

**REVISITING & REFLECTING
ON
NBPTS
CORE PROPOSITIONS
TO PREPARE FOR
COMPONENT #1**

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CORE PROPOSITION # 1

Teachers are committed to students and their learning.

RESEARCH STUDY A

Eccles and colleagues' (1993) theory of stage-environment fit states that the degree of alignment between a child's developmental needs (such as autonomy, peer acceptance, and supportive relationships with caring adults) and the environment provided both at home and at school is related to the level of social, academic, and emotional turmoil experienced by youths. When children's needs are well met by their environment, problematic behaviors tend to be avoided. Conversely, when there is a misalignment between student needs and opportunities afforded by the school environment, emotional, social, and academic problems are likely to arise. Eccles and colleagues identify adolescence as a time of particular risk, where changing psychological needs such as increased desire for autonomy, increased peer orientation, and increased cognitive power do not match up well with the traditional parenting and schooling trends of limiting autonomy, limiting collaborative tasks, and failing to provide tasks of greater intellectual complexity during this time.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What are the developmental needs (physical, emotional, cognitive, language, social) of my students, and what evidence do I have that my actions consistently meet these needs?
- In what ways can I better meet students' needs, and how do I know this?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 1

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RESEARCH STUDY B

Eccles and Wigfield (1985) argue that teacher expectations strongly contribute to student achievement. In classrooms with teachers who express high expectations and a belief that students can learn, student achievement is higher than their peers with teachers who do not demonstrate this commitment.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What evidence do I have that I set and communicate high expectations for my students?
- How does my teaching reflect my belief that all students can and will learn?
- What evidence do I have that students understand what is expected of them?
- How do I ensure that my expectations match my instructional and assessment practices (and what do I do when there is a mismatch)?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 1

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RESEARCH STUDY C

Research by Hamre and Pianta (2005) provides strong evidence for the importance of ~~positive teacher-student relationships~~. A national sample of 910 children who were identified by their kindergarten teachers as having multiple problems (social, academic, behavior, and attention) were divided into two groups: One group was placed with a supportive first-grade teacher; the second group was placed with a less-supportive teacher. By year's end, the at-risk students placed with a teacher who provided high levels of instructional and emotional support scored as well as their peers who were not at risk, while those with a less-supportive teacher continued to struggle. Positive teacher-student relationships continue to be important in middle and high school. In a longitudinal study of over 12,000 students in Grades 7 through 12, Resnick et al. (1997) found that positive relationships with teachers and other measures of "school connectedness" acted as a protective factor against a variety of student health risk factors, such as drug and alcohol use, violent behavior, emotional distress, suicide, and sexual activity.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- How do I consistently provide instructional and emotional support for my students?
- What evidence do I have from students that they feel supported?
- In what ways can I be more supportive of my students, and how do I know this?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 2

Teachers know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects to students.

RESEARCH STUDY A

Shulman (1986) introduced the term *pedagogical content knowledge* (referred to as PCK by pedagogy wonks), which he defined as “a blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented, and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction” (p. 8). A teacher’s pedagogical content knowledge has subsequently been found to be an indicator of effectiveness by numerous studies (Ball & Cohen, 1999; Berliner, 2004; Bransford, Darling-Hammond, & LePage, 2005).

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What evidence do I have that I know my content well and know how best to teach it?
- How does this knowledge help me determine the best sequence for teaching related ideas?
- How well do I anticipate and address student misconceptions?
- How can I clearly articulate evidence that I consistently use multiple methods or approaches to support student learning, development, and achievement?
- What knowledge do I have that informs this decision making?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 3

Teachers are responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.

RESEARCH STUDY A

Berliner (2004), in a study of “expert” teachers, identified the following characteristics: more extensive pedagogical content knowledge; better problem-solving strategies; better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners; more ambitious objectives for students; better monitoring of learning and providing feedback; greater display of a passion for teaching. A study of 92 highly effective K–8 teachers in Tennessee revealed a shared set of consistent actions including monitoring student learning by moving throughout the classroom; organizing multiple small-group activities; encouraging student participation in discussion and academic conversations; managing lesson flow from planning activities to arrangement and availability of materials; and displaying student work in the classroom (Bransford et al., 2005). The researchers were also struck by what was *infrequent* in these classrooms: teachers standing at the front lecturing; students working individually with desks in traditional rows; teachers using instructional time ineffectively.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What evidence do I have of how my teaching consistently exhibits these actions and characteristics?
- What evidence do I routinely collect about my students’ development and learning, and how do I use this to modify instruction to better support student development and learning?
- In what ways do I clearly provide feedback to students that supports their continued growth?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 4

