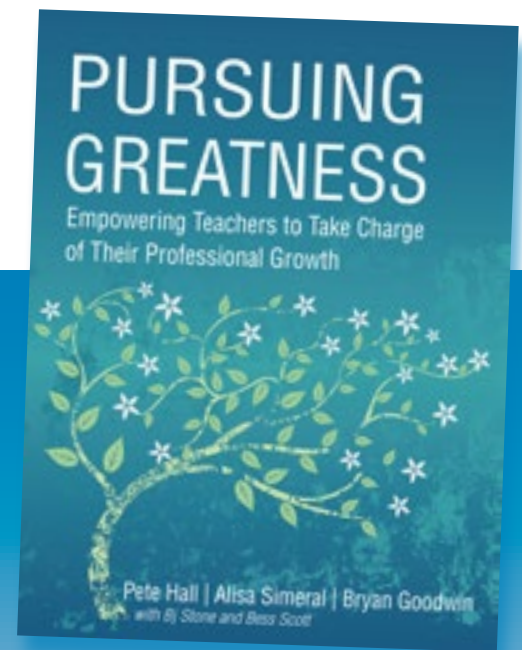


Pursuing Greatness:

Solving Your 25th Problem of Practice



A companion resource for readers of *Pursuing Greatness: Empowering Teachers to Take Charge of Their Professional Development*.



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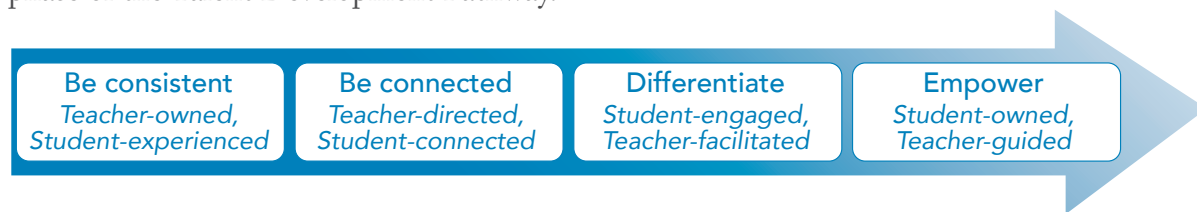
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25th Problem of Practice

Overview and Directions

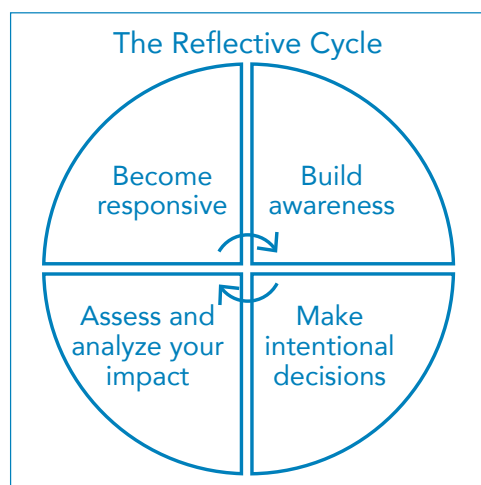
Remember, this is a learning journey that will take time. As you've seen throughout *Pursuing Greatness*, tough problems won't be solved overnight. Use the prompts on the following pages to identify and define your problem of practice and develop your driving question for each phase of the Talent Development Pathway.



When you begin enacting changes in your classroom practices, make sure to complete one phase at a time. Use the Reflective Cycle process to think about your current practices, identify the changes you want to try, enact them in your classroom, reflect on the outcomes, and identify next steps.

Don't move on to the next phase of the Talent Development Pathway until you feel confident answering your driving question from the current phase you're working on. We've provided space on each page to jot down your thinking as you go.

Enjoy the journey! And remember that if you get stuck, have a question, or want to share an "aha!" moment, head to www.mcrel.org/pursuing-greatness-resources and use the comment field at the bottom of the page to get in touch with the authors.



