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Strategies for

Culturally
and
Linguistically

**Responsive Teaching
and Learning**

Sharroky Hollie

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Let's Go Swimming

Dive into the Pool of Cultural Responsiveness

The primary purpose of this notebook is to make clear the process for diving into what I have dubbed the pool of cultural responsiveness, which compiles and describes the teaching skills necessary to be culturally and linguistically responsive (CLR). I use the metaphor of a pool because I liken the process of becoming culturally responsive to learning how to swim (based on my twin daughters', Biko and Zora's, swim lessons). At the swim school, they have six swim levels, distinguished by different colors, with a set of very discrete skills under each level.

CLR stands for culturally and linguistically responsive.

The pre-beginner level is an Emerger, which means standing on the side of the pool, daring oneself to get in. The top level is a Free Styler, which means you are ready for Olympic competition. Keep in mind that this is all being interpreted by a non-swimmer, me. I think that these swimming levels are a perfect way to look at the infusion of culturally and linguistically responsive pedagogy into instruction. Thus, I borrowed the labels from the swim school and created six infusion levels for becoming CLR.

Continuum of Infusion Levels to being CLR

Emerger	Splasher	Floater	Kicker	Streamliner	Free Styler
Use of 0–1 CLR activities in an instructional block.	Use of 2–3 different CLR activities in an instructional block.	Use of 4–5 different CLR activities in at least 2 instructional areas in an instructional block.	Use of 5–7 different CLR activities in at least 3 instructional areas in an instructional block.	Use of 6–8 different CLR activities in at least 3 instructional areas in an instructional block.	Use of 9 different CLR activities in at least 3 more instructional areas in an instructional block.

The goal of becoming culturally responsive is to be at the Kicker level or above. A Kicker is a teacher who uses five to seven CLR activities throughout the lesson. Therefore, upon completion of this notebook, you can expect to be at least kicking in your culturally responsive pool, your classroom, with the hope that over time you will be a Free Styler. Each infusion level increases your instructional activity in cultural responsiveness. Most times, teachers enter into the pool splashing and then move toward kicking. Some teachers enter emerging. Regardless of where you begin, it is where you end that counts.

The secondary purpose of this notebook is to challenge your pedagogy. Becoming culturally responsive means that your instruction changes for the better. I call this change in instruction transformative instructional practices or TIPs. The hypothesis is that if you are culturally

TIPs stands for transformative instructional practices.

responsive in your teaching, then it can renovate or overhaul your instruction. This notebook makes this hypothesis a truth. What is my evidence? The evidence is simply the thousands of teachers who have transformed themselves into being CLR. It is the type of evidence that is rooted in seeing and feeling the change for yourself, no different than losing weight, getting a new hairstyle, or buying a new outfit. In other words, you can see the difference without any external endorsement or research, because you know that it feels right. This, however, is not to say that there is not ample research support. In fact, the number of researchers providing supportive evidence is overwhelming (Zeichner 2003; Goodwin 2011; Tate 2010; Johnson and Johnson 1987; Slavin 2010; Dolan et al. 1993). Regardless, the most important evidence is seen within your students as they become more engaged and invested in their learning.

The question is, are you willing to be transformed? It is a difficult question to answer. After more than 15 years of training thousands of teachers, I have realized that most educators are not necessarily opposed to CLR and its principles. Those who do not transform their teaching are simply unwilling to change their instructional practices. I assume, therefore, that if you are reading this notebook, you are ready for change. The objectives of this notebook are twofold—to give practicing teachers the quantity (what to do) and to coach teachers on the quality (how). Each of the soon-to-be-discussed CLR categories is intentionally connected to a general area of instruction that impacts your daily teaching.

Understand, then, that being CLR is not so much about doing one activity as compared to another activity, but how your overall teaching dynamic is influenced, nudged, tweaked, or changed with the use of CLR. For example, one of the areas of instructional focus is academic vocabulary. It is assumed that you are dealing with academic vocabulary in some capacity already. The CLR aspect of this notebook teaches you how to validate and affirm your students' vocabulary for the purpose of building and bridging them to use academic vocabulary more proficiently in their speaking and writing. In doing this, your vocabulary teaching is enhanced. As you work your way through the chapters in this notebook, keep telling yourself the change in your instruction is not just about the cultural responsiveness. It is about transforming all of your teaching and how you approach instruction overall.

