Student Engagement

INTRODUCTION

High-impact teaching strategies (HITS), also referred to as high-leverage practices, are core pedagogical practices that help students understand content while also supporting their social-emotional development.[1] These teaching practices can demonstrably impact student learning outcomes in both literacy and numeracy.[2]

This mini-guide, one in a series, sheds light on how teachers can apply the high-impact teaching strategy of student engagement in their literacy or numeracy lessons.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

This guide is meant for those who support teacher professional development at the school level. Depending on the local context and approach to professional development, this role can be played by coaches, community of practice leaders, teacher-facilitators, lead teachers, trainers, and Ministry of Education staff working with teachers. As part of a wider professional development approach, this guide can be a tool to target teachers' use of proven strategies to improve student learning in literacy and numeracy.

Teacher professional development has various modalities, ranging from pre-service courses to one-on-one coaching and mentoring to teacher-led communities of practice. This guide is intended to support professional discussions across a variety of contexts: in-school coaching, communities of practice, and pre- or in-service training. Teachers and coaches can use the guide as part of an individualized professional development plan; teacher-facilitators can use it to drive discussion on high-impact strategies as part of a community of practice; and pre-service designers can incorporate it into their curriculum for teacher training. Finally, this mini-guide reflects the incremental progression that teachers follow in their professional growth.

This mini-guide for Student Engagement, along with the others in the series, reflects the strategy domains and the HITS presented in the following table.

Finally, when adapting the content and use of this mini-guide to the local educational context, it can be integrated into a structured pedagogy program already in place. The mini-guide can be linked

1 Ball & Forzani (2010).
2 Ambrose et al. (2010); Danielson (2022); Rosenshine (2012).

directly to the curriculum and teaching and learning materials, and supported through the existing professional development model.

HIGH-IMPACT TEACHING STRATEGIES (HITS)				
Strategy domains		**Tier 1: Basic strategies**	**Tier 2: Developing strategies** *(built upon Tier 1 strategies)*	**Tier 3: Advanced strategies** *(built upon Tier 1 and 2 strategies)*
Learning Environment		Teacher establishes clear **rules and routines** to support learning and create a positive learning environment.	Teacher uses and supports **positive interactions** in the classroom (teacher-student and student-student).	Teacher organizes students to work in **pairs and small groups** to enhance collaboration, to build teamwork, and to promote a sense of belonging.
Student Engagement in Learning		Teacher gives all students, including pairs/small groups, **regular time for the practice of new skills**.*	Teacher uses **questioning** to build and deepen student understanding of new content.	Teacher plans for the strategic use of **partner and small-group work** for collaborative learning activities.**
Knowledge Progression and Connections		Teacher plans with and states the **lesson objective** and links new content to **students' background** (prior knowledge).	Teacher provides a **daily review** and links content to **previous learning**.	Teacher purposefully **sequences** lesson objectives and **adjusts the teaching sequence** as needed.
Assessment-Informed Instruction		Teacher routinely **monitors learning** by checking for understanding during instruction and giving actionable feedback to students.	Teacher **modifies content and instructional strategies** based on evidence of learning collected through formative assessment.	Teacher provides **differentiated instruction and remediation** to address learning gaps.
Instructional Approach	**Numeracy**	Teacher **provides explicit models and explanations** of math concepts and skills, followed by **student practice** of modeled skills.	Teacher uses questioning and other **interactive approaches to build student understanding** when **modeling and explaining** math concepts and skills. *Modeling/explanation is followed by student practice.*	Teacher provides **opportunities for students to explore** concepts and then **draws on their ideas when modeling and explaining** concepts and their application.
	Literacy	Teacher provides **explicit models and explanations** of new skills and concepts, followed by **student practice** of modeled skills.	Teacher **adds activities** to **construct meaning (or build knowledge)** together with students.	Teacher gives students **opportunities to apply skills in meaningful ways**.

Notes:
*Tier 1: Teacher groups students to engage all children in the learning activity, especially when materials are being shared.

**Tier 3: Teacher purposefully groups students to engage all children through homogenous or heterogenous grouping. Homogenous grouping can be used with students working at a similar, medium level to learn at a higher level together. Heterogeneous grouping is used to provide peer support to students who may be struggling with new content and skills.

