

Unlocking Elaboration: Observation and Self-Assessment

Teachers can use the following tool to self-assess the strengths and challenges of elaboration through observation. The following table contains the criteria for successful elaboration, descriptions of how these criteria look when lived out day-to-day, and suggestions for how educators can nurture these criteria within their instructional and assessment plans. The final column offers suggestions for how to respond when criteria are absent or need additional support.

Critical Action	Elaboration Targets	What the Teacher Sees	Teacher Facilitation Techniques	Teacher Response
Engaging in Research and Development	I can conduct research.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Students who look to a variety of sources of information ♦ Students who jot down ideas and information as they research ♦ Students who have a clear purpose for their research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Explicitly teach research processes. ♦ Ensure students have access to the research items they need. ♦ Allow enough time for learners to explore. ♦ Introduce unique sources with new perspectives. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Help the student find appropriate texts. ♦ Provide an explicit process for gathering research information and translating it to creative work. ♦ Reduce or expand the number of sources depending on student need.
Building a Knowledge Base and Developing Insight	I can seek help from others when I need it to build knowledge and insight.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Students who ask for help ♦ Students who can articulate why they are seeking help ♦ Students who apply the help they receive in meaningful ways ♦ Students who make decisions about what knowledge they need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Designate a space in the classroom for students to seek and receive help. ♦ Make yourself available to support as students need it. ♦ Establish protocols for seeking help. ♦ Do not solve problems that students can solve themselves with time. ♦ Ensure there are multiple ways students can build knowledge and develop insight. ♦ Activate people outside the class who might listen to student plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ When students are not asking for help when they clearly need it, make seeking help mandatory (for example, saying, "List one area where you need support," as opposed to "Do you need help?"). ♦ Ask questions, instead of giving advice, as often as possible. ♦ Help students who are struggling without judging them. ♦ Help students list what they still need to know and choose from a list of places where they can gain insight.

Critical Action	Elaboration Targets	What the Teacher Sees	Teacher Facilitation Techniques	Teacher Response
Noticing, Describing, and Analyzing	I can notice, describe, and analyze important details and information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who collect ideas and then step back and reflect Students who use descriptive language to capture their creative process Students who can notice and describe their criteria for success Students who use these criteria to self-assess Students who connect their emotions to their success criteria (for example, I feel frustrated because this isn't the right texture) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pair students and have them spend time noticing and describing research, planning tools, mentor texts, catalysts, group processes, portfolios, and anything else that will lead to better decision making. Use a journal or portfolio for capturing the creative process. Use video, photographs, and artifacts to document learning. Use mentor texts and work samples. Show nonexamples. Make time to reflect and adjust (self-assess). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provide students with descriptive word lists. Plan for specific times to stop and notice; slow down the learning when needed (for example, What do you notice right now? What does it tell you?). Confer and continue to ask questions to help students develop their own understanding of what is currently happening in their work. As students create, innovate, and solve problems, have them continue to revisit criteria. Ask, "How is our understanding of these criteria changing?"
Refining Goals and Criteria Through Experimentation and Evaluation	I can generate and test multiple ideas, as needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students who can examine approaches, ideas, and strategies and determine effectiveness (in relation to goals and criteria) Students who are willing to try things in more than one way Students who actively seek alternate solutions and approaches Students who make decisions that advance their creative work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage students to document their risks and results. Build in time to reflect on results. Build in time to recover from mistakes. Deliver minilessons as needed to build skills and knowledge. Invite at least two approaches to the same problem, when it makes sense to do so. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure students have enough time to explore. Invite students to collaborate in groups. Offer minilessons to introduce new possibilities. Ensure students have criteria by which to determine effectiveness of approaches.

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Experimenting With Form	I can generate ideas for the form my creativity might take.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Students who are aware of possible forms creativity might take ♦ Students who can list more than one alternative ♦ Students who are beginning to think about audience and purpose 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Supply students with a list of possible products, performances, and services. ♦ Have students make time to connect their ideas to form. ♦ Make time to explore audience and purpose together. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Help students explicitly connect their goals, audience, and purpose to possible forms. ♦ Help students decide whether form will drive creativity or creativity and audience will drive the form. ♦ Describe the role of elaboration.
Redesigning, Revising, and Revisiting	I can redesign, revise, and revisit materials and ideas.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Students who continue to ask questions and explore ♦ Students who analyze their work in relation to criteria ♦ Students who seek and receive feedback ♦ Students who show evidence of growth ♦ Students who can adjust when needed ♦ Students who reflect on possible future outcomes (forecast) ♦ Students who use their goals to guide their decisions and actions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Allow students time and opportunity to reflect and revise, revisit, and redesign. ♦ Continually redirect students to their criteria. ♦ Provide minilessons and feedback sessions as needed. ♦ Use only formative assessment processes. ♦ Use graphic organizers to facilitate decision making. ♦ Have student goals front and center. ♦ Celebrate decisions students make and have them elaborate on how they made them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Structure time to revisit work. ♦ Ensure criteria and goals are visible. ♦ Provide opportunities to offer feedback. ♦ Guide students through not just what they need to adjust but how they might do it. ♦ Spend time explicitly forecasting the impact of decisions. ♦ Confer with students who are stuck. ♦ Offer choices to students who need support. ♦ Re-engage students in catalyst materials.