Anyone who has read *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Student Success* (Hollie 2012) knows that the journey to cultural responsiveness happens in two ways: a change in mindset and in skillset. It is important that these two ways be revisited before diving into the CLR pool of activities. The first way is the change in mindset. As the initial step to changing the instructional dynamic in the classroom and the overall school climate, educators have to see their students' cultural and linguistic behaviors. A change in mindset is rooted in four areas: speaking a common language, listening to your deficit monitor, knowing your race-ethno cultural identity, and identifying the students who are in most need of cultural responsiveness.

The second way the journey to responsiveness happens is in the change in skillset. Skillset means a culturally responsive use of a set of strategies and activities that validates, affirms, builds, and bridges. Validating and affirming refer to the explicit acknowledgment of the legitimate and positive cultural and linguistic behaviors of all students through proactive, strategic instructional planning and through reactive teachable moments. Proactively, this means that you are planning specific activities with the intention and purpose around your students' cultural behaviors. Reactively, this means there are going to be moments that you have not planned for, yet can still validate and affirm your students. For example, a student may utter something in his or her home language during class. At that moment, you can use the opportunity to let the student know that you appreciate the use of home language or how the

student expressed it, rather than “correcting” it. Building and bridging is the use of those acknowledged behaviors to teach the necessary academic, social, and cultural skills for success in the mainstream culture and academia. Building and bridging are done through what I have defined as situational appropriateness, which is a determination of what is the most appropriate cultural or linguistic behavior for the situation by the student.

Similar to the mindset piece, skillset is rooted in four aspects: knowing the gatekeepers of success, using traditional to responsive to culturally responsive instruction, jumping into the pool of responsive activities, and re-imagining the learning environment.

Understanding the skillset in brief enables us to examine how the change in mindset is associated with the skillset.

Note: For an in-depth understanding of this pre-requisite to successful, responsive teaching, see *Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning: Classroom Practices for Student Success* (Hollie 2012).

Change in Mindset Leads to Change in Skillset

The first way is the change in mindset. Educators have to see their students’ behaviors differently—culturally and linguistically—as the initial step to changing the instructional dynamic in the classroom and the overall school climate. A change in mindset is rooted in four areas:

- 1 Speaking a common language
- 2 Listening to your deficit monitor
- 3 Knowing your race-ethno cultural identity
- 4 Identifying the students who are in most need of cultural responsiveness

Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Teaching and Learning addresses this change in mindset, while this notebook focuses on the skillset. It is important to outline how the four aspects of mindset are linked to the strategies and activities here.

Speaking a Common Language

Being culturally and linguistically responsive begins with understanding its meaning and having consensus about how to name it. My term, culturally and linguistically responsive teaching and learning (CLR), speaks to its comprehensiveness and complexity. There is an in-depth focus on culture and language. There is a benefit to both teachers and learners. The use of the word “responsive” is strategic and purposeful because it forces a thought process beyond the common monikers, like relevance, proficiency, or competency. Responsiveness means the validation and affirmation of indigenous (home) culture and language for the purpose of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and in mainstream society. To be responsive, educators must be willing to validate and affirm students through instruction, which leads to the skillset and the pool of activities described in this

Responsiveness means the validation and affirmation of indigenous (home) culture and language for the purpose of building and bridging the student to success in the culture of academia and in mainstream society.

notebook. In short, they must be responsive to who their students are culturally and linguistically. Use of the strategies and activities begins with the common use of the terminology.