Recognizing that professional development is most effective when it is focused and incremental, this guide proposes a tiered approach to mastering a collection of strategies, as shown in the table. Professional development activities that support teachers, especially those working in low- and middle-income countries, in mastering the specific strategies listed under Tier 1 are likely to result in improved instruction and learning outcomes. As teachers master the basic strategies of Tier 1 and move toward the more "advanced" Tiers 2 and 3 in each category, they will be empowered with a full set of strategies to reach and support more students. Over time (as measured in years, as opposed to weeks or months), a professional development program that follows a tiered approach can help teachers move toward more depth of instructional mastery (higher tiers) and significantly improve the quality of their teaching, which will ultimately help more students develop a deeper understanding and mastery of foundational literacy and numeracy skills and concepts.

It is important to note that not all teachers will start at Tier 1. Depending on the teacher's level of experience and familiarity with implementing the strategies, she may start at Tier 2 or even Tier 3. Furthermore, a teacher

starting at Tier 2 within the Learning Environment domain may start at Tier 1 in the Knowledge Progression domain; this type of variation and personalization is a key component of this guide and reflects each teacher's individual journey within classroom practice. Each guide includes a decision tree that includes helpful questions about teacher practices and the learning environment to help you decide on how best to work with the teachers you support.

DOMAIN:

Student Engagement

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Research has shown that student engagement is key to learning performance and plays a critical role in student success. To maximize learning, teachers must provide regular opportunities for students to practice what they have learned, provide time for students to work with classmates to develop more in-depth understanding, and use questioning to engage students with new content. Independent and small-group practice is needed for students to become fluent in a skill, retrieve information automatically, and be able to apply concepts to new problems. Incorporating questions into independent or small-group practice is a strategy that can support student learning. Effective teachers spend more time asking students clear and well-planned questions when teaching new information. Deliberately planned group-learning activities promote learning and student engagement; small groups and pairs can work on shared tasks in mixed-skill levels or same-skill levels. In literacy, a common lesson structure is referred to as the gradual release model (also known as "I Do, We Do, You Do"), where initially the teacher models a skill, then leads the practice of the skill together with students, and finally has the students practice on their own. Numeracy lesson structures may vary depending on the context and domain/skill focus—but most numeracy lessons should involve modeling and practice.

WHERE TO START?

