

Explaining and modeling content, practices, and strategies

Explaining and modeling are practices for making a wide variety of topics, academic practices, and strategies explicit to students. Teachers determine when explaining or modeling can help to make explicit content and practices that often remain tacit or invisible. Teachers might use simple explanations when working with straightforward content, but choose modeling which includes verbal explanation, but also thinking aloud and demonstrating, when sharing the metacognitive process is critical for providing access to students.

Advancing justice through explaining and modeling content, practices, and strategies

Fundamentally, explaining and modeling content is about intentionally and thoughtfully providing access to skills, processes, and practices that may otherwise remain hidden to some students. Modeling, which requires the teacher to think aloud while demonstrating a skill, makes visible those practices and processes that happen internally, and often remain invisible to learners if not explicitly named, explained, and shared. Access to the kinds of knowledge most valued by and represented in traditional school settings is differentially distributed across lines of race and class. Making this content explicit by explaining, demonstrating, and modeling is critical to ensuring access to these skills across a range of learners. However, modeling can also convey low expectations of students and impede students' opportunities to make sense of content themselves. Teachers make judgments about whether and when to model specific content or practices, and ensure that students are supported and also have opportunities to think on their own.

Decomposition of modeling

The decomposition for modeling is shown below. The teaching practice of modeling content, practices, and strategies contains the work of demonstrating and explaining, so the decompositions of these practices are not shown explicitly. All three practices involve the work of planning, launching, doing the content area work, using language and representations carefully, and closing. Explaining and modeling also include the work of highlighting core ideas. Modeling layers on the work of making thinking visible by emphasizing thinking and key elements.

Planning to model	<p>Evaluating whether modeling is appropriate in terms of the specific content and student learning</p> <p>Selecting content, practice, or strategy to be modeled.</p> <p>Choosing strategic examples and appropriate representations.</p>
Framing	<p>Connecting ideas that are about to be shared to other topics or experiences e.g. to previous learning, work, or trends.</p> <p>Locating the work in the trajectory Explaining the purpose of the content about to be modeled which may include stating what is already known and what needs to be determined and/or stating the ways content being modeled is typically used in the content area.</p> <p>Closing Reinforcing the purpose of the modeling OR recapping the key points of the modeling, and emphasizing the result of the modeling.</p>
Doing the content area work	<p>Demonstrating Working through the content, practice or strategy in real time in front of students.</p>
Highlighting core ideas	<p>Backgrounding Avoiding highlighting aspects of the content or task that are distracting or may lead to misconceptions.</p> <p>Foregrounding Using explicit verbal markers to draw students' attention to important aspects of the content or the work; e.g., "Watch as..." "First ... then..." and elaborating and emphasizing the part of the explanation that is most complex or confusing.</p>

	<p>Marking Highlighting or drawing attention to important ideas by naming key elements while progressing in a logical fashion and being careful not to skip any elements.</p>
Making thinking visible by emphasizing thinking and key elements	<p>Annotating Adding or filling in ideas necessary to support students' understanding including clearly articulating what you are doing and why you are doing it.</p> <p>Marking Metacognition Using markers (verbal, tone, or visual) to indicate when thinking is being made visible.</p> <p>Thinking aloud Making appropriate thinking visible through narration.</p>
Using language and representations carefully	<p>Connecting Representations Making explicit correspondences between the problem, text or task, the verbal/written explanation, and any representations.</p> <p>Consistency (Consistent Verbal and Visual Representations) Using content-specific terms and representations clearly, concisely, and consistently throughout the modeling and using language and representations that are developmentally appropriate and accessible to learners.</p> <p>Defining Content Terminology Using and defining terms related to the content being modeled.</p> <p>Recording and Representing Translating verbal ideas into a visual form in the public space in ways that are likely to support student understanding, are clearly labeled, and are accurate. Using and explaining (if necessary) representations that illustrate your thinking and record the process used.</p>

Visual representation of explaining and modeling content, practices, and strategies