Listening to Your Deficit Monitor

The *deficit monitor* refers to looking at the students' behaviors solely as negative, as lacking, or as liabilities, without consideration that they might be culturally based and, therefore, assets. Those who practice responsiveness as a way of being, constantly ask reflectively, "What will prevent me from validating and affirming a student culturally and linguistically?" This reflection keeps us honest about our potential for bias, prejudice, misinformation, and ignorance. We have to be omni-aware of our implicit biased thinking, so we can combat it with the cultural lens of validation and affirmation. If we stay stuck in the deficit lens, then we are unlikely to validate and affirm. This can affect our instructional practices and the school climate and organizational issues related to equity and institutional racism. Being attuned to your deficit thinking is the key to cultural responsiveness in the classroom. It highlights the path to teaching in a way that validates and affirms.

Knowing Your Race-Ethno Identity

The research is clear. To the extent that you know who you are racially, ethnically, and nationally, the more likely you are to validate and affirm others (Villegas and Lucas 2004; Villicana, Rivera, and Dasgupta 2011). The concept is simple. When you love yourself or know who you are culturally and linguistically, you are likely to love others. The worrisome part of this concept is its opposite. If you do not love who you are culturally, then you are unlikely to be validating and affirming or change your instruction to fit your student population. Similar to listening to your deficit monitor, knowing your identity is a prerequisite to changing your skillset or instruction in the classroom and the school climate. Discovering yourself culturally is a liberating experience because it gives you empathy. Empathy will open up your teaching and allow you to be more validating and affirming. In other words, when you are able to consider your cultural background with confidence, whether it is ethnically or socioeconomically, then you are able to walk in the shoes of your students.

Identifying the Beneficiaries of Responsiveness

Without a doubt, the changing of your mindset and the changing of your skillset benefit all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status. Validation and affirmation are for everyone. There are some students, however, who will benefit more from this than others. Identifying who these students are focuses your advocacy and instruction. Since the beginning of state-mandated standardized testing, there are four groups (Mexican American, African American, Hawaiian American, and Native American) that have been traditionally underserved—failing academically or behaviorally because the school is not being culturally responsive (Hollie 2012; New American Foundation 2008). Through advocacy, CLR teaching and learning calls for specific discussions around certain students and particular issues that directly affect them. For instruction, the identification of the most underserved—any student who is not successful academically, socially, and/or behaviorally due to the school being unresponsive to the student's needs—in your setting tells you what specific strategies and activities will work most effectively (Hollie 2012). Keep in mind that these four aspects work together to allow for the transition from a change in mindset to a change in skillset or the focus

on instructional strategies, the emphasis of this notebook. Next, the four aspects of the skillset (gatekeepers of success, methods of instruction continuum, pool of responsive activities, and re-imagining the learning environment) are summarized.

Change in Skillset

The four gatekeepers of success are classroom management, academic vocabulary, academic literacy, and academic language (Orange and Hollie 2014, 68). They are considered “gatekeepers” because if students do not have success in these four areas, then they will not have success in school. They will be stopped at the gate. As educators, we must ensure student success in these areas. This notebook is divided into four general sections based on these areas with a brief scan of what the effective research says about their importance.

Methods of Instruction Continuum

Most instructional methodology used in the classroom falls into one of three broad categories—traditional methodology, responsive methodology, and culturally responsive methodology. All instruction should fall along this continuum in order for the instruction to be considered culturally responsive. Quickly defined, traditional instruction is teacher-centered with a higher affective filter and reliance on one-way interaction. Responsive instruction is student-centered with a lowered affective filter and reliance on two-way interaction. Culturally responsive instruction is, therefore, responsive but with the addition of cultural (anthropological) elements, such as language, rhythm (music), and other aspects of culture. The objective is to have a balance of activities across the continuum. If this can be accomplished, then culturally responsive instruction is accomplished because we know that validating and affirming activities (responsive and culturally responsive) as well as building and bridging activities (traditional) are utilized. The activities in this notebook will fill your “toolbox” in the areas of responsive and culturally responsive.

Pool of Responsive Activities

The pool of responsive activities is actually a set of categories. Each category has a list of activities. These activities provide the what and the how of the pedagogy of cultural responsiveness, which inherently includes traditional instruction as well. The challenge for most teachers is utilizing these activities strategically and intentionally. A successful culturally responsive teacher not only uses these activities but does so intentionally. There should never be random acts of teaching. Therefore, the CLR formula of success is Quantity + Quality + Strategy. All three of these equal CLR, resulting in increased student engagement and better student outcomes. The pool of activities are listed on page 17 and become the content of the subsequent sections for this notebook.

