



Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

Conditions for Highly Effective Literacy Learning



The **Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment** contains evidence-based, practical areas that can lead to critical conversations at your school that directly impact student literacy achievement.

Conditions for Highly Effective Literacy Learning

This self-assessment allows literacy educators to take a fresh look at their classrooms and evaluate a global view of the environment and practices that optimize student learning.

Well written units are only effective tools for learning if students are socially, emotionally, and intellectually engaged in improving their skills. As Dr. John Hattie notes, there is low statistical significance between student achievement and a teacher's subject knowledge. It is not how much a teacher knows, it is how effectively students can learn.ⁱ

Each of the Four Areas in the Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment are strategically chosen indicators. Much like a pediatrician will check a child's temperature to evaluate current overall health, these indicators help to reveal key focus points that improve, or when lacking can repress, student learning.

Evaluation without Fear

The **Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment** is directly aligned to positive, affirming, collaborative practice. There are no punitive labels here. Instead, points of reflection and self-assessment activities directly link to opportunities for professional collaboration.

Research shows that teachers involved in meaningful, collaborative practice lead to the strongest student outcomes and have the highest job-satisfaction.ⁱⁱ

Each of the Four Areas in the Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment are strategically chosen ...these indicators help to reveal key focus points that will improve student learning.

The Four Areas

The Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment provides strategic indicators for the conditions necessarily for highly effective literacy learning. Past and emerging research indicates aspects of classroom life and instruction that when present can more greatly engage learners socially, emotionally, and intellectually, or when absent can reduce student achievement.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Four Areas of the Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment bring together critical areas of effective practice, some of which should, however are not, often examined together.^{iv}

The Four Areas are:

1. **Global, Diverse Citizenship:** My Classroom works to develop citizens who are thoughtful about global diversity.
Indicator for: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, digital citizenship, robust literacy curriculum, technology and literacy integration
2. **Differentiation and Learning Mindset:** My Classroom works to support independence in all learners.
Indicator for: growth mindset, Universal Design for Learning, Differentiated Instruction, sustainable conferring practices, restorative justice/problem-solving discipline
3. **Family Partnerships:** My Classroom makes families our learning partners.
Indicator for: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy, two-generation learning, Family-School Partnership Standards
4. **Collaborative Professional Practice:** My Classroom encourages professional collaboration.
Indicator for: educator self-efficacy, personalized professional development, professional learning networks, reflective practice

Collaboration, Not Rating: Using the Self-Assessment Columns

This tool is intended to be non-evaluative. Instead, it is intended to be used by individual educators, or preferably educators working collaboratively, to self-assess.

The columns for this self-assessment intentionally suggest a move to collaboration. They are intended to be selected and used as follows:

- “Not Yet Present”:** mark this column if you see no evidence of this statement in your classroom, even if you agree and believe in the statement but no evidence is present or you find it hard to describe the evidence. **Then, after your final reflection,** reach out for expertise either in person or online. Marking this column means you may not have been aware of this area or have not yet been able to focus on it. Finding someone else to learn from can support you in quickly growing in this area. You are welcome to contact The Educator Collaborative for assistance or refer to the “Related Readings and Resources” section at the end of this document.
- “Approaching this Goal”:** mark this column if you have some evidence of the statement, though perhaps not fully meeting the descriptor. For instance, if the statement says “more than half,” and you are able to see a third, but not half, this column would be appropriate. **Then, after your final reflection,** seek a collaborator. Marking this column means you typically are aware of this area and simply need to strengthen it. Finding someone in person or online that you could study with and grow together will support your growth in this area. Again, you are welcome to contact The Educator Collaborative for assistance or refer to the “Related Readings and Resources” section at the end of this document.
- “Strong Evidence”:** mark this column if you have evidence that matches or exceeds the statement. **Then, after your final reflection,** share your work with others. Marking this column means you have this area as a strength in your practice. Other educators would benefit from learning about your experience and how you developed this practice. Seek a way to share with individuals or groups, either online or in person (or both). Again, you are welcome to contact The Educator Collaborative for assistance or refer to the “Related Readings and Resources” section at the end of this document.

How to Use this Document

As stated above, and worthy of repeating, **this tool is intended to be non-evaluative**. Instead, it is intended to be used by individual educators, or preferably educators working collaboratively, to self-assess.

All Four Areas should be assessed, however the order and timing is left to individual discretion.