*Teachers think systematically about their practice
and learn from experience.*

RESEARCH STUDY A

Ertmer and Newby (1996) identified several characteristics of expert learners (which is an essential characteristic of the highly effective teacher): experts are strategic, self-regulated, and reflective. It is not simply the amount of knowledge or skills one possesses, but rather the ability to self-regulate learning that makes him or her expert. Experts know their strengths and weaknesses and adjust their actions accordingly. To evaluate their effectiveness, experts systematically consider their initial goal(s) while examining both the outcomes of their actions and the processes they used.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- In what ways do my actions demonstrate an understanding of the task and draw on my strengths?
- What evidence do I have that I systematically evaluate the effectiveness of my teaching and the lesson(s) used?
- What evidence do I collect about outcomes and processes, and how do I analyze it to inform and improve my teaching?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 4

*Teachers think systematically about their practice
and learn from experience.*

RESEARCH STUDY B

Van Es and Sherin (2002) have written about teachers learning to “notice” student thinking through collaborative examination of classroom videos and student work samples. They studied a group of elementary teachers over the course of a year as they developed skills in noticing—identifying specific instances in video or aspects of student work that gave insights into students’ thinking. As the teachers became more adept at noticing, their written reflections shifted from narrative descriptions of what occurred (first I did this, then I did that) to become more organized around “analytic chunks” (e.g., recognizing a significant incident, relating it to a principle of teaching or learning, processing what the evidence provided says about students’ learning, and reflecting on how this informs their own practice as teachers). Through this research van Es and Sherin found that expert teachers are more focused on what *students* do and say, allowing them to better understand student thinking and learning. Similarly, Krull, Oras, and Sisack (2007) found that when given a video of teaching to analyze, expert teachers tended to focus their attention on “teaching and learning as a joint activity” and “learner activities and learning” than novices who primarily focused on “teaching activities.”

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What do I “notice” when I look at my teaching artifacts (videos, student work samples, lesson plans, etc.)?
- Do I focus on my actions and words, or those of my students?
- How do I go beyond a narrative description of my teaching to highlight instances of student action or speech that provide insight into their thinking processes?
- When I make evaluations of my teaching (this went well; this did not go well), what evidence are they based on?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 5

Teachers are members of learning communities.

RESEARCH STUDY A

Many researchers espouse the value of working collaboratively as professionals. Perkins (1993) describes the “person-plus” model of learning where the learner draws on surrounding resources (tools, other learners, texts) to construct new understanding. This is certainly true in teaching. In a study of four schools using various models for examining student work (Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003), researchers identified several characteristics associated with effective collaborative practice: Participants used tools to structure and focus their investigations and discussion; participants shared pedagogical content knowledge across disciplines (math, English, science, social studies); participants welcomed critical dialogue—they disagreed openly, but respectfully challenged assertions and asked tough questions; and participants were led by a facilitator who maintained a level of comfort and trust while challenging the group to engage in critical dialogue.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What resources do I draw on to examine artifacts of teaching?
- What additional resources would be useful?
- What is my focus when I examine these artifacts?
- What evidence can I provide demonstrating my willingness to ask “hard questions” about teaching and learning?
- How do my collaborative efforts impact student learning within and beyond my classroom?

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CORE PROPOSITION # 5

Teachers are members of learning communities.

RESEARCH STUDY B

Tschannan-Moran (2003) conducted a study of 50 schools in a large urban district. Teachers, principals, parents, and students were surveyed about their own level of collaboration, participation, and trust with each of the other groups. Results revealed that all three factors were strongly related to one another. In particular, a reciprocal relationship existed between parents and all other groups—the level of trust and collaboration with parents strongly influenced trust and collaboration between other groups. A study by Sheldon (2003) of 82 elementary schools found that in schools that “worked harder to overcome challenges to family and community involvement,” students earned higher scores on standardized state achievement tests, establishing a connection between opportunities for meaningful involvement and student development and learning. A more recent study by Sheldon and Epstein (2005) indicated that the *quality* of parental involvement matters and subject-specific activities that encourage child–family interaction and participation may influence student achievement in the target subject area.

QUESTIONS TO PONDER:

- What do I do to increase the level of trust between myself and various stakeholders (e.g., colleagues, administrators, students, and students’ parents and guardians)?
- What do I do to overcome challenges faced by students’ families or caregivers to being actively involved with their child’s learning?
- What opportunities do I provide for productive involvement of families?