CLR Formula for Success

Quantity	+	Quality	+	Strategy	=	CLR
use of many different activities with frequency		the activities are used with fidelity and technical precision		knowing when to use the particular activity and for what purpose		Cultural and Linguistical Responsiveness

Re-imagining the Learning Environment

The last skillset is to critically examine your classroom environment for opportunities to make it more culturally responsive. By putting on your cultural lens, you are looking to make three revisions in your learning environment:

- 1 *De-Blumenbach* your classroom. Johann Friedrich Blumenbach was an Enlightenment-era scientist who was known for his five-race system of racial classification based on skin color and perceived beauty. To de-Blumenbach your classroom, you deliberately look for ways to make the images, posters, and signs more racially representative of your student population and not subconsciously accept Caucasian representations as the standard.
- 2 *De-commercialize* your classroom. I promote that 70 percent of the images, posters, and signs in your classroom be authentically produced by students and the teacher. The most authentic piece that can be put on the walls is student work.
- 3 *De-superficialize* your classroom by filling your walls with authentic work representations of and from your students. Whenever possible, add historical and visual representations of your students' cultural backgrounds. The last chapter of this notebook provides tips and suggestions for a responsive learning environment.

In summary, successful infusion of these four areas into your instruction constitutes a change in skillset and becoming a Kicker. Each chapter that follows delves into the various CLR categories along with a host of activities. The chapters begin with the rationale for the general pedagogy of each category and then delve into its specific connection to cultural responsiveness. Steps to success follow with detailed explanations. Lastly, when applicable, tips, suggestions, sample lessons, and opportunities for reflection and assessment are provided for each chapter.

Are you ready to dive into the pool? You say, “Yes, I am!”

Small Steps, Big Gains

Effective Use of Attention Signals

Chapter 1

Understanding the Context

At first, effective use of responsive attention signals is not as easily done as it appears. What most teachers miss are the necessary nuances as well as the intentional and strategic use of responsive attention signals. Without considering these important subtleties in or during lesson planning, the desired outcome—increased student engagement—will remain elusive. Remember, small steps can produce big gains. In this chapter, you will discover a set of readiness questions and a checklist to determine your willingness and ability to use Call and Response attention signals. Under each readiness question are suggestions or things to think about for moving forward and possible hindrances that may keep you stagnate. Following the readiness questions is a list of successfully used attention signals put in the appropriate methodologies. Finally, the chapter ends with a post survey for your reflection.

Considering the Research

Current research supports the use of Call and Response attention signals as an effective method for utilizing culturally responsive teaching techniques in the classroom. The following studies represent a sample of relevant research supporting the use of Call and Response attention signals to enhance classroom management techniques and to create a culturally responsive classroom.

- ▶ The advantages of Call and Response have been linked to neuroscience and learning process in three ways: attention activation, firing and wiring, and mirroring neurons (Hammond 2013).
- ▶ Call and Response has been shown to improve literacy and language skills (Foster 2001).
- ▶ Call and Response is connected to teachers demonstrating that they know who their students are (Toney and Rodgers 2011).

Pre-Reading Assessment

Before reading this chapter, survey your use of attention signals using the chart in Figure 1.1. As you rate yourself, begin the reflective process. Ask yourself:

- ▶ Do I understand why attention signals are important for my classroom management?
- ▶ Do I believe that some students may respond better if I use them more effectively?

Figure 1.1 Effective Uses of Attention Signals Survey: Before Infusing the CLR Principles

	0 Never Emerging	1 Rarely Splashing	2 Sometimes Floating	3 Mostly Kicking	4 Always Free Styling
I use responsive attention signals					
consistently and strategically.					
for clarification/ further instruction.					
for transitioning.					
for ending the lesson.					
for other purposes: praising, shout-outs, check-ins.					

