

Valuing Inclusive Teaching and Learning (VITAL) Toolkit

Learning Environment Observation and Teacher Reflection

TEACHER SELF-REFLECTION FORM





Reflection is a diagnostic skill that helps you evaluate yourself and determine your learning needs, both in the light of your own past performance and in comparison with recognised experts. Reflections help you unpack your actions, to refine the component pieces, and then to put those pieces back together in a way that improves your performance.

Christensen et al. (2020)



What is the VITAL Teacher Self Reflection Tool?

One never learns to teach once and for all. It is a continuous, ongoing, constantly deepening process.

Schulman, I. 2004:517 cited in AITSL (2014)

Purpose

To help teachers reflect on their own teaching and students' holistic learning and target areas for improvement.

Teacher Reflection Tool Parts

The VITAL Teacher Reflection Tool comprises of two parts:

1. [The Teacher Self-Reflection Form](#) and the
2. [Observer Reflective Dialogue Question Bank](#).

Flexible Use of the Teacher Self-Reflection Tool

The VITAL *Teacher Self- Reflection Tool* is to be used with the VITAL Primary and Secondary Learning Environment Observation Tool. This can be used flexibly, for example:

- The teacher reflects generally on their own teaching and students' learning before being observed.
- The teacher reflects on the teaching and learning in the lesson that was observed. Time would need to be allocated for this to happen before the reflective session with the observer.
- The teacher reflects on specific dimensions that have been targeted during the Human-centred Design workshops, before the observation and after a particular lesson.
- The teacher uses the tool to reflect on her/his teaching and students' learning without an observer as a part of her/his ongoing professional development practice or as part of an education community of practice at the school or cluster level. This could be combined with studying the Learning Environment Observation Rubric.
- The team would need to discuss how to use the Teacher Self-Reflection Form and reach a consensus.



The *Teacher Self-Reflection Form* is an important tool for the observer/mentor to help discuss observations and agree on targets and strategies to be used for improvement before the next observation.

The second part of the VITAL Teacher Reflection Tool is the *Observer Reflective Dialogue Question Bank* that assists observers frame questions to help teachers reflect on their teaching and learning practices during the post-observation mentoring session.

How do you use the VITAL Teacher Self-Reflection Form?

1. The *Teacher Self-Reflection Form* covers the same areas, dimensions and teaching and learning behaviours as the VITAL Primary and Secondary Classroom Observation Tool.
2. The first page has general information and instructions.
3. This is followed by descriptions of the dimensions and questions related to each of the behaviours with a few clarifying examples.
4. The teacher is to reflect on the lesson observed (or her/his teaching practices over the last week) and decide how well they demonstrate a particular behaviour such as '*I treat all students respectfully*', under the columns of 'not well', 'partly well', 'well' or 'very well'.
5. At the end of each dimension such as *Emotional Climate*, teachers then reflect on the dimension as a whole and note their strengths in creating a positive emotional climate and the behaviours/practices they wish to focus on to improve.
6. All dimensions could be targeted or those specifically chosen during the Human-centred Design process or previous observations.
7. On the last page of the *Teacher Self-Reflection Form*, the teacher looks at their overall strengths in creating a positive inclusive learning environment and the key goals/priority areas for improvement, along with suggestions or sources of support.
8. By way of example, a teacher may identify a strength such as the ability to create a warm and supportive emotional climate; however, s/he does not have high expectations of learning of all the students.
9. S/he therefore sets the goal of communicating higher expectations of students. S/he could identify strategies such as stating expectations at the beginning of the lesson, examining assessment data to identify students to help, asking another teacher to assist her, reading about communicating high expectations and creating a 'growth mind-set' in the classroom.



Schools2030 VITAL: The Teacher Self-Reflection Form

This tool is to help you reflect on your classroom teaching and learning practices. It is a professional development tool to help you determine with your observer/peer how well you are teaching and how well students in your classes are learning in areas that are key to improving students' holistic learning outcomes. It is **not** for inspection but focuses on helping you develop as a professional teacher throughout the year.

