

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## What is APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence?

Definition of Teaching Excellence (DTE) was created to articulate APS' collective and aspirational vision for excellent teaching and give us shared language to collaboratively work towards achieving this vision. As our vision for excellent teaching evolves, based on observed excellence in APS classrooms and classrooms across the nation, we will ensure our Definition of Excellence evolves with it.

## How will DTE be used?

- Teacher Hiring, Coaching, Development (non-evaluative) and Recognitions
- New Teacher Orientation and Induction
- Professional Learning Community Development
- Talent Reviews

## How should DTE be used?

Teachers, leaders, and instructional coaches should use DTE as one tool to develop Professional Growth Plans, regular cycles of helpful feedback and to drive self-reflection. Coaches and leaders are encouraged to observe classrooms using DTE, identify “Core Teacher Behaviors” that are areas of strengths and growth, and then identify an aligned “Core Teacher Skill” to focus on for F.A.S.T. feedback. In addition, leaders are encouraged to use DTE as a foundation for their teacher-hiring processes, the development of Professional Learning Plans, ongoing teacher professional development, and teacher recognitions. Additionally, DTE can be used to inform on-boarding of new teachers.

## How was DTE created?

This spring, a diverse team of APS teachers, leaders, and district staff met to review and revise DTE to further clarify and expand APS' vision of excellent teaching and leadership. In addition to drawing from the expertise of this diverse team, DTE revisions were based on the ground-breaking and inspirational work of the following thought-leaders:



## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



- APS' Instructional Practices
- Student Achievement Partners
- Teach Like A Champion
- Get Better Faster
- Robert Marzano
- Charlotte Danielson
- CASEL (SEL)
- The National Equity Project
- Jon Saphier (The Skillful Teacher)
- Zaretta Hammond
- Martin Seligman and Chris Peterson
- Georgia DOE (TKES)

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## 1. Social Emotional Learning

Are students developing strengths across the five core Social-Emotional competencies and learning how to navigate the world more effectively?

OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS	CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students use and apply the core social-emotional competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making) throughout the lesson in order to achieve classroom objectives (E.g., cooperating during group work, actively listening to peers during classroom discussions, persevering during independent practice)</li> <li>• Students are able to identify, label, and recognize their own emotions and triggers; they are then able to identify those emotions in others and analyze how those feelings affect the classroom environment</li> <li>• Students establish and pursue personal and academic goals through a display of grit, determination or perseverance</li> <li>• Students are able to identify social cues (verbal, physical) and appreciate diversity by recognizing similarities and differences in individuals and groups</li> <li>• Students communicate effectively in written, oral, and nonverbal formats</li> <li>• Students are self-reflective and self-evaluative; they use these skills to reflect on how their current choices affect the future</li> </ul>	<p><b>Models SEL Competencies:</b> Explicitly models the five core SEL competencies for students via individual and whole-class interactions with students (E.g., transparently reflects on personal SEL strengths and areas for growth, models the use of SEL language and strategies, demonstrates emotional intelligence, regulates emotions, uses systems for problem solving and resolving conflict, welcomes feedback from students)</p>
	<p><b>Builds SEL Skills:</b> Promotes student growth in SEL competencies by providing learning experiences (E.g., direct instruction on strategies for building SEL competencies, reflecting with students on SEL strengths and areas for growth) that directly build skill in the core social-emotional competencies (Self-Awareness, Self-Management, Social Awareness, Relationship Skills, and Responsible Decision Making)</p>
	<p><b>Capitalizes On Teachable Moments:</b> Identifies and takes advantage of teachable moments with students to build and reinforce SEL skills (E.g., reminding students to use SEL skills to persevere through challenging academic work, modeling a growth mindset in response to school/current events)</p>

**\*Note:** APS believes Social Emotional Learning (SEL) is embedded in all aspects of an excellent teacher's instruction and should be evident across all domains of APS' Definitions of Teaching Excellence. This SEL-specific domain has been created to highlight specific, high-impact SEL practices.