Identifying Your Problem of Practice

What unique problem of practice should you work on? Really, it's up to you. Here are some prompt questions that can help you identify what issue or challenge you want to work on in this 25th Problem of Practice effort.

What is a current teaching-learning challenge that I have in my classroom?

How will solving this challenge benefit my students?

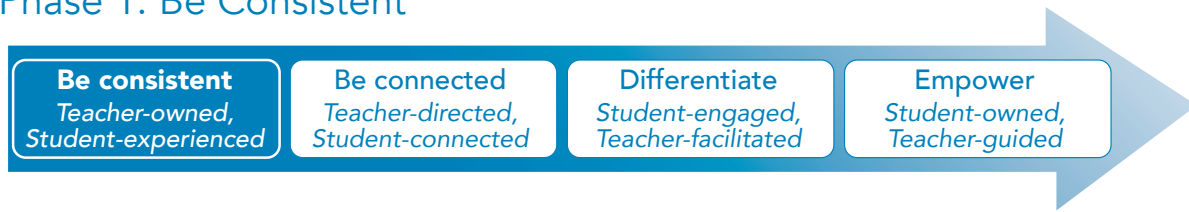
What knowledge do I already bring to the table regarding this subject?

What questions do I have? What am I curious about, regarding this challenge?

State your Problem of Practice here:

When working with a problem of practice, it can be tempting to immediately look for a solution. This can propel us down endless paths in search of an answer. Refrain from this mindset. Zoom out, and spend the necessary time now to identify the theory behind your problem of practice. Understand thoroughly why this problem of practice is important to focus on and learn about.

Phase 1: Be Consistent



To begin the **Be Consistent** phase of the Talent Development Pathway, take a moment to reflect on the following questions through the lens of your problem of practice. Jot your thoughts in the space provided.

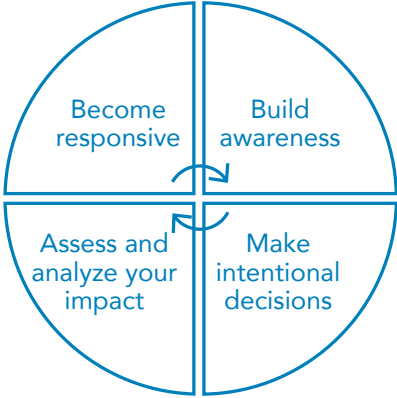
<i>When thinking about my problem of practice...</i>	
Why is being consistent important to helping me solve this problem of practice?	
What fundamental teaching skill(s) do I want to improve on, to provide my students with a consistent learning experience?	
What do you predict will happen for your students, if you become more consistent in delivering high-quality teaching and learning?	

Using your notes above, craft one driving “how do I” question regarding your problem of practice that will help you **be consistent** in meeting your students’ needs.

Your Driving Question for Phase 1:

How do I _____
 _____?

Now begin using the Reflective Cycle process to
 1) think about your current classroom practices that are related to your problem of practice, 2) plan and enact the changes you want to try, 3) reflect on the outcomes, and 4) identify next steps. Remember, this process will take time, likely several days or weeks or more. We've provided some prompts to help you get started in each part of the cycle. Use the space on the right to make notes (or use additional pages if you need more room).



Reflective Cycle Stages for Be Consistent

Build Awareness	
How consistent are my current instructional planning and delivery practices related to my problem of practice and driving question?	
Do I have teacher colleagues or mentors who can offer advice on being consistent ? What are their best practices that I might be able to use?	
What does research say about my Be Consistent driving question? Are there published reports, papers, or books on this topic? Is there agreement on what fundamental teaching/learning practices support high-quality outcomes in this area?	

Make Intentional Decisions

From what I learned during the Build Awareness stage of the cycle, what are some of the new or different instructional actions and activities I could use in my classroom to help address my **Be Consistent** driving question?

How will I measure changes in my teaching and in my students' responses and learning outcomes?