Begin by selecting your first Area. Alone, or with colleagues, read the **bold "Area"** description. Then read the first **"Do this" section**. This section is the assessment activity that the bullets below refer to. For each bullet, place a check mark or write the date under one of the three columns: "Not Yet Present," "Approaching This Goal," or "Strong Evidence."

For example:

- Under "**Area 1: Global, Diverse Citizenship**," the first **"Do this"** reads: "Do this: Choose 20 books randomly from your classroom library..."
- Randomly collect those 20 books and place them in front of you.
- While looking at those books, move to the first bullet, which reads: "I see many different characters/people/regions represented by the main characters in fiction or people in nonfiction (examples: gender, ethnicity, class, etc.)"
- Reviewing only those 20 books, place a checkmark in the corresponding column.

At the completion of the bulleted activities, return to the **"Do this" row** and place a check-mark in the corresponding column you feel best describes your self-assessment of that area. This is an overall assessment of that section.

After completing all "Do this" rows, do the same in the **"Area"** row. This is an overall assessment of that Area.

Finally, turn to page 11, here you can reflect on your findings and set a goal of how to proceed and when to reassess. We suggest you select less goals, not more, so you can focus your efforts.

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present Reach out for expertise	Approaching this Goal Seek a collaborator	Strong Evidence Share with others
Area 1: Global, Diverse Citizenship <i>My Classroom works to develop citizens who are thoughtful about global diversity.</i>			
<i>Do this: Choose 20 books randomly from your classroom library...</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I see many different characters/people/regions represented by the main characters in fiction or people in nonfiction (examples: gender, ethnicity, class, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When books have characters/people with similar identities... <ul style="list-style-type: none"> stereotypes are <u>not</u> reinforced (example: not all girls are in need of saving; not all Latino characters live in cities, etc.) and/or different human experiences are shown (example: in one book a white character is rich, in another a white character is poor) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half of the books I randomly selected have been published in the last 10 years (this is important as more current texts tend to reflect more current issues, identities, and perspectives). 			
<i>Do this: Make a list of last 7 classrooms your students interacted with (in person or virtually)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My class has interacted with at least one other classroom 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half are classrooms outside of my district 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half are classrooms outside of my state 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half are classrooms outside of my country 			

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present Reach out for expertise	Approaching this Goal Seek a collaborator	Strong Evidence Share with others
<i>Do this: Review your last 4 writing assignments</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many had audiences outside of our classroom 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All gave students choice in topic based on their interest, point of view 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least two involved working to understand diverse perspectives on the same topic/event 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least two involved writing to make a change 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> At least one was co-authored with students' peers (in person or online, inside or outside of my classroom) 			

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present Reach out for expertise	Approaching this Goal Seek a collaborator	Strong Evidence Share with others
Area 2: Differentiation and Learning Mindset <i>My Classroom works to support independence in all learners.</i>			
<i>Do this: Look at the assessments you collect</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I ask students about the work environments in which they work best and differentiate learning areas of the room in response 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I assess student academic needs at least 2 weeks prior to a unit starting and incorporate that feedback into my planning 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My assessment practices involve student reflection and personal goal setting 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meaningful celebration of growth is a regular part of my assessment cycle 			
<i>Do this: Sit in at least two different students' regular desk/seat/work areas, and pretend you are him/her each time</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From this seat, imagining I am this student, I am sitting in a place that is best for how I learn (example: close to charts, near a spot I walk around in when I need to, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From this seat, imagining I am this student, I see artifacts in this classroom that feel personal to me (example: my work is posted; an author's books I love; images, art, or writing by a person I admire is visible; etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> From this seat, imagining I am this student, I feel safe and cared for in this classroom, by these peers and by this teacher 			

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present Reach out for expertise	Approaching this Goal Seek a collaborator	Strong Evidence Share with others
<i>Do this: Take a look at your conference or small group records</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have a system in place to regularly talk with my students one-on-one and in small groups 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I am knowledgeable of my students' IEP goals and use those to inform my conferring 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students have a voice in a conference or small group, they make decisions about their work and goals 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without prompting, most of my students could explain what goals/skills we are working on together in my conferring with them 			
<i>Do this: Reflect on your classroom management</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My students would say that they feel heard and empowered in my classroom, even when they are upset 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I take a problem solving approach to solving classroom disruptions (example: talking with all parties, seek solutions solve solutions, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I include opportunities to build classroom community and positive relationships between students (examples: nurture friendships, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My students understand and have a part to play in deciding consequences and rewards for the class 			