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## Core Teacher Skills

### Models SEL competencies

- A. Self-Awareness - has the ability to accurately self-assess and understands how their emotions affects others and their job performance
- B. Self- Management - is optimistic, controls emotions, remains calm when angry, and pushes past moments of distress by using sound judgment
- C. Social Awareness - understands their own personal biases and the diverse needs of students; is culturally aware and understands the community in which they serve
- D. Relationship Skills - knows students by name, avoids shaming comments, and shows concern for the personal and academic well-being of students
- E. Responsible Decision Making - approaches situations with a systematic process that takes into consideration short and long-term consequences

### Builds SEL Skills

- A. SEL Skill Building - uses SEL curriculum or other resources to teach explicit SEL competencies; gives students consistent feedback to help them grow and develop towards mastery
- B. Tracking SEL Growth - uses a variety of data points to track student progress towards mastery of SEL competencies and evaluates if SEL Skill Building is resulting in increased mastery
- C. Social and Emotional Cues - practices effective communication by using the appropriate body language, eye contact, speech, and tone and teaches students to do the same through role play and discussion
- D. Warmth and Support - expresses concern and check-ins to help students develop a work system that meets their individual needs
- E. Storytelling - uses storytelling to build relationships with and between students and to foster empathy and understanding of individual differences and similarities
- F. Growth Mindset - helps students goal set; follows up with students to develop a plan of action to accomplish the goal and reflects on the outcomes to set new goals or prioritize the action plan

### Capitalizes On Teachable Moments

- A. Awareness - Is aware of student behavior and adjusts instruction, accordingly, providing specific, concrete, sequential and observable directions for SEL skill building, behavior and academics
- B. Precise Praise - Reinforces positive behavioral, academic and social behaviors through delivering specific, real-time and genuine feedback to students and narrating positive behavior

## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



### 2. CULTURE OF LEARNING

Are all students deeply and joyfully engaged in the learning process throughout the lesson?

OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS	CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students feel known, valued and part of a safe learning community to fully contribute their ideas, perspectives and questions</li> <li>• Students work with genuine curiosity, joy and a love for learning - as demonstrated by a willingness to take on challenges, risk failure, and embrace confusion</li> <li>• Students take ownership over classroom systems and routines and execute routines with little to no prompting from teacher</li> <li>• Students are able to easily access materials, resources and work effectively independently and with peers</li> <li>• Students find lesson highly engaging and relevant to their day-to-day lives, interests and unique cultural backgrounds</li> <li>• Students develop a critical consciousness through which they are equipped to acknowledge and challenge the status quo</li> </ul>	<p><b>Authentic Relationships:</b> Develops authentic and individualized relationships with and between students to create a safe, joyful, and engaging learning environment</p>
	<p><b>Systems and Routines:</b> Designs, plans for, and executes efficient classroom routines and systems (E.g., transitioning to small groups, passing and collecting materials, establishing process for asking and getting help, managing classroom devices) with students to maximize instructional time</p>
	<p><b>Behavioral Expectations:</b> Develops and executes behavioral and academic expectations with students and effectively responds to positive, negative, or off-task behavior</p>
	<p><b>Physical Space:</b> Establishes classroom environment (E.g. seating, displays of student work, resources, cleanliness, organization) that supports student learning and growth while reflecting the cultural diversity of students</p>
<p><b>Culturally Responsive Teaching and Learning:</b> Values students' unique cultural backgrounds, knowledge and experiences and utilizes them in designing the lesson; plans multiple connections to issues of diversity, equity, social-consciousness and inclusion</p>	

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## Core Teacher Skills

### Authentic relationships

- A. Student Relationships - builds authentic, trusting relationships with students and uses that bond to help students rise to higher expectations
- B. Knowledge of Students - intentionally and authentically seeks to know and honor students' unique backgrounds, culture, interests, social/emotional strengths and academic strengths
- C. Student Well-Being - develops an active interest in students' well-being and demonstrates that interest through his/her engagement with students
- D. Biases - Reflects to identify personal biases, assumptions, and patterns of inequity inherent in instructional approach and actively seeks to overcome them