Assess and Analyze Your Impact

What differences did I notice in my own teaching practices? What went well and what was challenging?

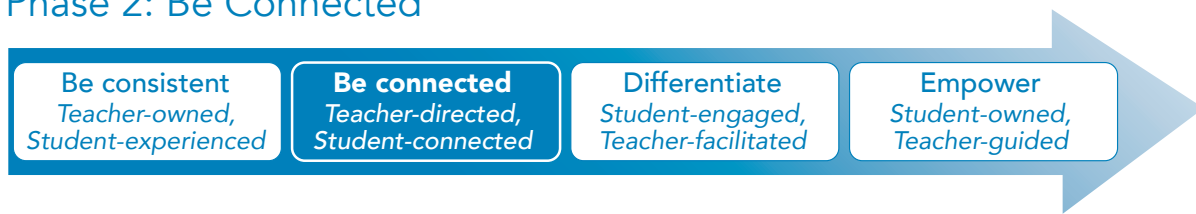
Did I become more **consistent** in my delivery?

How did my students respond?

Become Responsive	
<p>If I had any initial doubts about the strategies and actions I tried, what do I think about them now?</p>	
<p>Returning to my Be Consistent driving question, how might I answer it now?</p>	
<p>Are there now additional actions I want to try in my classroom to be more consistent, regarding my driving question?</p>	

Don't move on to the next phase of the Talent Development Pathway until you feel confident answering your driving question from the **Be Consistent** phase.

Phase 2: Be Connected



To begin the **Be Connected** phase of the Talent Development Pathway, take a moment to reflect on the following questions through the lens of your problem of practice. Jot your thoughts in the space provided.

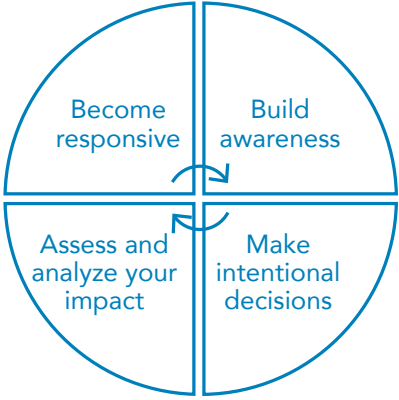
<i>When thinking about my problem of practice...</i>	
How are my students responding to my instructional practices, strategies, and lessons?	
Do my students show interest in what they're learning? Do they feel that it's relevant to their lives? Why is it important that they do so?	
Are they receptive to the feedback I give them? Does my feedback help motivate them to want to learn more?	
What are some teaching skills that I want to improve on, to help me and my students feel connected to each other and to the content we are teaching/learning?	
What possible solutions might I try?	

Using your notes above, craft one driving “how do I” question related to your problem of practice that will help you **be connected** with your students’ needs.

Your Driving Question for Phase 2:

How do I _____
 _____?

Now begin using the Reflective Cycle process to 1) think about your current classroom practices that are related to your problem of practice, 2) plan and enact the changes you want to try, 3) reflect on the outcomes, and 4) identify next steps. Remember, this process will take time, likely several days or weeks or more. We’ve provided some prompts to help you get started in each part of the cycle. Use the space on the right to make notes (or use additional pages if you need more room).



Reflective Cycle Stages for Be Connected

Build Awareness	
How connected are my students right now with my learning objectives, lessons, and activities, related to my problem of practice and driving question?	
Do I have teacher colleagues or mentors who can offer advice on being connected ? What are their best practices that I might be able to use?	

