

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS: FOSTERING STUDENT OWNERSHIP THROUGH A POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

All educators want to create classrooms where every student is empowered to be successful. As school leaders continue to consider how to help their students overcome challenges and setbacks, focusing on the classroom environment and culture is a key step.

NIET's *Teaching and Learning Standards Rubric* includes a domain focused on the environment, with four indicators that outline what excellent teacher practice and student ownership looks like through that lens. At NIET, [student ownership is defined](#) as the stage when students can articulate and show what they are learning, why they are learning it, strategies that support their learning, and how they will use these strategies in the future – and that starts by creating a classroom where that level of learning is the expectation.

This tool shares ideas and examples to help teachers and school leaders establish what it looks and sounds like for teachers and students to build a positive and inclusive classroom culture where students take ownership for their learning, with coaching considerations for leaders to have intentional conversations with teachers before and after a lesson. It is aligned to the NIET rubric and includes descriptions of how students demonstrate ownership, how teachers can support student ownership, key markers that signal increased ownership, and guiding questions to help coaches support teachers in coaching conversations. Consider using this before your next classroom walkthrough or learning walk to support your work to create a positive school culture.

If you are looking for more resources about how to coach for student ownership around specific components of a teacher's instructional practice, [view our coaching considerations for instruction](#).



NIET RUBRIC INDICATOR

TEACHER ACTIONS

Teachers support student ownership by:

- Developing learning activities that promote student thinking and engagement.
- Providing opportunities for student reflection.
- Asking students what are you learning, how are you learning and how will you know if you have learned the content
- Engaging students in the creation of success criteria and provide opportunities for students to set personal goals based on the criteria.
- Encouraging students to self-monitor their learning and track their progress.

STUDENT ACTIONS

Students demonstrate ownership by:

- Being cognitively engaged in learning and working with the teacher to set challenging goals for their learning.
- Learning from their mistakes and articulating their thinking, what they have learned, and how they learned the content.
- Actively participating with their teacher in establishing criteria for what success looks like for this lesson/task/unit/etc.
- Striving for success based on clear criteria that has been established for the lesson.
- Striving to meet or exceed their goals.
- Reflecting on their learning according to success criteria and goals to assess their progress in learning.

POTENTIAL EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

- Students set and own their goals for learning.
- Students see errors as learning opportunities and can articulate their next steps for learning.
- Students establish and own the success criteria for the lesson and often monitor their work according to the criteria.
- Students examine exemplars and develop criteria for success with the teacher, then utilize the criteria in their own work.
- Students self-assess and reflect on their work according to the lesson's success criteria and adjust their individual goals for learning.

EXPECTATIONS

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE A LESSON

Talk with the teacher about how they have structured the lesson to set high expectations. Together, answer these guiding questions:

- How will the learning activities promote student thinking and engagement throughout the lesson?
- How will you engage students in co-constructing success criteria for the lesson?
 - When in the lesson will students be provided time to reflect and respond to the following questions:
 - What are you learning?
 - How are you learning?
- How will you know you have learned the content?
- How will the expectations for the lesson be communicated to students in order for them to take ownership of their learning?
- When in the lesson will students have opportunities to set goals and reflect on their goals?

AFTER A LESSON

Discuss the evidence from what you observed and heard. Walk through these guiding questions with a teacher following a walkthrough.

- From the questions we discussed before the lesson, which ones were implemented the way you envisioned? Which did not happen according to plan?
- When was an example of a moment when you differentiated instruction in order to increase equitable access to the success criteria?
- How can the leadership team help you to continue to create a classroom environment where students are able to own their learning?

NIET RUBRIC INDICATOR

TEACHER ACTIONS

STUDENT ACTIONS

POTENTIAL EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

ENGAGING STUDENTS AND MANAGING BEHAVIOR

- Teachers support student ownership by:**
- Providing resources and materials to support students with monitoring their own behaviors.
 - Understanding each student's needs and when to provide structures that support students with staying on task.
 - Brainstorming and reaching consensus with students on the class's common, clear commitments for learning and behavior.
 - Providing strategies and resources for supporting students with monitoring their engagement levels throughout the lesson.

- Students demonstrate ownership by:**
- Taking ownership for their behaviors in order to optimize their learning and time on task.
 - Working with their teacher to establish clear commitments for their learning and behavior.
 - Monitoring their own engagement and having strategies for supporting this process.

- Students monitor their own behavior and make adjustments themselves when needed.
- Students take ownership of class and individual commitments for learning and their behavior.
- Students are aware of when they are not on task and have strategies for monitoring their engagement in learning.

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE A LESSON

Talk with the teacher about how they have structured the lesson to engage students and manage expectations and behavior. Together, answer these guiding questions:

- What structures will be in place for students to take ownership of their behaviors in order to optimize their learning?
- In what ways will you encourage students to monitor their own engagement in the learning during the lesson?
- How will the class commitments be established, and what role will students play in establishing these commitments?

AFTER A LESSON

Discuss the evidence from what you observed and heard. Walk through these guiding questions with a teacher following a walkthrough.