### Systems & routines

- A. Routines and Procedures – designs, practices, and invests students in efficient behavioral and academic routines and systems, leading to high student engagement
- B. Plan and Rehearsal - plans and practices critical routines & procedures moment by moment; scripts and rehearses roll out of all critical routines and systems in the classroom
- C. Start and End Strong - establishes efficient techniques for starting and ending lessons
- D. Investment - provides students with opportunities to make choices and to influence the classroom culture, ensuring kids can explain the why behind every action
- E. Threshold - establishes rapport, sets the tone, and reinforces the first steps in a routine that makes excellence habitual when students cross the threshold into the classroom
- F. Classroom Agreements (systems & routines) - develops high behavioral expectations and agreements for classroom routines and management with students and enforces them consistently
- G. Model - models SEL behaviors of respect, caring, self-control, and fair decision-making

### Behavioral expectations

- A. Classroom Agreements (behavioral expectations) - develops agreements with students for how to treat each other respectfully and engage with one another productively
- B. What To Do - is clear about "what to do" by giving specific, concrete, sequential and observable directions
- C. Precise Praise - reinforces positive behavioral, academic, and social behaviors through delivering specific, real-time and genuine feedback to students and narrating positive behavior
- D. Effective Teacher Voice - exudes confidence and poise in all verbal interactions with students through respectful use of language, engagement, positive tone, and register
- E. Awareness - is aware of his/her presence in the room (self) and aware of how students are interacting with him/her and each other
- F. Off-Task - addresses all negative and off-task student behavior immediately and in a way that does not slow or disrupt lesson momentum
- G. Logical Consequences - issues logical and appropriate consequences as needed without hesitation, such that consequences are successful in changing student behavior

### Physical space

- A. Classroom Organization - organizes classroom; seating is arranged strategically to align with the purpose of the instructional activity

### Culturally responsive teaching and learning

- A. Multiple Perspectives - incorporates multiple perspectives and multicultural examples into curricular materials, visual aids, and instructional approaches
- B. Multiple Methods - varies instructional methods (grouping, writing, independent work, etc.) based on knowledge of students' learning styles

## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



### 3. ESSENTIAL CONTENT

Are all students being challenged with rigorous and relevant content aligned to the appropriate standards and lesson objective?

OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS	CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students are engaged in mastering standards-based, culturally relevant and grade-appropriate content (E.g., lesson objectives, texts, instructional tasks, questions)</li> <li>Students use instructional materials (E.g., texts, questions, problems, exercises and assessments) that are appropriately demanding and require students to use evidence to demonstrate understanding and support their ideas</li> <li>Students can fully and readily answer the questions: What are you learning? How does it help you in this class? How is it connected to other areas of study and your daily life?</li> <li>Students have sufficient time for independent practice, exploration, and learning with peers</li> </ul>	<p><b>Daily Lesson Planning:</b> Designs daily lesson plans that reflect all components of quality plans (aligned to performance-based objectives; uses specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, timely (SMART) lesson objectives; incorporates standards-aligned content and activities; uses appropriate instructional practices and selects appropriately rigorous instructional materials; employs gradual release; utilizes aligned criteria for success; uses differentiated support for students based on process, product, environment, and content)</p>
	<p><b>Rigorous Instructional Materials/Resources:</b> Selects instructional materials (E.g., texts, tasks, questions, prompts, and exercises) that are appropriately demanding, culturally relevant, and require students to use evidence to demonstrate understanding and support for their ideas. Materials are appropriately differentiated (based on process, product, environment, and content) to meet students unique academic needs and strengths</p>
	<p><b>Lesson Execution:</b> Delivers lesson in a well-organized, clear and accessible manner, incorporating gradual release; uses relevant data to adjust course and re-teach as needed; lesson framing reflects all components of a well-framed lesson (communicating objective and purpose, connecting lesson to big ideas in the unit and prior learning, etc.)</p>
	<p><b>Pacing:</b> Maintains an intentional pace that supports student mastery of the standards, maximizing instructional time and engagement</p>