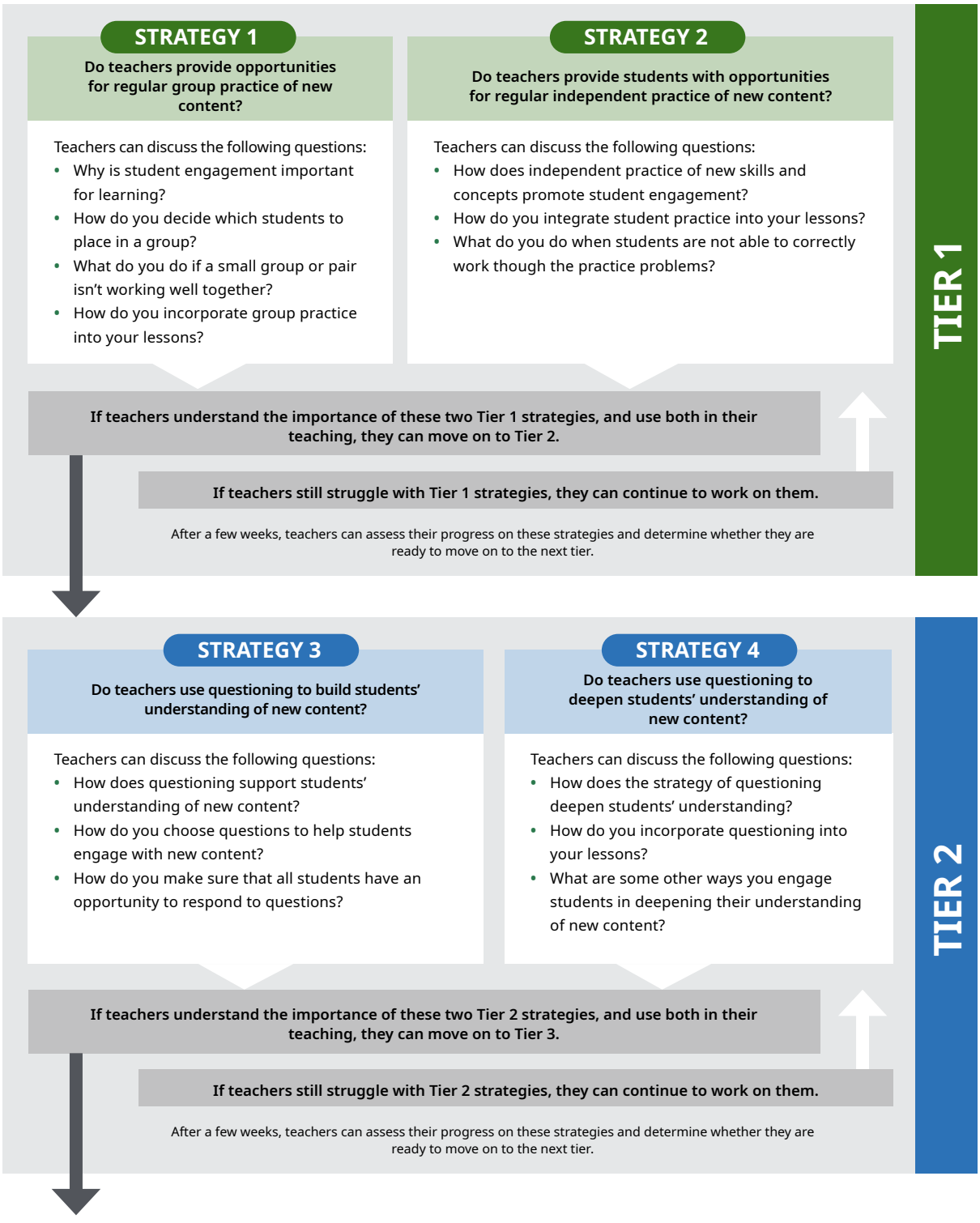
As mentioned earlier, **not all teachers will start on the same tier of strategies for a given domain**. The decision tree below is designed to help meet the teacher where they are and support them to implement these strategies at their own pace. There are three different boxes for each domain with prompts to help guide decisions as to which strategy teachers – in individual coaching sessions, in communities of practice, or in pre- and in-service training - should try and how to determine when a teacher is ready to implement a new strategy from the next tier. The strategies are color coded: Tier 1 strategies are listed in green, Tier 2 in blue, and Tier 3 in purple. However, it is important to remember and to convey to teachers that the strategies are not meant to be a checklist; it takes time to implement new ideas, and teachers may have to work on a strategy over several days, weeks, or months before feeling confident in using them and before students start benefiting from them.