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present	Approaching this Goal	Strong Evidence
	Reach out for expertise	Seek a collaborator	Share with others
Area 3: Family Partnerships			
<i>My Classroom makes families our learning partners.</i>			
<i>Do this: Review the last 5 months of your teaching (include last year if need be)</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have asked families to teach me about their children at least once this year 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have asked families to teach me about their children multiple times across the year, as students grow and change 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have had families volunteer regularly in my classroom 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have had families present their expertise in my classroom (examples: guest teaching, family learning events, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I assign homework, I have provided support to families that allows them to adequately support their children (examples: materials produced in home languages, video explanations, encourage class families to connect on email lists or wiki pages, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If I have not seen/heard from a family, I actively reach out to help them feel comfortable and confident in interacting with me/our school 			

Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment

	Not Yet Present	Approaching this Goal	Strong Evidence
	Reach out for expertise	Seek a collaborator	Share with others
Area 4: Collaborative Professional Practice			
<i>My Classroom encourages professional collaboration.</i>			
<i>Do this: Review the last 5 professional publications you have read</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have read at least 5 professional publications (examples: books, journals, articles, blog posts, etc.) 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More than half of these titles have led to experimenting with practices in my classroom 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have participated in or led a discussion group for at least one of these titles, in person or online 			
<i>Do this: Reflect on your prior 6 months of teaching</i>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I regularly invite colleagues to visit my classroom and/or I visit their classrooms 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I regularly invite colleagues (who are not already co-teachers) to co-teach with me and reflect on our practice 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I regularly discuss student work from my classroom with colleagues and reflect on my practice 			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I regularly share the work/challenges/discoveries of my classroom with colleagues outside of my school (example: on my blog, on Twitter, at conferences) 			

Final Reflection

Review your notations on this Self-Assessment. Select one bullet or “Do this” area from each column and make a plan. Use additional paper or digital notes if needed.

Need Support Reach out for expertise	Growing Practice Seek a collaborator	Strength Share with others
Which statement? and Who or Where will you reach out to?		
What is your timeframe? and/or When will you reassess?		
Visualize success, what will it look like within this timeframe?		

Development of this Self-Assessment

This Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment was developed by The Educator Collaborative, LLC, under the guidance of the Founding Director, Christopher Lehman, and developed through the organization's current professional Think Tank membership: Chad Everett, Chantal Francois, Katharine Hale, Dr. Rozlyn Linder, Kristine Mraz, JoEllen McCarthy, Pernille Ripp, Kate Roberts, Maggie Beattie Roberts, Heather Rocco, Elizabeth Lacy Schoenberger, Dr. Dana Stachowiak, Brian Sweeney and Kristin Ziemke and members' field-based study and practices as well as current research in the field. Please see "Related Reading and Resources" below for scholarly works, professional publications and organizations whose work was also drawn upon for this document.

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Related Readings and Resources

Influential to this Self-Assessment's development and listed to provide further to support educators in developing expertise within the Four Areas

Area 1: Global, Diverse Citizenship

Teaching Tolerance's *Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education* (2014)

Reflections on the Development of African American Children's Literature (Bishop, *Journal of Children's Literature*, 2012)

Common Sense Media's *Digital Citizenship Curriculum*

Educolor Movement

The Missing Voices in EdTech: Bringing Diversity Into EdTech (Davis, 2014)

Culturally Affirming Literacy Practices for Urban Elementary Students (Eds. Scott and Purdum-Cassidy, 2016)

Amplify: Digital Teaching and Learning in the K-6 Classroom (Muhtaris and Ziemke, 2015)

Upstanders: How to Engage Middle School Hearts and Minds with Inquiry (Daniels and Ahmed, 2014)

Kindness Wins: A Simple No-Nonsense Guide to Teaching Our Kids How To Be Kind Online (Breen, 2016)

Area2: Differentiation and Learning Mindset

National Center on Universal Design for Learning

A Mindset for Learning (Mraz and Hertz, 2015)

Smarter Charts (Mraz and Martinelli, 2012)

Mindset (Dweck, 2006)