Beginning the Reflective Process

Learning happens when we reflect upon what we have experienced. “Critical learning *generates* learning (articulating questions, confronting bias, examining causality, contrasting theory with practice, pointing to systemic issues), *deepens* learning (challenging simplistic conclusions, inviting alternative perspectives, asking ‘why’ iteratively), and *documents* learning (producing tangible expressions of new understandings for evaluation)” (Ash, Clayton, and Moses 2009a, 2009b, 27). So, are you ready to respond and use attention signals in your classroom?

Use the following checklist to gauge your readiness and ability to effectively integrate attention signals into your teaching. Each item represents an important aspect of understanding and using attention signals in a culturally responsive classroom. After completing the checklist, read the detailed descriptions of each item and reflect on how you plan to implement or increase your use of responsive attention signals in the classroom.

The Use of Attention Signals Reflection Checklist

- Yes** **No** **Item 1:** Do I know the technical definition and the purpose of an attention signal?
- Yes** **No** **Item 2:** Do I have something that is worthy and meaningful to bring students back into focus?
- Yes** **No** **Item 3:** Do I use the attention signals for instructional value and not for classroom management purposes only?

- Yes No **Item 4:** Do I acknowledge that responsive attention signals are not just about getting students quiet?
- Yes No **Item 5:** Do I have at least one signal in each of the instructional range categories (traditional, responsive, culturally responsive)?
- Yes No **Item 6:** Do I have a Stop on a Dime signal for classroom management purposes that I have procedurally contrasted from the other attention signals?

Item 1: Do I know the technical definition and the purpose of an attention signal?

An *attention signal* is an agreed upon verbal or non-verbal cue used to bring the students back to focus when they are engaged. A special emphasis is placed on the word engaged as opposed to when they are sleeping, when they are working individually, or when they are off-task. The definition of an attention signal cannot be assumed or taken for granted, especially from a classroom management perspective. Unfortunately, many teachers miss the importance of the attention signal and do not realize that the skill of using an attention signal is a small step that can yield huge results. These cues are only to be used during three specific contexts:

- ▶ To clarify directions already given or to give further direct instruction
- ▶ To transition during the lesson from step one to step two and so on
- ▶ To bring the lesson, activity, or class time to a close

Understanding the definition and purpose of the attention signal should assist in its strategic and frequent use—increasing student engagement, and decreasing classroom management issues.

Reflective Thought: Break down your current use (purpose) of attention signals by percentage (numbers must add up to 100 percent):

Clarifications _____ Transitions _____ Terminations _____ Other _____



Thought-Provokers: A Mindset for Moving Forward

- 1 Attention signals are conceptually social cues. I value using them to give students the opportunity to learn a necessary life skill for success in the world beyond the classroom.
- 2 I value validating and affirming students' culture by using Call and Response cues. Call and Response is a cultural norm for many cultures with deep relevance. Call and Response is defined as the mandated response to a call in a social or cultural setting, like in church where *amen* can be said anytime during the service as an affirmation.

Engagement exists when students and the teacher equally feel the need for a cue to come together and refocus.



Thought-Blockers: A Mindset for Staying Stagnant

- 1 I use the responsive attention signals when my students are *not* engaged, expecting them to work successfully. I do not believe that engaged students respond best to attention signals.
- 2 I do not believe that students need to be validated and affirmed culturally with Call and Response. I believe that students are in school to comply with the school's cultural norms.

Item 2: Do I have something that is worthy and meaningful to bring students back into focus?

Over time, students lose confidence in “what comes next” if the teacher repeatedly brings them back to focus without a good reason. Students assume the attitude of *why should we focus for nothing* compared to *we are not being focused* or *we are being off-task*. The teacher blames the students for the latter, which becomes a classroom management issue.

Three Reasons to Use Responsive Signals:

- To clarify directions already given or to give further direct instruction
- To transition during the lesson from step one, to step two, and so on
- To bring the lesson, activity, or class time to a close

Reflective Thought: Remember a time when you brought your class back to order for no “good” reason. How did the students respond?