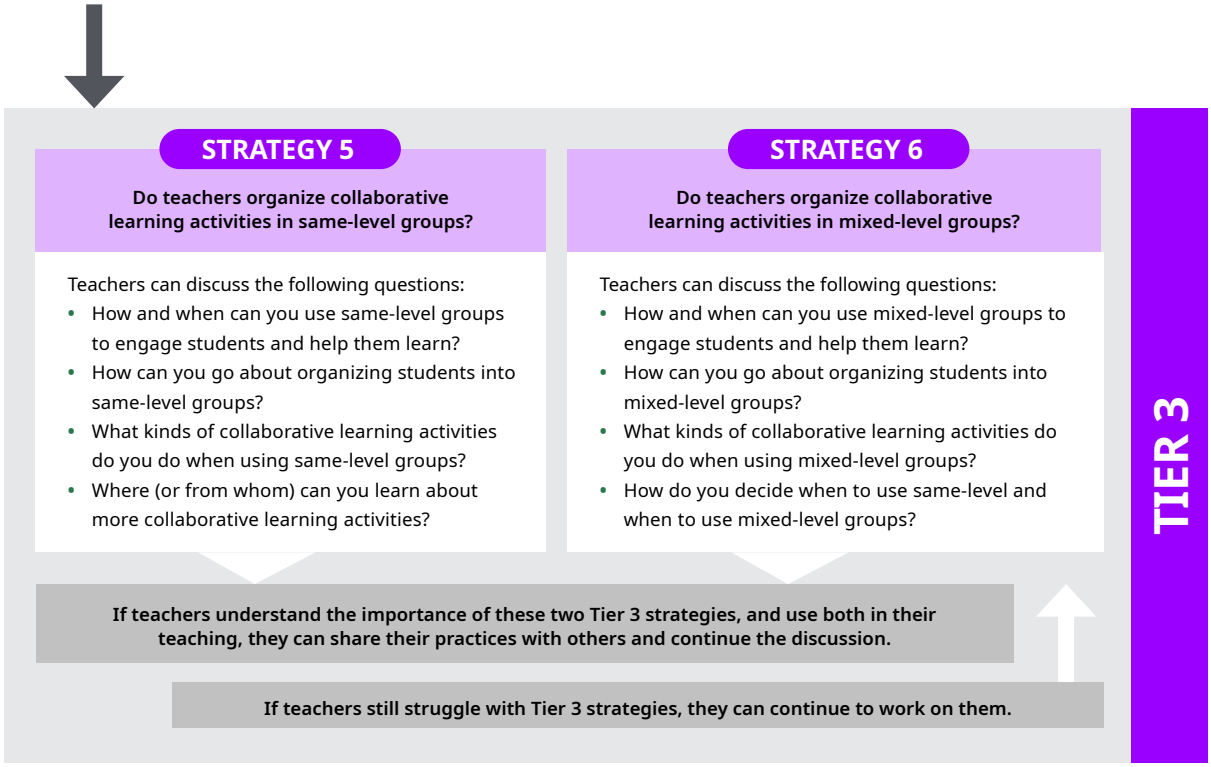
Decision Tree

The decision tree below can help teachers identify which strategies to begin with and help those who support their professional development focus their support. Starting with Box 1, teachers can discuss the questions listed to check whether they already implement that strategy. As they proceed through the subsequent boxes in the decision tree, when they reach a strategy that is new to them or they believe needs improvement, teachers work on the strategy noted in that box. The section after the decision tree provides sample activities and approaches for each strategy. Additional strategies offered by teachers should be welcomed.

Teachers and those who support them can also gauge what type of strategies they use in the classroom by discussing questions such as the following:

- How do you incorporate practice into your lessons?
- How do you use questioning to promote student engagement?
- Do you use collaborative learning activities with students? If so, how?





STRATEGIES FOR PROMOTING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The strategies below can be used with students across the early primary grades and adapted for the upper grades. Teachers may need to adjust the strategy from the way it is described to work with a specific grade or group of children. The strategies in this mini-guide are written with the classroom teacher in mind, even though, in most cases, coaches or teacher learning facilitators will be the ones sharing the strategies with teachers. Whether it is providing printed handouts or discussing the strategies together, the coach can decide the best way to share them with teachers.

Each of the strategies corresponds to one of three tiers:

Green: TIER 1

Blue: TIER 2

Purple: TIER 3

TIER 1: Teacher gives all students, including pairs/small groups, regular time for the practice of new skills.

Strategy 1 – Providing Opportunities for Regular Practice of New Content in Pairs and Small Groups

Working in pairs or small groups of three to six students has the advantage of engaging all students in learning. Added benefits include the sharing of scarce materials (such as supplementary books and math manipulatives) and learning to work collaboratively. Assigning students to partnerships or small groups takes careful planning and flexibility. Some students may not have worked in small groups before and will need instruction, guidance, and practice listening to and working with peers. Suggested ways of pairing and grouping students are to:

- Assign students numbers and then call random pairs of numbers to work together.
- Write students' names on sticks, and randomly select sticks to form pairs.
- In large classes: Ask students in every other row to turn around and partner with the person directly behind them.

In the sample activities below, begin lessons by modeling or explaining a task/skill. If possible, use assessment records of student performance to form pairs or groups of three to five students.

