. And if you are all virtual right now or if you have many students who are virtual you may need to look in areas other than pedagogy, other than instruction.

We may need to not look at the finer points of how to do chemistry labs or give feedback on term papers. We may need to look lower down in Maslow's hierarchy of needs and ask ourselves are we even in touch with our students? What do we do about our students that we're not getting a hold of at all and really consider some of those basic physiological needs? You know, do they have food? Did they have electricity? Is the student housed? You know, maybe we need to stop worrying so much for you know, for particular students about why they're not doing their assignments and really look at, you know, why they're not thriving more broadly.

We may need to, you know, to look at other supports that we could provide for some of our students and that may actually be our biggest opportunity for improvement, to meet some of those basic needs. There may be conditions that we could set that would allow them to participate. Maybe they can't have a, you know, a private workspace at home where they can turn their webcam on and have the ability to fully participate. But maybe they can listen in with headphones. Maybe they can do their work, even if they can't fully engage the way we want them to.

And finally, maybe we need to think about what would actually be worth logging on for. How can we create learning opportunities for our students that would actually get them to show up when they don't have to. Those may be some of our biggest opportunities in times of virtual learning.

And I think I've shared my rubric for nonresponsive students, you know in terms of how teachers can engage and reach out to and try to reconnect with students who are not participating in virtual learning. This kind of thing may be more important than the standard elements of pedagogy in a given subject area.

So, don't overlook those opportunities and in your journal go ahead and pull that out now, and reflect what are my best opportunities for developing instructional frameworks right now> what would be the most high frequency, high impact, and high variability practices to build shared understandings around?

Do some reflection in your journal and when you've done that you're ready to move on to the next section.

# The Instructional Framework Development Program

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Now that we've been talking about instructional frameworks throughout Module Four, you may be wondering how to actually get started with this. We just talked in the previous section about how to choose a focus, but once you've chosen that focus for developing a new set of shared expectations, how do you actually get people going and make that a shared endeavor?

Now, certainly you can do a lot of this by yourself, but it's going to be far more powerful if you enlist your staff in articulating these shared expectations and developing full qualitative rubrics for those shared expectations. So what I wanna share with you now is a bonus training that is included with your Virtual Instructional Leadership Challenge access that we call the Instructional Framework Development Program.

And the distinction here is that the Instructional Framework Development Program is for teacher teams to go through. They watch it, they go through the workbook together and develop their own department or grade specific frameworks, and then you use those frameworks in your feedback conversations. You get involved as an instructional leader and then collaboratively revise and continue to improve those frameworks.

So with that training, you will find a printable workbook. You can print a copy for everyone, and that workbook and the associated video modules walk teachers through the process of identifying a practice, breaking it into its key components or characteristics. Again, not the steps, but the actual elements of that practice, plotting those on the visibility and zoom grid. So we know where they are on the iceberg of practice, and then drafting a rubric.

So again, there are video lessons that walk teachers through every bit of that, and you have full access to that program as part of the Virtual Instructional Leadership Challenge. So if you would like a link where we can send your team or link that you can share with your teachers to get them going on that program, just reach out to us and we will get that set up for you. And you are welcome to share that with everyone on your team, you do not have to register individual teachers.

This is a resource for you to make available as you see fit. So in your journal, if you wanna go ahead and pull that out, to close out Module Four, ask yourself which teacher teams would be most receptive to going through that program that we just talked about, the Instructional Framework Development Program, to outline rubrics for shared expectations in their particular area. And what particular areas might they want to work on? What elements of practice might they want to develop rubrics around? If you have people who feel misunderstood in some way, like I was a science teacher and often I felt like expectations had to look a little bit different in science, especially if we were doing inquiry and we wouldn't put the objective on the board, we would put a question on the board. So if you have people who have been pushing back on some of your improvement initiatives and saying, you know what? This really needs to look different in our department. Great, this is a perfect opportunity for them to say how it should work in their department. That's it for Module Four, when you've completed your workbook you have a in your journal you have completed Module Four, and I will see you in Module Five. I'm Justin Baeder. Thanks so much for being part of the Virtual Instructional Leadership Challenge.