The tool covers the two key areas of the Valuing Inclusive Teaching and Learning (VITAL) Toolkit: creating a **Supportive Learning Environment** and **Quality Teaching and Learning Practices** in the classroom. It covers the same eight dimensions, providing behaviour/practice statements that look at what teachers and students are saying and doing in the classroom. As a reminder the dimensions are:

A. Supportive Learning Environment	B. Quality Teaching and Learning Practices
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Emotional Climate 2. High Expectations 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Facilitating Learning 4. Critical Thinking and Creativity 5. Social and Collaborative Learning 6. Learning to Learn 7. Checks for Understanding 8. Feedback

You will have an opportunity to discuss your reflections using this tool after the first observation which could be at the beginning of the year. It can help you develop solutions to learning gaps in your class through the Schools2030 Human-centred Design process, along with the assessments of student holistic outcomes. Peers/mentors will also observe your classroom teaching and learning practices in the middle and at the end of the year to help you progress through your improvement goals. This reflection tool includes all the classroom behaviours that are in the observation form that your headteacher/peer will use to observe you and give you feedback to help you further improve the learning of all students in your classroom.

After giving general information below, please reflect on how you taught the lesson that was observed or reflect on your typical practices over the last week. Reflect on how you prepared the lesson, what you were saying and doing in class, how students were responding and what they were learning. Please try to be honest. You can answer 'not well', 'partly well', 'well' or 'very well'. Please also state what you think your strengths are in each dimension and what you want to focus on to improve. At the end, choose about three goals to work on in the short- and long-term and discuss these with your observer/mentor. These would then be the focus for the future.

Your Name:	Date of Observation:
Male/Female:	Grade/Class:
School:	Subject/Topic:
No. of students:	Time of lesson:
No. of Girls:	No. of Boys:
With Disabilities: (please refer to national definitions)	With disabilities:



HOW WELL DID THESE TEACHING PRACTICES AND INTERACTIONS TAKE PLACE IN YOUR CLASSROOM?

Please think about the beliefs and practices that were used in the lesson that was observed (or which occurred last week). Please indicate how well you practised these behaviours, using the 'not well', 'partly well', 'well' or 'very well' right-hand columns. Questions and brief notes are based on the behaviours in the VITAL Observation Tool. Please respond as honestly as possible so that your mentor/observer can help you reflect on your teaching and how well students learn in your classroom. This can help you improve teaching and learning practices in your classroom.

A. SUPPORTIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT				
1. EMOTIONAL CLIMATE				
<i>Students learn best within a supportive, warm, positive and inclusive learning environment in which they all feel safe and are encouraged to take learning risks. This section explores how far you make students feel welcome through treating them with respect, regardless of their background and abilities and attending to their needs. It explores how well you make them feel heard, understood, trusted and valued, and feel a sense of belonging. It looks at your interactions with the students as well as how they interact with each other.</i>				
How well do you think you did/do the following?	Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
1.1. I treat all students respectfully. <i>Use names, polite language, culturally relevant signs of respect and positive body language. Avoid harsh words and punishment.</i>				
1.2. My interactions with students are positive. <i>Greet students, eye contact, talk with them to get to know them, create a welcoming classroom.</i>				
1.3. I respond to my students' emotional, physical and material needs. <i>Meet needs e.g. help with materials, respond with empathy, ensure physical comfort, help late students, give specific support where needed.</i>				
1.4. I do not exhibit bias relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc. <i>Avoid bias, labels and stigma; treat all students equitably expecting all to learn. Make everyone feel included.</i>				
1.4.a Gender				
1.4.b Disability				
1.4.c Background/Other				
1.5. I challenge stereotypes, relating to gender, disability, colour, ethnicity, linguistic or socio-economic background etc. <i>Pick up on stereotypes used by students or in materials; help students question and reflect on them; students work in diverse groups. No stigma and bullying. Use story to teach empathy.</i>				



<p>1.6. Students in my class demonstrate sensitivity, empathy and respect towards each other and are willing to help peers.</p> <p><i>Students work respectfully together, encourage and celebrate each other's efforts, successes and qualities. They empathise and include others. No bullying, laughing at each other or negative remarks.</i></p>					
<p>Reflections on Creating a Positive Emotional Climate:</p> <p>Please make notes in relation to your strengths and behaviours/practices to focus on.</p>					
<p>My strengths in creating a positive emotional climate</p>			<p>The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.</p>		