LITERACY	NUMERACY
Lesson objective – Blend (or combine) letter sounds to read a word. **Introducing the task** 1. Clearly explain to students that they will work with a partner or in a small group. 2. Model to the class how to blend the sounds of a short, decodable word for the class (I Do) by pointing each letter as you say the sound. Do two to three examples. 3. Then, invite students to practice blending together with you by saying the sounds with you or just after you (We Do). **Partner and small-group work** 1. Allocate enough time in the lesson for practicing both the We Do and the You Do lesson steps. 2. Tell the students that they will practice blending the sounds in new words while supporting each other as needed (You Do). 3. Have students begin their practice in pairs or groups. 4. Monitor students and give immediate feedback and support to pairs and groups as they practice blending the sounds of the word (You Do).	**Lesson objective** – Draw shapes and name their attributes. **Introducing the task** 1. Clearly explain to students that they will work with a partner or in a small group. 2. Say, *I'm going to draw a rectangle. [Draw a large rectangle on the board.] I know that a rectangle has four sides and four corners, so I will write that*. 3. Tell students that they will work in their groups to draw other shapes and write down some things about them, as you have done. 4. Check student understanding of the activity by asking questions that prompt students to summarize the instructions. **Partner and small-group work** 1. Explain that each member of the group will be responsible for drawing one shape and then the group members will work together to list the attributes for each shape. (If students are not able to write, they can just tell their group members everything they know about the shape.) 2. Allow sufficient time for students to draw and label the attributes. 3. Move around the classroom while students are working and observe them; provide immediate feedback and support as needed. 4. Note which groups are working well, which may need some assistance, and where there may be problems with group dynamics. 5. Ask each group, upon finishing, to post their shapes (and labels) on the wall. 6. If students have misconceptions, ask them to clarify their reasoning and explain again; immediately correct any mistakes or misconceptions.

Strategy 2 – Providing Opportunities for Regular, Independent Practice of New Content

Students need regular, independent practice for skill development and mastery. Deliberate practice involves rehearsal and repetition and leads to new knowledge or skills that can later be developed into more complex knowledge, skills, and concepts. Although other factors such as intelligence and motivation affect performance, practice is necessary for acquiring mastery and should be carefully planned and integrated into each lesson, following teacher explanation, modeling, and guided practice.

Providing immediate, effective feedback is crucial during the independent practice component of any lesson. Pay attention to students who need extra help; some may even need you to hold their hand and move it in the right direction when writing letters, numbers, or drawing shapes. Individual students' efforts should be rewarded with encouraging words.

LITERACY	NUMERACY
Lesson objective – Write the lowercase letter "b." **Introducing the task** 1. Model how to write the letter "b" for the class, explaining each step as you go. Repeat several times (I Do). 2. Guide the children in writing the letter using a finger—in the air or on their desks as you also do on the board or in the air (We Do). 3. Plan enough time in the lesson for the You Do part to give students time for group, pair, and individual practice. **Independent practice (You Do)** 1. Then move students on to independent practice. 2. Give students time for independent practice writing the letter in their exercise books. Writing practice on one to two rows is sufficient—no need for them to fill the page. 3. Walk around and offer immediate feedback and support, making sure that students start writing the letter at the correct point and move in the right direction. Your feedback should be encouraging. For example, when writing letter "b," if the child writes the stroke well but the half circle is not placed correctly, praise them for what they have done well.	**Lesson objective** – Identify the attributes (characteristics) of various shapes. **Introducing the task** 1. Before the lesson, create a practice sheet for students to match shapes to their attributes. 2. Read through each of the questions on the practice sheet for students. Be sure that everyone understands the activity. 3. Model and think aloud while completing the first matching task together with the students. **Independent practice** – Students match different shapes with their correct attributes on the teacher-prepared practice sheet. 1. Allow students time to complete the practice sheet independently. 2. As students practice, walk around and observe them. • Stop at students' desks and ask them to tell you what they are thinking as they answer the questions on the practice sheet. • Do not spend more than 30 seconds with each child. • Give immediate support to students who need it. 3. Collect practice sheets, assess further, and plan support.

TIER 2: Teacher uses questioning to build and deepen student understanding of new content.

Strategy 3 – Using Questioning to Build Understanding of New Content

Questioning is a strategy that can be used to increase student engagement. Well-formed questions can be effective at helping students reflect on new content, clarify thinking, correct misconceptions, and more fully participate in classroom learning. Open-ended questions—that is, those that have multiple right answers—are useful when students are just beginning to build their knowledge of a subject, because students at all levels are able to answer the question. Open-ended questions also allow students to provide deeper, more thoughtful answers, compared to simple yes-no and recall-type questions. In this strategy, you will learn how to use open-ended questions to build students' understanding of new content.