Thought-Provokers: A Mindset for Moving Forward

- 1 I check the validity of my reason to bring the students back together.
- 2 I remind myself of the three reasons to use responsive attention signals, and I hold myself to those.



Thought-Blockers: A Mindset for Staying Stagnant

- 1 I believe that students should come to focus regardless of the reason.
- 2 I do not consider it instructionally valuable to strategically plan for use of the responsive attention signals.

Chapter Exercises

These scenarios and exercises assist you in processing, practicing, and applying the concepts for the chapter.

“I Am” Call and Response

The class is working in cooperative groups to complete an assignment. While working with one group, the teacher believes she hears adult voices rising outside of the classroom. The teacher assertively calls out, “I am!” The students respond, “Ready!” and immediately get quiet. Their eyes find the teacher and wait for further direction. During the silence, the teacher is able to assess the situation with the rising voices outside of the classroom in order to determine the actions that need to be taken.

The Call and Response protocol employed by the teacher was used:

- | | |
|---|--|
| a. to clarify directions already given. | c. to transition during the lesson. |
| b. to give further directions. | d. as a Stop on a Dime attention signal. |

Answer: d. as a Stop on a Dime attention signal.

This teacher’s Stop on a Dime attention signal is a much-abbreviated version of a Call and Response attention signal used during instruction. When the teacher assertively calls out “I am” just once as opposed to repeating it two or three times, her students understand the difference and immediately respond, “Ready!” They come to attention because they understand that there will be no second call. They understand that they need to get quiet to allow the teacher time to assess the situation, and their eyes need to find the teacher to wait for further directions.

Classroom Applications

Think about your own classroom and teaching practices. Use the following prompts to reflect on your past experiences, and consider how you can effectively use a Stop on a Dime attention signal with your students.

- List some situations in the past where you needed to immediately call the students’ attention. What did you try in those situations? Was that use of a Stop on a Dime attention signal appropriate in those situations?

- Choose a Stop on a Dime attention signal you would like to use in your classroom. Describe how you plan to implement the use of this signal with your students.

Sample Lesson—Introducing an Attention Signal

Attention signals can only be used successfully if they are taught well and used appropriately. Before attempting to use an attention signal for an instructional purpose, be sure to take the time to deliberately introduce the attention signal to the class and practice the desired response. The following lesson provides one method for introducing a Stop on a Dime attention signal.

Procedure

- 1 Before beginning the lesson, choose a Call and Response that you plan to use as your Stop on a Dime attention signal. Since the students need to respond to the signal immediately, the Call and Response should not involve multiple repetitions. You may also want to choose an attention signal that reminds students to stop moving as they focus their attention on the teacher.
- 2 Say, “There are times when I need your attention immediately, such as when a fire alarm goes off, when the principal needs to make an announcement, or when the daily news is being announced over the loudspeaker. I am going to use the ‘Macaroni and cheese/ Everybody freeze!’ signal to let you know when I need your attention immediately. Let’s practice what that would look and sound like. When I say ‘Macaroni and cheese’ you immediately stop what you are doing, freeze your body, turn your eyes to me, and reply ‘Everybody freeze!’ Now, let’s try it.”
- 3 Practice calling the attention signal and having the students respond several times. If students get distracted or begin to lose focus, remind them about the importance of the Stop on a Dime signal and reinforce your expectations that they immediately give you their full attention when they hear it.
- 4 Role-play different scenarios from the situations when you might use the Stop on a Dime attention signal with the class. For instance, have students move around the room and converse with each other. Imitate the sound of the fire alarm going off and practice using the attention signal to get the students’ attention.
- 5 Throughout the rest of the day, practice using the attention signal to call the students’ attention at random times. Once they have mastered the designated Call and Response, only use the Stop on a Dime when it is imperative to get the students’ complete attention immediately.

Ineffective Use of Attention Signals

A middle school teacher is conducting a lesson. While the content has the potential to be the basis of a great lesson, the teacher’s delivery of the content does not have the students’ attention, or buy-in. On the other hand, the students are very interested in their own personal conversations.