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## Core Teacher Skills

### Daily lesson planning

- A. Performance-Based Objective - creates a standards-based objective (accessible to students, teacher, and observers) linked to the content and aligned to a higher order thinking skill (APS Instructional Practice #1)
- B. Lesson Progression - designs a logical and aligned sequence of lesson plans within a unit to achieve unit objectives
- C. Academic Language - designs curriculum-driven opportunities to determine the meaning of general and domain specific words, phrases and symbols (APS Instructional Practice #2)
- D. Gradual Release of Responsibility - designs lessons to gradually release responsibility to students, from teacher dependence to student independence (APS Instructional Practice #3)
- E. Lesson Internalization - invests the time to internalize the big ideas, objectives, criteria for success, and sequence of lesson to deliver lessons clearly and accurately
- F. Criteria for Success - identifies and communicates clear criteria for success for the mastery objective so that students understand it and can clearly explain it
- G. Stretch It - scripts "stretch" questions into lesson plan to challenge students
- H. Content Knowledge - prepares by deeply studying and having an understanding of the standards, curriculum, materials, and tasks
- I. Differentiation - develops and provides accommodations and modifications as needed to ensure all students are able to attain learning goals
- J. Alignment - aligns all aspects of the lesson and ensures the assessments give accurate information on the number of students mastering the objective(s)

### Rigorous instructional materials/resources

- A. Discipline-Specific Resources - develops curriculum-driven opportunities to integrate resources (balanced literary and informational texts, manipulatives, primary sources, and models, etc.) (APS Instructional Practice #4)
- B. Demanding Materials - develops and/or uses appropriately demanding instructional materials such as texts, questions, problems, exercises, and assessments
- C. Scaffolding - provides support and scaffolding necessary for students to complete instructional tasks that require higher-order thinking skills

### Lesson execution

- A. Setting the Stage - develops and clearly communicates a well-framed, standards-aligned and appropriately rigorous objective to describe the goal(s) of the lesson
- B. Clarity and Coherence - delivers lesson content clearly, accurately, and with coherence
- C. Model the Thinking - models the metacognitive thinking, not just the procedure
- D. Verbal and Visual Instruction - provides information verbally and orally
- E. Re-Teaching - recognizes the root of student errors and re-teaching or re-framing content to address the underlying cause of student misunderstanding

### Intentional pacing

- A. Time Allocation - allocates the appropriate instructional time to address the most important content for the grade or course
- B. Build in Time-Stamps - monitors lesson pacing (time-stamps) to ensure sufficient time for independent practice
- C. Countdown - uses countdowns to build urgency and minimize loss of instructional time

## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



### 4. ACADEMIC OWNERSHIP

Are all students responsible for doing the thinking and learning in this classroom?

OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS	CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students are responsible for the majority of thinking, speaking and doing in the classroom</li> <li>• Students spend the majority of class time thinking, reading, writing, discussing, analyzing, or problem solving as they complete standards-aligned tasks/prompts</li> <li>• Students regularly make connections to their lives, the world around them, and their individual goals and aspirations</li> <li>• Students respond with evidence (speaking, writing, drawing, etc.) and clear rationale to support their thinking and responses</li> <li>• Students regularly participate in well-facilitated academic conversations (whole group, small group, peer-to-peer) that deepen their learning, build on their peers' thinking and answers, critique each other's' thinking, and provide constructive feedback/responses to their classmates</li> <li>• Students consistently persevere in completing academic work (questions, prompts, tasks, etc.), even if the work is challenging</li> </ul>	<p><b>Insists on Students Doing the Heavy Lifting:</b> Designs and executes the lesson so students do the majority of thinking, discussing and analyzing (E.g., via reading, writing, discussion, analysis, computation, or problem solving) and supports them in persevering through challenging academic work; the teacher rarely finishes any of the cognitive work that students could own</p> <p><b>Requires Evidence:</b> Selects classroom resources (tasks, questions, prompts, tools, etc.) that are standards-aligned and require students to provide meaningful oral or written evidence to support their thinking</p> <p><b>Student-led Academic Conversations:</b> Builds students' skill for participating in rigorous, student-led conversations to achieve conceptual understanding and mastery of the standards</p>