LITERACY

Lesson objective – Use letter sounds to show how words are similar and different.

Planning

1. Choose word pairs that sound similar but have a different consonant (for example, *sit* and *sip*, *pit* and *pin*, *met* and *net*, *mad* and *man*, *tin* and *tip*, *hit* and *hip*).
2. Make a list of questions about the word pairs that you will ask students (see "Questioning" section below for examples).
3. Ensure that you have enough different word sets to show students that this principle can be applied to many words.

Questioning

1. When asking the whole class a question, choosing students at random to answer can ensure that not only the most vocal students respond. However, it is important that students not feel surprised or embarrassed. To help them feel ready:
   - Pose the question to the entire class.
   - Ask that all students think about the question for 20 seconds.
   - Ask all students to raise their hands (so they know someone will be called on).
   - Select a student to respond.
   - If asking multiple questions, make sure to call on students who are often less quick to respond to ensure that more timid students are not left out.
2. Ask questions such as the following:
   - *How are these two words the same?*
   - *Which letters make them the same?*
   - *How are they different?*
   - *Which sounds make these two words different?*
3. Continue probing with questions to build students' understanding of the skill.

NUMERACY

Lesson objective – Describe the attributes (characteristics) of various shapes.

Planning

1. Select simple recall and open-ended questions to use during the lesson (see "Questioning" section below for examples).
2. Draw shapes on the chalkboard (or in the sand/dirt) in advance, or be prepared to draw these shapes during class.

Questioning

1. When asking the whole class a question, choosing students at random to answer can ensure that not only the most vocal students respond. However, it is important that students not feel surprised or embarrassed. To help them feel ready:
   - Pose the question to the entire class.
   - Ask that all students think about the question for 20 seconds.
   - Ask all students to raise their hands (so they know someone will be called on).
   - Select a student to respond.
   - If asking multiple questions, make sure to call on students who are often less quick to respond to ensure that more timid students are not left out.
2. Ask questions such as the following.
   - *What makes this shape a triangle?*
   - *Is this shape a triangle? Why or why not?*
   - Simplify the questions if students struggle. For example, reword an open-ended question to a recall question (*How many sides does a triangle have?*) and then ask the harder question again.
3. Continue probing with questions to build students' understanding of the skill.

Strategy 4 – Using Questioning to Deepen Understanding or Apply Content

Questioning can be used as a strategy to deepen students' understanding of content. You can use questions to relate previously taught content to new content, help students see how new content builds on the old, and lead students to apply new skills or concepts. Questions must be well thought out and linked to learning objectives to support or extend learning. Asking about similarities and differences, which is a higher-order skill, will prompt students to think more deeply about a topic. In order to answer the question, not only will students have to refer back to the lesson and recall what they learned about different shapes, but they will have to apply that information in a new way. Being able to use new content to explain, compare, and justify helps deepen and solidify learning. Therefore, when designing questions to use in the classroom, think carefully about the lesson objective and what you want students to learn, and select questions to deepen that learning. The examples below are designed for students working in small groups.

LITERACY

Lesson objective – Blend sounds to read words.

c	an
f	
p	

Planning

1. Determine in advance a few questions that you will pose during class to deepen students' understanding of this skill (illustrative examples of questions are below).
2. Select the letters and words to be used.
3. Prepare boards, like the one above, for this activity.
4. Organize students into pairs or small groups, and give each pair or group a board.

Questioning

1. Ask groups and pairs questions such as the following:
   - *What words can you make with your board?*
   - *What other letters can you add to -an to make other words?*
   - *What do your words mean? Can you draw a picture to show their meaning?* (Groups with higher abilities can write sentences using the words.)

NUMERACY

Lesson objective – Compare and contrast the attributes (characteristics) of various shapes.

Planning

1. Identify a specific question (see point #1 below for an example) to ask students to deepen their understanding of the target concept (e.g., characteristics of different shapes.
2. Organize pairs or groups.