<p>What does research say about my Be Connected driving question? Are there published reports, papers, or books on this topic?</p>	
<p>Make Intentional Decisions</p>	
<p>From what I learned during the Build Awareness stage of the cycle, what are some of the new or different instructional actions and activities I could use in my classroom to help address my Be Connected driving question?</p>	
<p>How will I measure changes in my teaching and in my students' responses and learning outcomes?</p>	
<p>Assess and Analyze Your Impact</p>	
<p>What differences did I notice in my own teaching practices? What went well and what was challenging?</p>	

<p>How did my students respond? Did they show more engagement and connectedness with their learning?</p>	
<p>Become Responsive</p>	
<p>If I had any initial doubts about the strategies and actions I tried, what do I think about them now?</p>	
<p>Returning to my Be Connected driving question, how might I answer it now?</p>	
<p>Are there now additional actions I want to try in my classroom to help my students and I be more connected, regarding my driving question?</p>	

Don't move on to the next phase of the Talent Development Pathway until you feel confident answering your driving question from the **Be Connected** phase.

Phase 3: Differentiate



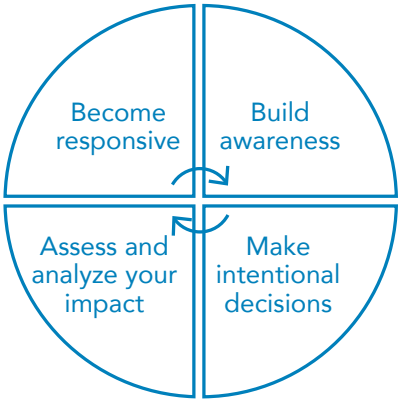
To begin the **Differentiate** phase of the Talent Development Pathway, take a moment to reflect on the following questions through the lens of your problem of practice. Jot your thoughts in the space provided.

<i>When thinking about my problem of practice...</i>	
How can I help students use _____ to personalize their learning?	
What are some teaching skills that I want to improve on, to provide my students with differentiated learning experiences?	
What possible solutions might I try?	

Using your notes above, craft one driving “how do I” question related to your problem of practice that will help you **differentiate** your teaching and learning to meet your students’ needs.

<p>Your Driving Question for Phase 3:</p> <p><i>How do I</i> _____ _____?</p>

Now begin using the Reflective Cycle process to 1) think about your current classroom practices that are related to your problem of practice, 2) plan and enact the changes you want to try, 3) reflect on the outcomes, and 4) identify next steps. Remember, this process will take time, likely several days or weeks or more. We've provided some prompts to help you get started in each part of the cycle. Use the space on the right to make notes (or use additional pages if you need more room).



Reflective Cycle Stages for Differentiate

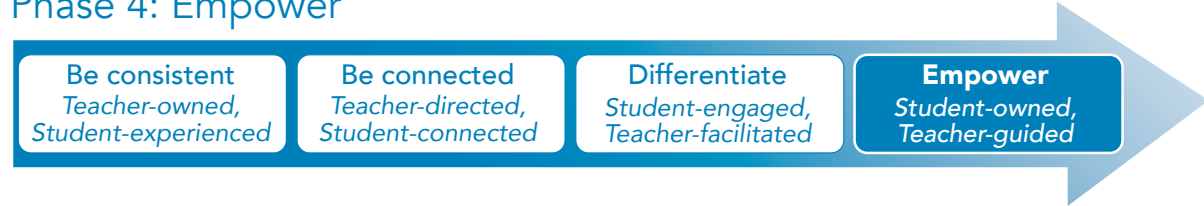
Build Awareness	
What does the research say about my Differentiate driving question? Are there published reports, papers, or books on this topic?	
Do I have teacher colleagues or mentors who can offer advice on differentiating teaching and learning? What are their best practices that I might be able to use?	
How do I currently customize or contextualize my instructional planning, delivery, and feedback for my students?	
Do I know each of my students' hobbies, career interests, family backgrounds, etc. so that together with my students I can better differentiate their learning experiences?	