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Falling in Love with Close Reading (Lehman and Roberts, 2013)
Classroom Management Matters (Cassetta and Sawyer, 2015)
The Construction Zone (Terry Thompson, 2015)
Leading and Managing a Differentiated Classroom (Tomlinson and Imbeau, 2010)
Visible Learning (Hattie, 2008)
Still Learning to Read (Sibberson and Szymusiak, 2016)
The Book Whisperer (Miller, 2009)
Chart Sense (Linder, 2014)
DIY Literacy (Roberts and Roberts, 2016)

Area 3: Family Partnerships

National Center for Families Learning
 National PTA, National Standards for Family-School Partnerships
Balancing Reading and Language Learning (Cappellini, 2005)
Classroom Management Matters (Cassetta and Sawyer, 2015)
 Eric Dearing, Holly Kreider, et. al. Family involvement in school and low income children's literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 2006.

Area 4: Collaborative Professional Practice

Professional Capital (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012)
The Joy and Power of Reading: A Summary of Research and Expert Opinion (Scholastic, 2015)
The Framework for Teaching (Danielson Group)
Writing Next (Biancarosa and Snow, 2006)
Reading Next (Graham and Perin, 2007)
Passionate Learners (Ripp, 2015)
 Nerdy Book Club
 National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE)
 International Literacy Association (ILA)
 International Society of Technology in Education (ISTE)

Feedback on this Document and Future Revisions

This document is a living one and your feedback is critical to the development of this tool. Please visit the Strong Classrooms Self-Assessment feedback form on our website to provide feedback, additional sources, report typographical errors, or other input that could strengthen this tool for educators.

The feedback form can be found at:

TheEducatorCollaborative.com/strong-classrooms-self-assessment/
or
bit.ly/StrongClassrooms

or
scan this QR code



ⁱ “The Visible Student” presentation at the International Literacy Association Conference, Boston, MA, 2016; see also Visible Learning for Teachers (2008).

ⁱⁱ *Professional Capital* (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2012); Biancarosa, C., & Snow, C. E. (2006). Reading next—A vision for action and research in middle and high school literacy: A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York (2nd ed.). Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.; Graham, S., & Perin, D. (2007). Writing next: Effective strategies to improve writing of adolescents in middle and high schools – A report to Carnegie Corporation of New York. Washington, DC: Alliance for Excellent Education.

ⁱⁱⁱ Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A. R. (2007). We feel, therefore we learn: The relevance of affective and social neuroscience to education. *Mind, Brain, and Education*, 1(1), 3-10.; Skinner, E. A., Zimmer-Gembeck, M. J., & Connell, J. P. (1998). Individual differences and the development of perceived control. *Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development*, 63(2-3), i-vi, 1-220.; Howard, T., & Terr, C. L. Sr. (2011). Culturally Responsive Pedagogy for African American Students: Promising Programs and Practices for Enhanced Academic Performance. *Teaching Education*, 22(4), 345-362.; Tomlinson, C. A. (2000). Differentiation of instruction in the elementary grades.; Writing Next; Reading Next; Professional Capital; National Center for Families Learning: From Theory to Outcomes: NCFL’s Two-Generation Movement for Families (2016); Dearing, E., Kreider, H., Simpkins, S., & Weiss, H. (2006). Family involvement in school and low income children’s literacy: Longitudinal associations between and within families. *Journal of Educational Psychology*. 98 (4). 653-664.

^{iv} Santamaria, L. J. (2009). Culturally Responsive Differentiated Instruction: Narrowing Gaps Between Best Pedagogical Practices Benefiting All Learners. *Teachers College Record*. 111(1), 214-247.

About The Educator Collaborative

The Educator Collaborative, LLC, is a think tank and educational consulting organization working to innovate the ways educators learn together. Founded by internationally recognized educator, author, and literacy expert, Christopher Lehman, we aim to serve children and the adults who teach, learn, and grow alongside them.

The Educator Collaborative network is made up of trusted and recognized experts and emerging voices in literacy, technology, culturally relevant pedagogy and instructional leadership. Members author some of the most widely read and relied upon texts in our profession. Most importantly, members of the network consistently live their love for teaching, learning and social change through all they do.



Professional Development

The Educator Collaborative provides onsite and online professional development support to schools in the United States and around the world. It also hosts a number of acclaimed online learning opportunities that are unique in scope and organization, connected educators from across the world in intensive and interactive professional learning.

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