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## Core Teacher Skills

### Insists on students doing the heavy lifting

- A. Gradual Release of Responsibility - designs lessons to gradually release responsibility to students, from teacher dependence to student independence (APS Instructional Practice #3)
- B. Write First, Talk Second - provides students with opportunities to write before engaging in academic conversations
- C. Questioning (critical thinking) - engages students in deep critical thinking through effective, varied questioning, driving students towards greater engagement and conceptual understanding
- D. Questioning (DOK/Bloom's) - varies questioning strategies across depth of knowledge levels and Bloom's Taxonomy
- E. Lesson Pitch - challenges students and tests the intellectual ceiling; teacher embraces struggle, knowing it is good for students
- F. Ratio - pushes more and more of the cognitive work out to students as soon as they are ready; cognitive work must be on-task, focused, and productive
- G. Defend Responses - promotes the persistence and grit of students to get correct, defended responses
- H. Right is Right - holds out for all the way right answers, setting a rigorous standard for correctness
- I. Non-examples - uses incorrect responses for students' analysis and evaluation

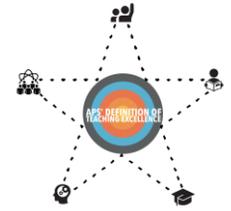
### Requires evidence

- A. Cite Evidence - poses questions or provides lesson activities that require students to cite evidence to support their thinking; explicitly teaches how to cite evidence
- B. Reason with Evidence- creates opportunities for students to critique and make an argument based on evidence
- C. Probe - probes answers to questions, prompting students to habitually display persistence in providing evidence to support answers
- D. Questioning (evidence) - posing questions or providing lesson activities that require students to cite evidence to support their thinking

### Facilitates student-led academic conversations

- A. Academic Conversations - facilitates rigorous, student-led discussions utilizing discipline-specific language that methodically move class towards meeting lesson objective and cementing student understanding; Discussion is authentic, and students use habits of discussion to respond to each other's points and concisely and eloquently state their thinking on the topic
- B. Habits of Discussion (students prompt) - teaches students to prompt other students to push discussion to a deeper level
- C. Habits of Discussion (build) - teaches students how to respond to and build off of other students' responses
- D. Habits of Discussion (disagree respectfully) - teaches students how to disagree respectfully with other students
- E. Habits of Discussion (stay neutral) - stays neutral during discussion, asking open-ended questions ("What do you think?" rather than "Why?") to stimulate divergent thinking

## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



### 5. DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING

Do all students demonstrate that they are learning and can apply what they have learned?

OBSERVABLE STUDENT BEHAVIORS	CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students utilize multiple standards-aligned assessment opportunities to demonstrate learning and reflect on their progress towards their learning goals; uses feedback and data to correct misconceptions and accelerate their own learning</li> <li>Students' responses, work products, and interactions demonstrate mastery and conceptual understanding of the lesson objective and their ability to apply learning through multiple methods</li> <li>Students are challenged to regularly apply learning by solving real-world problems/tasks through multiple standards-aligned assessment opportunities</li> <li>Students engage in self- and peer-assessment, and use the feedback to accelerate their learning</li> </ul>	<p><b>Actionable Assessments During the Lesson:</b> Uses a variety of standards-aligned assessments (E.g., questions, informal conversations, turn and talk, prompts/tasks) and aggressive monitoring strategies (E.g., coded note-taking, checklists, commentary) throughout the lesson to assess students' progress toward conceptual understanding of learning objectives; uses assessment data to scaffold learning opportunities as needed (reteach, accelerate)</p>
	<p><b>Actionable Assessments at the End of the Lesson:</b> Develops and uses end-of-lesson, standards-aligned assessments (questions, problems, prompts/tasks, journals, exit tickets, etc.) that yield data allowing the teacher to assess students' progress toward mastering learning goals and pinpoint where understanding is strong and where it breaks down for individual students or across groups of students; scaffolds learning opportunities as needed (reteach, accelerate)</p>
	<p><b>Multiple Opportunities to Demonstrate Learning:</b> Creates a variety of opportunities for students to self-assess, peer assess, and receive timely feedback to demonstrate conceptual understanding of lesson objectives and standards as well as progress towards their learning goals</p>

# APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



## Core Teacher Skills

### Actionable assessments during the lesson

- A. Checks for Understanding with Validation – gets a methodical and accurate “pulse” on student understanding throughout key points in the lesson (e.g., during direct instruction, before independent practice, at a transition, and at the end of a lesson) and adapts the lesson accordingly
- B. Monitoring (plan) - plans a monitoring pathway to check student work during small group and independent practice; uses information gathered to give students precise feedback, re-teach, etc.
- C. Monitoring (use) - uses information gathered to give students precise feedback, re-teach, name and correct common errors
- D. Highlight Misconceptions - identifies student work that exemplifies misconceptions and leads discussion with students around that work
- E. Plans Questions - plans standards-aligned questions and problems (reflecting Hess's Matrix) that drive critical thinking and proactively get to student misconceptions
- F. Questioning - poses standards-aligned questions and problems that prompt students to share their developing thinking about the content of the lesson
- G. Self and Peer Assessment - uses information to build conceptual understanding of the objectives and standards
- H. Diagnostic - uses diagnostic tools to identify students' strengths and opportunities for growth

### Actionable assessments at the end of the lesson

- A. End-of-Lesson Assessments (questions, problems, prompts/tasks, journals, exit tickets, etc.) - accurately assesses conceptual understanding of the daily objectives and informs misconceptions for the next day's instruction (reteach, spiral review, acceleration, etc.)
- B. Data Analysis - analyzes data, makes warranted changes to the next day's lesson, and uses data to provide student feedback

### Multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

- A. Systems for Daily and Weekly Achievement (diagnostic, formative, summative) - collects data via informal and formal assessments to determine conceptual understanding and drive standards-based instruction
- B. Differentiated Support - differentiates instruction as needed in response to student learning needs, including enrichment, acceleration, and extra support

## APS' Definition of Teaching Excellence



### 6. BELIEFS & VALUES

CORE TEACHER BEHAVIORS
<p><b>Modeling APS' Core Values:</b> Consistently lives up to and models APS' core values of “Put Students First”, “Commit to Teamwork”, “Focus on Communication”, “Demonstrate Respect for Others”, “Be Accountable”, “Act with Integrity” and “Embrace and Drive Change”</p>
<p><b>High Expectations:</b> Maintains the highest expectations for all students based on an unwavering belief in their potential</p>
<p><b>Self-Awareness and Continuous Learning:</b> Consistently recognizes his/her strengths and areas for growth and how s/he is perceived by others; proactively seeks feedback, self-reflects, and adapts own teaching practice and behavior; engages in learning opportunities aligned with student needs; accepts personal responsibility for mistakes and uses them as learning opportunities; builds a school culture that fosters a growth mindset</p>
<p><b>Responsiveness and Follow Through:</b> Consistently completes all responsibilities (E.g., grading, surveys, unit/lesson plans, assessments, parent meeting preparation) in a timely and high-quality manner; effectively interacts with stakeholders (students, parents, school/regional staff) in a professional and proactive manner that builds positive rapport and trust</p>
<p><b>Professional Expectations:</b> Consistently models the professional expectations established by the school and APS (E.g., minimal/no unexcused absences, adhering to professional dress code, preparing for substitutes in a timeline manner, being punctual and engaged during meetings); models and strictly adheres to APS' ethics policies</p>
<p><b>Renews to Get Stronger:</b> Establishes a healthy work-life balance and sets appropriate boundaries; consistently sustains self through skillfully using personal well-being strategies (E.g., identifying life lines, leveraging strengths)</p>