<p>Are there local issues in our school's neighborhood or nearby communities that relate to my classroom projects, standards, and objectives?</p>	
<p>Make Intentional Decisions</p>	
<p>From what I learned during the Build Awareness stage of the cycle, what are some of the new or different instructional actions and activities I could use in my classroom to help address my Differentiate driving question?</p>	
<p>How will I measure changes in my teaching and in my students' responses and learning outcomes?</p>	
<p>Assess and Analyze Your Impact</p>	
<p>What differences did I notice in my own teaching practices? What went well and what was challenging?</p>	

<p>How did my students respond? Did they show more engagement with their learning?</p>	
<p>Become Responsive</p>	
<p>If I had initial doubts about the strategies and actions I tried, what do I think about them now?</p>	
<p>Returning to my Differentiate driving question, how might I answer it now?</p>	
<p>Are there now additional actions I want to try in my classroom to differentiate learning experiences for my students, regarding my driving question?</p>	

Don't move on to the next phase of the Talent Development Pathway until you feel confident answering your driving question from the **Differentiate** phase.

Phase 4: Empower



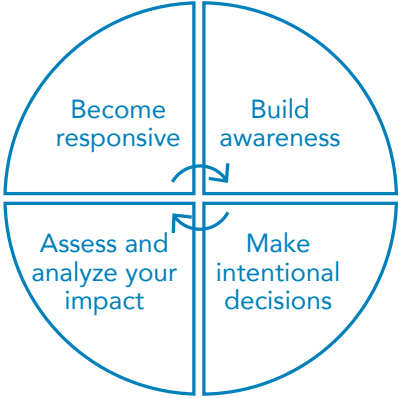
To begin the **Empower** phase of the Talent Development Pathway, take a moment to reflect on the following questions through the lens of your problem of practice. Jot your thoughts in the space provided.

<i>When thinking about my problem of practice...</i>	
How do I empower my students to own this learning?	
What does it look like to guide learning rather than facilitate it?	
What possible solutions might I try?	

Using your notes above, craft one driving “how do I” question related to your problem of practice that will help you **empower** your students to own their classroom experiences and learning.

<p>Your Driving Question for Phase 4:</p> <p>How do I _____ _____?</p>


Now begin using the Reflective Cycle process to 1) think about your current classroom practices that are related to your problem of practice, 2) plan and enact the changes you want to try, 3) reflect on the outcomes, and 4) identify next steps. Remember, this process will take time, likely several days or weeks or more. We've provided some prompts to help you get started in each part of the cycle. Use the space on the right to make notes (or use additional pages if you need more room).