Questioning

1. Explain to students, organized into groups, that they will answer the following question: *How is a triangle different from a square?*
2. Give them time to think about the question independently and then to take turns to discuss in their groups.
3. Choose one person in the group to write the answers down on a sheet of paper and another member to share the group response with the class.
4. If some groups struggle with being able to describe how the shapes are different, ask a group with a clear response to present and explain their answer again. Ask the group that struggled to try again, this time summarizing what their peers said.
5. Make a note of the groups that struggled to answer the question and work with them during another lesson.

TIER 3: Teacher plans for the strategic use of partner and small-group work for collaborative learning activities.

Strategy 5 – Using Collaborative Learning Activities in Same-Level Groups (Homogenous Grouping)

Collaborative learning refers to when students work in small groups on a task designed for full participation by each member of the group, which ensures that each student contributes to the completion of the task. Homogenous grouping means that students are grouped with other students at a similar skill level. Students placed in the "higher"-level groups receive a more challenging task than students at other skill-level groups. Similarly, students who are struggling the most would be paired together and would be given the most basic tasks. Importantly, homogenous grouping allows the teacher to focus their attention on the group(s) of students with a lower skill level, giving them the support they need. For successful group work (whether in homogenous and heterogenous groups—see next strategy), it is important that the teacher create rules about, and schedule time for, students to practice treating one another with respect, listening to one another, and being supportive to one another. See strategies in the Learning Environment mini-guide for how to do this.

LITERACY	NUMERACY
Lesson objective – Identify rhyming words. **Planning** 1. Before class: Group students. • Review your class roster and identify the level for each student based on their ability in relation to the lesson objective (note: this requires that you know the skill levels of your students formally or more informally through formative assessment). • Form groups according to the levels you have identified. You should have at least three levels: One level for "struggling" students, another level for students who need a little support, and a third level for high-performing students who do not need any support. • Place students in groups according to their level. In large classes, you will likely have multiple groups at each level. 2. Take the lesson objective and prepare three separate activities—each with a different level of difficulty—on rhyming words on a sheet of paper. • Least difficult: The sheet of paper should have a target word and then two to three other words. Students read the words aloud with one another and then select which word rhymes with the target word. • Moderately difficult: This is similar to the activity above, but the words are longer or more difficult (e.g., words with different vowel spelling but sound the same, like *true*, *glue*, *grew* with a non-rhyming word, *blow*). • Most difficult: This group will generate—on their own—a list of words that rhyme. **Homogenous group activity** 1. During class: Demonstrate the activity first (We Do) with the class. • Write several short words on the board. • Then say a few words that rhyme and one that doesn't. • Ask the students to say which one doesn't rhyme. • For example, you might write the word *can* and then say, *tan*, *top*, *pan*, *man*. • Students should say that *top* does not rhyme. 2. Repeat this with the class once more with a different set of rhyming words. 3. Ask students if they have any questions. 4. Explain to students that you will group them with some of their peers (do not explain that they are grouped by level, as this can affect students' confidence). 5. Once students are grouped, assign each group their activity. For the students who are struggling the most, assign them the least difficult activity you have prepared in advance. Assign the high-performing students the most difficult activity, and assign the middle-level students the activity of moderate difficulty. 6. Walk around the room and make sure the high-performing groups are on task and doing okay. Then, proceed to the group(s) of struggling students. Remain with them and help them with the activity as needed.	**Lesson objective** – Identify simple shapes. **Planning** 1. Before class: Group students. • Review your class roster and identify the level for each student based on their ability in relation to the lesson objective (note: this requires that you know the skill levels of your students formally or more informally through formative assessment). • Form groups according to the levels you have identified. You should have at least three levels: One level for "struggling" students, another level for students who need a little support, and a third level for high-performing students who do not need any support. • Place students in groups according to their level. In large classes, you will likely have multiple groups at each level. 2. Take the lesson objective and prepare three separate activities, each with a different level of difficulty. • Least difficult: This group identifies very simple shapes. For example, you could have different shapes on a piece of paper and ask them to identify which one is a square or which one is not a triangle. • Moderately difficult: This group identifies the shape and state what characteristics make it this shape. • Most difficult: The students compares and contrasts the characteristics of a shape. **Homogenous group activity** 1. In class: Demonstrate the activity first (We Do) with the class: • Draw a shape on the board. • Ask students to state what shape it is. • Ask them what makes it that shape. • Draw another shape on the board. • Ask students to state what is similar about this shape and the first one you drew. • Then, ask them what is different about the two shapes. 2. Ask students if they have any questions. 3. Explain to students that you will group them with some of their peers (do not explain that they are grouped by level, as this can affect students' confidence). 4. Once students are grouped, assign each group their activity. For the students who are struggling the most, assign them the least difficult activity you have prepared in advance. Assign the high-performing students the most difficult activity, and assign the middle-level students the activity of moderate difficulty. 5. Inform groups that all students are to actively participate, which means that when a student is not talking, they are actively listening to their peers. 6. Walk around the room and make sure the high-performing groups are on task and doing okay. Then, proceed to the group(s) of struggling students. Remain with them and help them with the activity as needed.