<p>2. HIGH EXPECTATIONS</p> <p><i>Students learn best when the teacher communicates the highest expectations for learning and behaviour for each student. This section explores how you communicate expectations, help students make ethical and socially responsible choices and provide opportunities for students to take on meaningful roles in classroom activities. It looks at whether you promote positive behaviour, set clear behavioural expectations for different parts of the lesson and focus on the expected behaviour when re-directing misbehaviour, so the students are well behaved and can focus on learning.</i></p>				
<p>How well do you think you did/do the following?</p>	<p>Not well</p>	<p>Partly well</p>	<p>Well</p>	<p>Very well</p>
<p>2.1. I communicate the highest behavioural expectations for learning activities.</p> <p><i>Believe that all students will do well and show this through tone, verbal and body language. Clear instructions on what to do and how throughout the lesson. Discuss classroom rules. Students know what to do if they complete work.</i></p>				
<p>2.2. I acknowledge positive student behaviour.</p> <p><i>Look for and specify good behaviour telling students what they have done well; give authentic praise.</i></p>				
<p>2.3. I redirect misbehaviour by focusing on the expected behaviour.</p> <p><i>Focus on the specific behaviour you would like to see rather than reprimand. Use facial expressions, go up to the student and tell them what you would like to see politely. Plan for transitions, e.g. getting into groups quietly.</i></p>				
<p>2.4. I help students make ethical and socially acceptable choices.</p> <p><i>Discuss right and wrong, implications of choices; discuss dilemmas that happen or in a story; discuss how it feels to be wronged, or an unfair situation is. Discuss global events and inequity.</i></p>				
<p>2.5. I provide opportunities for students to take on meaningful roles in the classroom.</p>				



<p><i>Students e.g. solve an equation and explain their methods or tell a story with expression. Assign peer tutors. Students with special educational needs have roles. Roles relate to learning.</i></p>							
Reflections on Communicating High Expectations							
My strengths in communicating high expectations.				The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.			



B QUALITY TEACHING & LEARNING PRACTICES					
3. FACILITATING LEARNING					
<p><i>Students learn best when teachers become facilitators of learning helping to improve students' understanding and holistic learning outcomes. This dimension looks at whether you articulate the expected learning outcomes of the lesson, explain concepts clearly and connect these to classroom activities, students' lives and prior learning. It also addresses providing students with a variety of appropriate strategies, materials, choices and adapting learning activities for the varied levels of the students while still challenging them. It addresses whether your lessons are well-structured and paced and whether all students are engaged in learning activities.</i></p>					
How well do you think you did/do the following?		Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
3.1.	<p>I explicitly articulate the expected learning outcomes of the lesson and relate learning activities to these outcomes. <i>State, write and show what students will be able to do specifically e.g. double - digit multiplication sum by the end of the lesson; ask them to demonstrate at the end. All activities are directly related.</i></p>				
3.2.	<p>I explain concepts and content clearly. <i>Explain technical terms in simple language; use different strategies and examples, pre-teach words, use visuals, actions, rhymes etc.</i></p>				
3.3.	<p>I relate the lesson to previous learning, other content knowledge and/or students' daily lives. <i>Make connections to daily life e.g. birthday cake for fractions; village/urban life for pollution.</i></p>				
3.4.	<p>I use a variety of appropriate learning strategies, tasks and materials <i>e.g. auditory, visual, movement, play, role-play, multi-sensory, discussion, presentation, digital technologies etc. and objects, low-cost materials and those from the contexts/environment.</i></p>				
3.5.	<p>I provide students with choices. <i>Related to the expected learning outcome, e.g. students can choose to write a story or article or make a presentation or video on the topic. Students suggest alternatives e.g. a rap song.</i></p>				
3.6.	<p>I adjust teaching and provide activities relevant to the levels of the students. <i>Break content into small steps; harder questions to challenge and easier ones that gradually build up. Appropriate level of challenge from simple to hard. Additional work when needed. Adapt and personalise materials and support individuals.</i></p>				
3.7.	<p>I provide a beginning, middle and end to my lesson/s with good sequencing and pacing. <i>Engaging start to the lesson, activities in the middle, summarising/reflection/sharing at the end. Different activities flow into each other with enough time; energisers when needed.</i></p>				
3.8	<p>All or most of the students in my classroom are engaged in learning activities. <i>Capture attention of students from the lesson start. All/most students happy and interested and take part well.</i></p>				



Reflections on Facilitating Learning	
My strengths in facilitating learning.	The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.