Determined to make it to the end of the lesson, the teacher presses forward as planned. Throughout the lesson, the teacher uses a variety of attention signals to bring the students back to focus. The teacher rings a bell to quiet students down, uses a rain stick to signal that they are talking too loudly, and even uses a variety of Call and Responses. The lesson comes to a close, the class period is over, and the students move on to their next class.

In this scenario, the teacher *did not* use attention signals:

- a. to stop students from engaging in off-task behavior.
- b. to encourage students to pay attention during the delivery of the lesson’s content.
- c. to have the students engage in instructional activities designed to help them access the content.
- d. to “get the kids quiet.”

Answer: c. to have the students engage in instructional activities designed to help them access the content.

The teacher receives kudos for using both responsive (use of the rain stick) and culturally responsive (use of Call and Response) attention signals (see list on page 33) in addition to the more traditional one (ringing the bell). The use of attention signals in this scenario does, however, demonstrate a misunderstanding of how to strategically use these pedagogical tools. As answers a, b, and d suggest, the attention signals were being used as classroom management tools. This is not their intended use and can lead to overuse of the protocols. Attention signals can be effectively used when students are working in collaboration or in discussion (Hollie 2012); both of these could have helped increase the students’ engagement with the lesson.

Classroom Applications

Think about your own classroom and teaching practices. Use the following prompts to reflect on how you have used attention signals in the past and the types of changes you would like to make in your classroom.

- 1 Reflect on a lesson that did not go as planned. What strategies did you use to refocus the students’ attention? Were they effective? Why?

- 2 If you were the teacher in the example above, what could you have done in order to avoid the overuse of the attention signal protocol?

Sample Lesson—Using Attention Signals to Increase Collaboration

The following lesson demonstrates how a teacher can use attention signals as an effective tool to engage students in instructional material. In this lesson, the teacher uses the “The more you do/ The better you get” attention signal to facilitate collaborative group learning and transitions.

Procedure

- 1 Before beginning the lesson, select an array of instructional artifacts related to a current area of study, such as the Great Depression. For example, artifacts related to the Great Depression might include newspaper articles, photographs, postcards, and letters. Divide the artifacts into four groups and place them at centers around the classroom.
- 2 Separate students into four groups. Assign each group to one of the artifact centers, such as reviewing primary sources.
- 3 Say, “I am going to use a Call and Response signal to let you know when it is time to rotate artifact centers. When I say ‘The more you do,’ you reply ‘The better you get!’ When you hear the attention signal, you will have 30 seconds to finish what you are doing. After 30 seconds, I will repeat the signal, and you will need to have your complete attention on me. I will know that I have your attention when your eyes are on me, your hands are folded on your desk, and your mouth is quiet. When I have everyone’s attention, I will tell you how we are going to rotate to the next center.”
- 4 Practice calling the attention signal and having the students respond several times.
- 5 Have students examine the artifacts in their groups. Ask the class before small-group discussions begin, “How are the artifacts related to each other? How do they relate to the concepts we have been studying?” If appropriate, provide students with a graphic organizer, so they can take notes on the various artifacts at each station.
- 6 After the allotted amount of time, use the attention signal to notify students that it is time to rotate centers. Direct them in how to move to the next artifact center.
- 7 Instruct students to repeat the process of examining and discussing the artifacts at the new center.
- 8 Continue rotating until all four groups have been to all of the artifact centers.
- 9 Ask students to return to their seats. Have volunteers share their ideas and notes about the artifacts with the rest of the class. Discuss the similarities and differences between the groups of artifacts.

Math Lesson

Students are engaged in a math lesson in which they are learning how to use multiplication to evaluate exponential expressions. The teacher observes several students who have confused the meaning of the exponent when using multiplication to calculate the value of exponential expressions.

For example, students were computing 3^3 as (3×3) instead of $(3 \times 3 \times 3)$ and 5^3 as (5×3) instead of $(5 \times 5 \times 5)$. The teacher should use an attention signal to:

- a. clarify directions already given to the students
- b. give further directions
- c. transition from one step to another during the lesson
- d. close out the lesson and prepare to transition into another activity