Strategy 6 – Organizing Collaborative Learning Activities in Mixed-Level Groups (Heterogenous Grouping)

Heterogenous grouping describes groupings that purposefully mix students by skill level (i.e., each group has students of varying skill levels). The objective of heterogenous grouping is to allow students to learn from their peers. Through heterogenous groups, higher-performing students can assist their peers who need more support. Organizing students into groups (both homogenous and heterogenous) is especially effective in engaging all students in learning in large classes.

LITERACY

Lesson objective – Create a chart of rhyming words.

Planning

1. Count the number of students in your class and determine the size for each group (approximately six students per group is ideal).
2. Review your class roster and place students in levels according to their ability in relation to the lesson objective (note: this requires that you know the skill levels of your students formally or more informally through formative assessment).
3. Assign students to groups so that each group includes at least one to two students from each skill level.
4. Consider assigning stronger students the role of peer mentor, who plays a supportive and friendly role as they help their peers.
5. Allow students to ask questions or suggest areas in which they need more practice.
6. Ensure that the classroom environment is safe for collaboration and learning for all.

Heterogenous group activity

1. Write three words on the board: *can*, *top*, and *mat*.
2. Give the instructions for the group work: tell students that they will be working together to create a chart of words that rhyme with the words written on the board.
3. Tell students that the aim of this activity is not only to work on an assignment together but to learn from one another in their small groups. Ask students to think about (1) what they find to be difficult or what they do not understand; (2) from whom in their group they can ask for help; and (3) who in their group might need additional support that they may be able to provide.
4. Also tell students that in order to achieve the aim, rules for group work must be followed: everyone gets a turn to speak and ask questions, as well as to contribute to the task; when a student is not talking, they are actively listening to their peers. In addition, any resources should be shared.
5. While students are working, carefully monitor the groups to ensure that students are collaborating—namely, that all students are having an opportunity to contribute—and that those who need additional support are receiving that support in their groups.

NUMERACY

Lesson objective – Create shapes based on their attributes.

Planning

1. Count the number of students in your class and determine the size for each group (approximately six students per group is ideal).
2. Review your class roster and place students in levels according to their ability in relation to the lesson objective (note: this requires that you know the skill levels of your students formally or more informally through formative assessment).
3. Assign students to groups so that each group includes at least one to two students from each skill level.
4. Consider assigning stronger students the role of peer mentor, who plays a supportive and friendly role as they help their peers.

Heterogenous group activity

1. Draw three shapes on the board: triangle, square, and circle.
2. Give the instructions for the group work: tell students that they will be working together to create a chart, showing each shape and then listing the different thing they know about that shape (i.e., attributes), as well as some examples of where that shape can be found in the classroom or community.
3. Tell students that the aim of this activity is not only to work on an assignment together but to learn from one another in their small groups. Ask students to think about (1) what they find to be difficult or what they do not understand; (2) from whom in their group they can ask for help; and (3) who in their group might need additional support that they may be able to provide.
4. Also tell students that in order to achieve the aim, rules for group work must be followed: everyone gets a turn to speak and ask questions, as well as to contribute to the task; when a student is not talking, they are actively listening to their peers. In addition, any resources should be shared.
5. While students are working, carefully monitor the groups to ensure that students are collaborating—namely, that all students are having an opportunity to contribute—and that those who need additional support are receiving that support in their groups.

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