4. CRITICAL THINKING & CREATIVITY

Students learn best when teachers help to build their critical thinking and creativity skills so that they can reflect on and use information in different ways, including actively applying and analysing information. This section looks at how well you help students become creative and critical thinkers and include learning through play and activities that encourage students to use their initiative, imagination, curiosity and creativity. It also looks at whether students happily engage in asking questions, including open-ended questions.

How well do you think you did/do the following?		Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
4.1.	I ask open-ended questions <i>that require reasoning, explanation, generalisation or have more than one correct answer.</i> <i>Ask 3 or more open-ended questions; ask students to elaborate, justify and clarify. Build upon answers with further questions.</i>				
4.2.	My students are happy to ask questions, including open-ended questions. <i>Help every student ask questions. Ask them to use question words: Why? How? Can? Should? Would? Could? Will? Invite all sorts of questions on a topic.</i>				
4.3.	I provide thinking tasks <i>that require students to actively analyse content as opposed to rote learning or building fluency.</i> <i>Help students make predictions, identify patterns, explore thinking, interpret and evaluate information and apply skills.</i>				
4.4.	I provide activities that encourage student initiative, curiosity, imagination, creativity and/or learning through play, <i>e.g. use of art, craft & design, mime, movement, drama, music, poetry and playful pedagogies such as experiential learning, games, inquiry, problem-solving and project-based learning, use of outdoor activities.</i>				

Reflections on Critical Thinking and Creativity	
My strengths in developing students' critical thinking and creativity.	The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.



5. SOCIAL & COLLABORATIVE LEARNING

Students learn best when teachers foster a collaborative and inclusive learning environment that incorporates a respect for diversity. This section looks at how you promote interpersonal skills and peer interaction through effective use of individual, pair and group work. It also looks at how you encourage all students to participate and work with peers from different genders, abilities and backgrounds as well as how you help students find ways to resolve conflict and reach agreements to create an environment free of hostility.

How well do you think you did/do the following?		Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
5.1.	<p>I use collaborative pair and group work effectively.</p> <p><i>Students e.g. think about a question, share with a partner and tell the class; create a diagram or solve a problem in groups. Students learn teamwork skills.</i></p>				
5.2.	<p>I help students find ways to resolve conflict and reach agreements.</p> <p><i>Help students ask each other for clarification and express thoughts and emotions. Encourage students to empathise and practise deep listening and inclusion. Students learn to calm emotions. Students do not ridicule each other and suggest solutions.</i></p>				
5.3.	<p>I integrate a respect for diversity into lesson content and delivery, e.g. respect for diverse perspectives, opinions, peoples, ethnicities, genders, abilities/'disabilities', neurodiversity, geographies, cultures, contexts, beliefs, languages.</p> <p><i>Examples: create a diversity collage, learn different languages including sign language, explore climate change impacts on poorer countries. Students are free to express different opinions respectfully and work with students of various backgrounds and abilities. Materials are gender responsive and inclusive.</i></p>				

Reflections on Social and Collaborative Learning

My strengths in fostering a collaborative and inclusive learning environment.	Behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.



6. LEARNING TO LEARN

Students learn best when teachers model learning to learn and guide students in thinking through how to approach tasks and how they learn. This section looks at this and how well you positively respond to students' challenges and frame failure and frustrations as part of the learning process. It also looks at providing opportunities for students to self-assess, assess their peers and set short- and long-term learning goals and whether students seek clarification whenever they are struggling with an activity.

How well do you think you did/do the following?		Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
6.1.	<p>I model learning to learn and/or offer guided instruction to help students think through how they will approach a task.</p> <p><i>Show and think through each step of a process e.g. maths problem, thinking aloud. Help students with various strategies for note taking, extracting information and recording learning, including using visuals. Students show their thinking.</i></p>				
6.2.	<p>I respond positively to student challenges.</p> <p><i>Ask students to explain the challenge without a negative or neutral attitude, praise efforts. Help them break the problem down into easy steps. Say it's ok to feel frustrated as part of learning. Make deliberate mistakes to discuss and correct. Discuss common errors.</i></p>				
6.3.	<p>Students seek clarification and support.</p> <p><i>Six or more students seek support or most students can do the work. Pair up students, designate peer tutor, ask students to show their work, go around the class to assist; give additional support to students with special educational needs.</i></p>				
6.4.	<p>I provide opportunities for self-assessment and/or peer assessment.</p> <p><i>Students e.g. mark own or partner's work using criteria; reflect on how well they are learning, show confidence levels at the lesson end or test readiness at the end of a unit. Students say two good things about a peer presentation and one thing that could have been better.</i></p>				
6.5.	<p>I provide opportunities for students to set their own goals.</p> <p><i>Help students set and monitor short- and long-term goals e.g. improve algebra results by 20% by end of fortnight. Students research or read about the role of goal setting and overcoming challenges for successful people.</i></p>				

Overall Reflections on Learning to Learn

My strengths in learning to learn.	Behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.