- In what ways did the students uphold the class commitments to staying on task and engaging in learning?
- Was there a moment you (the teacher) differentiated your instruction to support an individual student or students with staying on task? How did you feel that went?
- What strategies did you use to help students monitor their own engagement during the lesson?
- What practices from today will you take with you into the next lesson?

NIET RUBRIC INDICATOR

TEACHER ACTIONS

STUDENT ACTIONS

POTENTIAL EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

ENVIRONMENT

Teachers support student ownership by:

- Helping students to understand how we learn from errors and taking risks.
- Developing tasks that challenge students' thinking where the support of peers is encouraged to interact with the task.
- Developing lessons and activities where student interaction is valued and encouraged.
- Collaborating with students to organize the classroom to meet their needs.
- Providing a space for students to display their work and setting aside time for students to reflect on their work to identify student work samples for display.
- Examining the classroom environment from the student perspective and encouraging students to make adjustments to their environment when appropriate.

Students demonstrate ownership by:

- Feeling safe to take risks and interact with peers.
- Attempting challenging and new things.
- Seeking help and interacting with their classmates.
- Taking on an active role in designing and organizing their classroom to support their learning.
- Having and knowing where to locate supplies, equipment, and resources readily.
- Taking ownership of selecting and displaying their own work.
- Organizing and shifting the organization of their classroom to support their learning (working individually or cooperatively with peers).

- Students take risks in their learning and support their peers with risk taking.
- Students do not shy away from challenging work and feel comfortable seeking the help of others.
- Students collaborate with others and take ownership of monitoring their learning to know when they need the support of their peers.
- Students take initiative to organize their learning environment in order for it to maximize their learning.
- Students self-assess their work to select appropriate work to display in their learning environment and feel confident in their decisions.
- Students shift and create a learning environment that maximizes their learning. (This could be working in groups, pairs or individually, etc.)

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE A LESSON

Talk with the teacher about how they have structured the lesson to ensure a safe and comfortable learning environment for students. Together, answer these guiding questions:

- In what ways will you communicate with students that the classroom is a safe space to take risks and learn from their errors?
- What specific moments in the lesson will encourage students to interact with one another and support each other's work?
- How will students be able to share their work with others and you?
- Are there any student interactions or pairings you are wondering about or want to talk through ahead of the lesson?
- Are there any students who you feel will not take a risk or fully engage with the lesson? How can we support them in doing so?

AFTER A LESSON

Discuss the evidence from what you observed and heard. Walk through these guiding questions with a teacher following a walkthrough.

- How did the classroom environment encourage student risk taking? Did you see some specific evidence, such as an opportunity for a student to take a risk?
- How did you encourage students to learn from their missteps during the lesson?
- How did students interact with and take ownership of the classroom environment? Was there a moment where they were able to move around and interact or adjust their environment purposefully?
- In what way did students have the opportunity to reflect on their own work and share takeaways with peers?
- Were there any moments of confusion or lost time that could prompt us to revisit classroom routines or structures?
- Is there an opportunity to display the student work publicly? If so, how will you do this?
- Where did you see evidence of students taking initiative to seek help from you or peers?
- Were there any students who we could focus on supporting more to take a risk in the next lesson?

NIET RUBRIC INDICATOR

TEACHER ACTIONS

Teachers support student ownership by:

- Modeling caring, kindness, and respect for others.
- Modeling, valuing, and celebrating the various backgrounds and cultures in the room.
- Seeking students' opinions and striving to better understand their interests.
- Developing a classroom environment that promotes positive relationships.
- Encouraging and promoting multiple opportunities for students to be interdependent.

STUDENT ACTIONS

Students demonstrate ownership by:

- Consistently demonstrating caring, kindness, and respect for one another and toward their teacher.
- Understanding their peers' backgrounds and cultures and displaying actions that demonstrate acknowledgment and value.
- Sharing their interests and opinions with their teacher and peers.
- Taking ownership of building and maintaining positive relationships and showing interdependence in the classroom.

POTENTIAL EVIDENCE OF IMPACT

- Students work together collaboratively towards a common goal, demonstrating respect towards one another.
- Student conversations demonstrate understanding and respect of each other's cultures and backgrounds.
- Students want to share their opinions and feel safe doing so with others.
- Students take initiative to develop positive relationships within the classroom without being prompted to do so.

RESPECTFUL CULTURE

COACHING CONSIDERATIONS

BEFORE A LESSON

Talk with the teacher about how they have structured the lesson to ensure a respectful classroom culture for students. Together, answer these guiding questions:

- In what ways will you seek students' opinions during the lesson in order to incorporate their interests and viewpoints?
- What moments during the lesson will encourage students to rely on each other?
- Is there one way you can celebrate or acknowledge a variety of backgrounds and cultures during the lesson?

AFTER A LESSON

Discuss the evidence from what you observed and heard. Walk through these guiding questions with a teacher following a walkthrough.

- What is an example of a moment during which you saw students interacting positively? Did they need encouragement to do this, or did they take initiative without being prompted?
- In what ways did students rely on one another during the learning?
- How were students encouraged to share their interests and opinions during the lesson?
- How did the teacher model caring, kindness, and respect for students?
- Did you hear any student conversations that demonstrated mutual understanding of individual backgrounds and cultures?