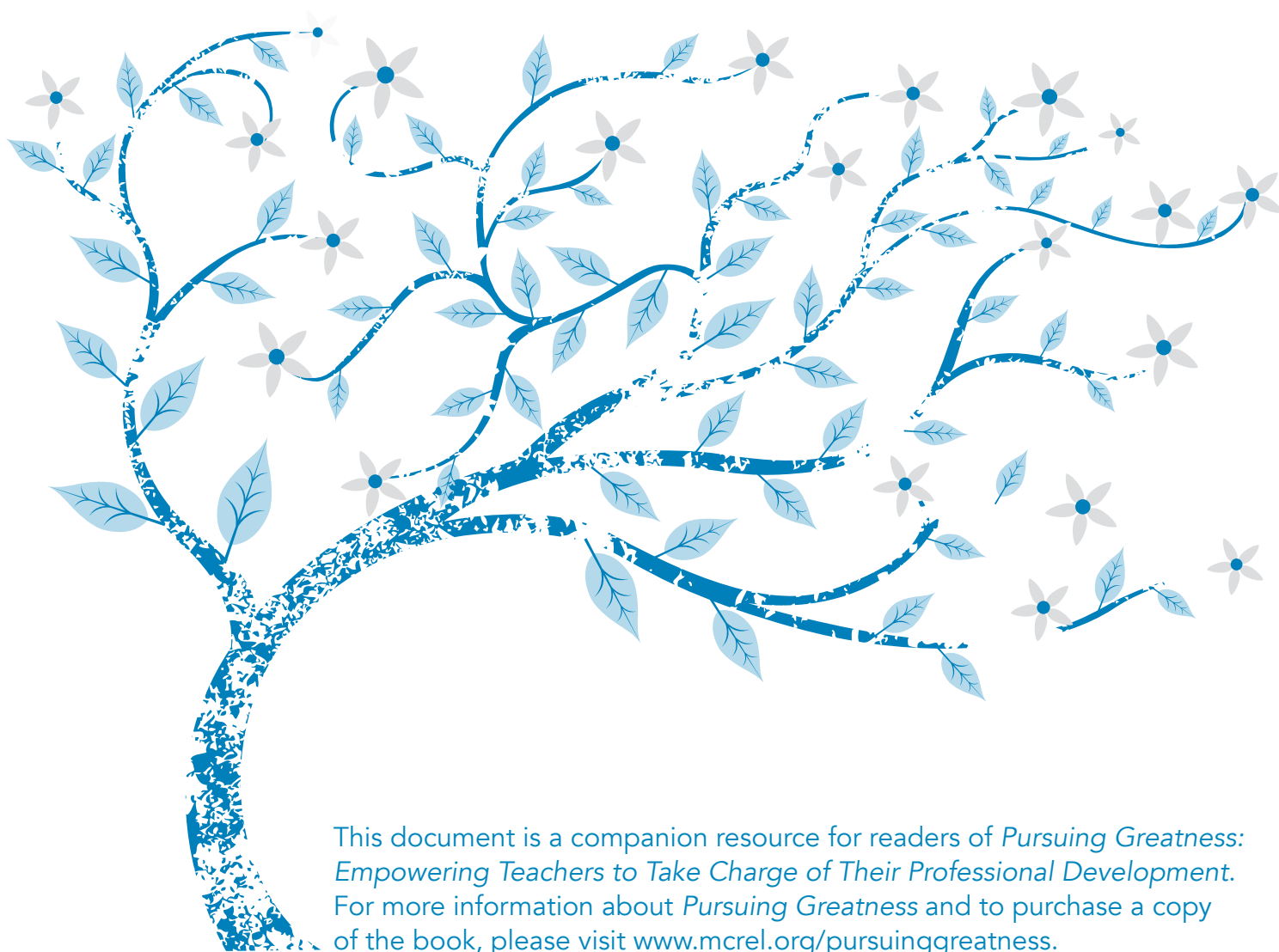


Reflective Cycle Stages for Empower

Build Awareness	
What does the research say about my Empower driving question? Are there published reports, papers, or books on this topic?	
Do I have teacher colleagues or mentors who can offer advice on empowering students to drive their own learning? What are their best practices that I might be able to use?	
What decisions about learning goals, topics, and activities can I allow students to make for themselves, while still guiding them to address common standards and objectives?	
Make Intentional Decisions	
From what I learned during the Build Awareness stage of the cycle, what are some of the new or different instructional actions and activities I could use in my classroom to help address my Empower driving question?	

How will I measure changes in my teaching and in my students' responses and learning outcomes?	
Assess and Analyze Your Impact	
What differences did I notice in my own teaching practices? What went well and what was challenging?	
How did my students respond? Did they show more engagement with and ownership of their learning?	
Become Responsive	
If I had any initial doubts about the strategies and actions I tried, what do I think about them now?	
Returning to my Empower driving question, how might I answer it now?	
Are there now additional actions I want to try in my classroom to empower my students to own their own learning, regarding my driving question?	

Congratulations! By now you should feel like you have solid answers to all of your driving questions and have made significant progress toward solving your 25th problem of practice. As we said from the start, every teacher at every stage of their career has a problem of practice they want to address. If a new one surfaces for you, return to this template and start another journey toward professional greatness. 



This document is a companion resource for readers of *Pursuing Greatness: Empowering Teachers to Take Charge of Their Professional Development*. For more information about *Pursuing Greatness* and to purchase a copy of the book, please visit www.mcrel.org/pursuinggreatness.