7. CHECKS FOR UNDERSTANDING

Students learn best when teachers check what they understand of the lesson concepts/content and build upon this to extend their understanding and learning. This sections looks at how you check and walk around the classroom to assess students' understanding, monitor progress and assist students. It looks at how you promote students' efforts towards acquiring new concepts, skills and attitudes and help them develop a 'growth mind-set'- the belief that one can improve one's intelligence, qualities and skills, rather than simply focus on results, intelligence and natural abilities.

How well do you think you did/do the following?		Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
7.1.	<p>I use questions, prompts, or other strategies to determine students' levels of understanding.</p> <p><i>Ask a question, give time to think and then ask any student. Give mini quizzes at the lesson start.</i></p> <p><i>All students e.g. show if they agree or disagree with a definition; write three lines while you walk around to read to find out what needs to be explained further, read their sentences or take regular quizzes for you to check.</i></p>				
7.2.	<p>I monitor students during independent and group work.</p> <p><i>Walk and look around observing work, praise, clarify concepts, ask questions, giving prompts and suggestions.</i></p> <p><i>Ask random students in groups to explain their work. Keep looking up to see who needs support.</i></p>				
7.3.	<p>I acknowledge and focus on students' efforts and attitudes (rather than focusing only on results, intelligence or perceived 'natural' abilities).</p> <p><i>Praise efforts students make to solve problems, e.g. "You have progressed much - this is now a delight to read. If you keep using the strategies we learned, you'll master them. Your positive attitude to re-drafting has helped- well done!"</i></p>				

Reflection on Checking for Understanding

My strengths in checking students' level of understanding.	The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.



8. FEEDBACK

Students learn best when teachers provide timely, genuine and meaningful feedback that is framed positively and constructively to deepen students' understanding. This section looks at providing specific comments or prompts to help identify misunderstandings, understand successes and guide students' thought processes to promote learning. It also looks at opportunities for students to give constructive feedback to each other.

How well do you think you did/do the following?

Not well	Partly well	Well	Very well
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8.1. I provide specific comments or prompts that help identify students' successes.

Consistently give feedback such as on the quality of story opening, specifying what was done well e.g. build-up of metaphors or the clarity of the bar graph's horizontal and vertical axes, colouring and labelling.

8.2. I provide specific comments or prompts to help clarify students' misunderstandings.

Example: re-phrase a question when needed; ask students the strategy they learned, ask them to go through the steps and ask what they have left out. Ask them to refer to their notes.

8.3. I provide opportunities for students to give constructive feedback to one another.

Example: Students can e.g. learn how to give feedback on a presentation, noting two strengths and one area to improve. Assess the quality of their feedback.

Overall Reflections on Feedback

My strengths in providing feedback

The behaviours/practices I need to focus on to improve.



IMPROVING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING IN MY CLASSROOM

My Overall Strengths and Areas for Improvement.

Overall, what are your greatest strengths as a professional teacher? Which areas would you like to prioritise for improvement? Please state your goals below and add any strategies, sources of support and people who could help you.

<i>My greatest strengths include:</i>	<i>My Goals are to focus on improving:</i>	<i>I will use these strategies and/or sources of support:</i>
<p><i>Example:</i></p> <p><i>Creating a warm and supportive emotional climate.</i></p>	<p><i>Having and communicating higher expectations of all students:</i></p> <p><i>1. I will communicate high expectations of all students by the next lesson to be observed next month.</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>State that I want all students to achieve success and what this looks like.</i> • <i>State the expected learning outcomes clearly and show that I expect all students to achieve.</i> • <i>Study my assessment data and differentiate tasks so I can work more closely with struggling students so they can improve.</i> • <i>Ask another teacher whose students do well to help me.</i> • <i>Read about communicating high expectations and the influence of 'growth mindset' (the belief that one can improve one's intelligence, qualities and skills), on teachers and children and decide on one thing I will change.</i>
<p>1.</p>		
<p>2.</p>		
<p>3.</p>		