

Identifying an area of Reinforcement and Refinement

Hints and Questions for Choosing Reinforcement and Refinement Objectives

When choosing areas of reinforcement and refinement from the South Carolina Teaching Standards 4.0 Rubric, leadership should ask themselves several guiding questions to ensure that a teacher's professional growth will have the maximum impact on the achievement of his/her own students.

1. Which areas on the rubric received the highest scores (reinforcements) and the lowest scores (refinements)?
2. Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on student achievement?
3. Which of these areas would have the greatest impact on other areas of the rubric?
4. In which area will the teacher have the most potential for growth? For example, with new teachers it might be better to focus on developing objectives and sub-objectives instead of improving a teacher's ability to teach problem solving.
5. Make sure that the reinforcement is not directly related to the refinement. It is important that teachers see their area of strength as separate from their area needing improvement.
6. Choose a refinement area for which you have sufficient and specific evidence from the lesson to support why the teacher needs to work in this area.
7. Select refinement topics with which you have personal knowledge and teaching experience. There is nothing worse than telling a teacher they need to alter their practice and then not being able to provide specific examples for how this can be done.
8. Understand the teacher's capacity when identifying an area of refinement. In other words, where will you get the biggest bang for your buck?
9. Remember—a reinforcement should be only to reinforce the teacher. Do not hedge this part of the post-conference with qualifying statements such as “it could have been even better if,” or “next time you could also do...”. Teachers need to hear what they are effective at and have it be left at that.

When developing the post-conference plan, consider identifying the area of refinement first. This will ensure that the reinforcement and refinement do not overlap.

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Directions: Observe and script a lesson. On the left side of the table, list individual pieces of evidence from the lesson that reinforced student success. On the right side of the table, list evidence from the lesson that if improved, could increase student success. Then, label each piece of evidence with an indicator from the SCTS rubric. This will help you identify an area to reinforce and an area to refine.

Reinforcement	Refinement
What in the lesson was encouraging, supporting and reinforced student success?	What could have been refined to improve student learning at any point in the lesson?

Steps to follow when selecting areas of reinforcement and refinement:

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1. Brainstorm three to four indicators that stand out as possible areas of refinement or reinforcement.
For example:
 - Questioning
 - Grouping
 - Activities
 - Materials
2. Identify the specific descriptor within each indicator identified. (This is still part of the brainstorming phase.)
For example:
 - Questioning - wait time
 - Grouping - most students participating in groups are held accountable for group work and individual work
 - Activities and Materials - elicit a variety of thinking
3. Look for similarities or trends between the indicators/descriptors identified.
 - Ask yourself which, if any, of the descriptors impact the others identified?
 - Knowing the teacher, which of these, if given a model, would have the greatest impact on the teacher's instruction?
 - What other indicators will be impacted if this indicator/descriptor is targeted?
This actually provides rationale and anticipated results.
4. Identify the indicator and descriptor that will be the identified area of refinement or reinforcement.