

The Principles of Learning in Action

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The Guilford Public Schools' vision is that of a professional learning community where instruction invites effort and supports academic rigor for all students and educators. To that end, our daily work in classrooms is rooted in and supported by the Principles of Learning (POLs). These nine principles have been foundational to our work over the past 10+ years.

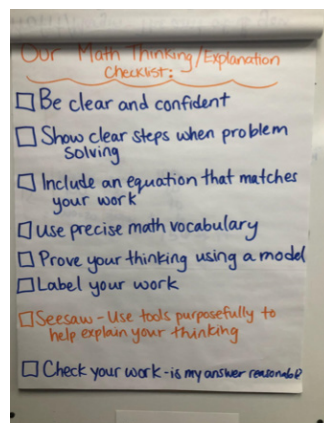


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The importance of the POLs in Guilford is evidenced by just how prominently they factor into ongoing district work. Prior to the start of the school year, Guilford administrators participated in a retreat focused on equity. A portion of the retreat was a retrospective on the Principles of Learning during which each POL was defined and mapped to both the high-leverage practices and the TRU Framework. Administrators watched several classroom scenarios and considered the application of the Principles of Learning as a way to frame instructional conversations with their faculties. Principals and administrators brought this

work back to their buildings to support a deeper understanding of each principle as well as to clearly represent each principle's impact on classroom instruction. A deep and growing understanding of the Principles of Learning has been established through our long-standing partnership with the Institute for Learning and is reflected daily in our schools' cultures and in the way our students engage with content and process.

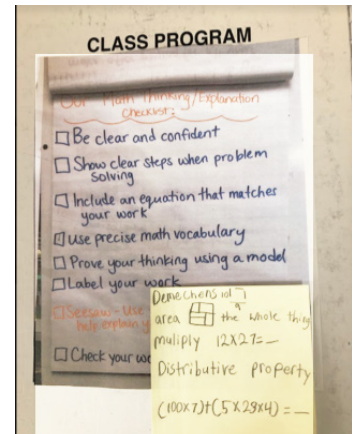
In our classrooms, we see evidence of the Principles of Learning in action every day. For example, our content-focused coaches have supported teachers as they continue to grow their conferring practice. Effective conferring helps teachers and students develop clear expectations for growth and encourages self-management and self-assessment of learning. Teachers keep notes of conference teaching points and use these notes to track the trajectory of learning, to plan, and to individualize instruction to meet the needs of each student. Conferring also facilitates the identification of strengths on which to build and the creation



Clear Expectations: Student-generated criteria chart clarifies expectations about quality mathematical explanations.

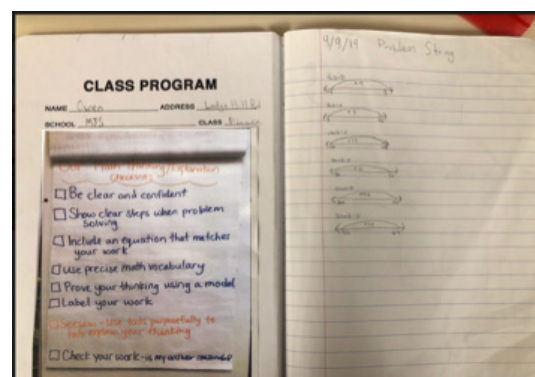
of goals for improvement by the students themselves.

Let's step into a classroom to see the impact of several of the Principles of Learning, specifically Clear Expectations and Self-Management of Learning. Students in Ms. Pierce's 4th-grade classroom at Melissa Jones Elementary School have been working on clearly communicating their mathematical thinking. This work has included using visual representations as well as written and oral explanations to clarify and make visible mathematical reasoning. After engaging in this work on several occasions, students were given the opportunity to individually reflect on their areas of strength as well as the concepts they find challenging. Following this self-reflection process, the class worked as a whole to brainstorm elements of a quality mathematical explanation. This, in turn, led to a class-generated criteria chart indicating the qualities of effective communication of mathematical reasoning upon which all students agreed. Each student used this checklist to self-assess one of their previously recorded mathematical explanations and then identified one area to set as their goal for better meeting the



Self-Management of Learning: This student identified "Use precise math vocabulary" as a goal and is keeping notes on a sticky note to support her progress.

criteria for quality explanations. A copy of the chart was posted in the front of each student's math journal and is being used independently by students as a guide when reviewing mathematical explanations and monitoring progress towards an identified goal. Teachers are able to reference this student-generated tool when conferring with students in order to better ask advancing and assessing questions that push students' thinking around mathematical reasoning. ■



Clear Expectations: The student-generated criteria chart is posted in front of a student's math journal for easy reference.