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A PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR  
IMPROVING TEACHING & LEARNING



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*Tripod is an independent research and education firm based at the Cambridge Innovation Center in Cambridge, MA. Tripod's nationally recognized surveys and framework for school improvement were first developed in 2001 by Dr. Ronald F. Ferguson of Harvard University. Since then, Tripod® surveys have been administered across thousands of schools in the US and abroad. Educators use insights and actionable feedback from Tripod surveys to better understand educational practice, set goals with confidence, and focus improvement efforts. For more information, visit [www.tripoded.com](http://www.tripoded.com).*



# TRIPOD'S 7Cs FRAMEWORK of EFFECTIVE TEACHING

CARE • CONFER • CAPTIVATE • CLARIFY • CONSOLIDATE • CHALLENGE • CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Tripod's 7Cs™ framework of effective teaching and associated survey measures capture essential elements of instructional practice. Student survey results aligned with the 7Cs framework offer a streamlined way to provide actionable feedback for teachers and school leaders. Better survey results on the 7Cs components predict higher student achievement, engagement and motivation, as well as success skills and mindsets (Ferguson & Danielson, 2014; Ferguson et al., 2015; Kane & Cantrell, 2010; Kane et al., 2013; Stuit, Ferguson, & Phillips, 2013). Strategic use of Tripod surveys together with the 7Cs framework supports reflection, goal-setting, professional learning, and instructional improvement.

The 7Cs framework groups components into three conceptual categories: personal support (care and confer), curricular support (captivate, clarify, and consolidate); and academic press (challenge and classroom management). This guide provides details about the 7Cs framework, including indicators of exemplary practice, reflection questions and sample strategies, as well as sample survey items related to each of the 7Cs components.

# TRIPOD'S 7Cs FRAMEWORK of EFFECTIVE TEACHING

## AT-A-GLANCE



### PERSONAL SUPPORT

Cultivating teacher-student relationships and a classroom climate where students feel valued and welcomed

**Care:** Show concern for students' emotional and academic well-being

- Build relationships
- Address learning needs

**Confer:** Encourage and value students' ideas and views

- Respect perspectives
- Promote discussion
- Invite input

### CURRICULAR SUPPORT

Teaching in ways that make the curriculum engaging, accessible, and coherent

**Captivate:** Spark and maintain student interest in learning

- Design stimulating lessons
- Facilitate active participation

**Clarify:** Help students understand content and resolve confusion

- Explain clearly
- Check for understanding
- Provide constructive feedback

**Consolidate:** Help students integrate and synthesize key ideas

- Review and summarize
- Connect ideas

### ACADEMIC PRESS

Fostering classroom conditions that require students to stay focused on achieving their full potential

**Challenge:** Insist that students persevere and do their best work

- Press for rigorous thinking
- Press for quality work
- Press for persistence

**Classroom Management:**

Foster orderly, respectful, and on-task classroom behavior

- Manage activities
- Manage behavior





Teachers who **care** show concern for students' emotional and academic well-being. They develop supportive, personalized relationships with students, cultivate an emotionally safe environment, and respond consistently to students' social, emotional, and academic learning needs.

#### MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“Your success and well-being matter to me in a serious way.”



#### SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS

(for different grade levels)

- I like the way my teacher treats me when I need help.
- My teacher in this class makes me feel that he/she really cares about me.
- My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me.

#### CARE: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively demonstrate **care** through practices like these:

##### BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

The teacher actively develops positive relationships with all students.

- The teacher is courteous, respectful, and fair with all students.
- The teacher shows sincere interest in students' lives.
- The teacher pays attention to students as individuals.

##### ADDRESSING LEARNING NEEDS

The teacher commits to monitoring and responding to students' learning needs.

- The teacher maintains an intellectually and emotionally safe environment.
- The teacher consistently provides assistance as needed.
- The teacher fosters a culture that encourages students to seek and accept help.



## CARE continued

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

- What expectations and routines do you establish to create an intellectually and emotionally safe environment?
- What type of language and tone do you use when...
  - Offering students encouragement?
  - Trying to help students improve their behavior?
  - Commenting on students' work?
- How often do you show interest in students' extracurricular activities and lives outside school?
- How do you incorporate opportunities for students to share their personal experiences, interests, and concerns?
- How do you respond when students seem sad or upset?
- How do you respond when students want to talk about issues they are facing unrelated to your class?
- How do you customize support based on students' specific learning needs?
- How do you show sensitivity and express encouragement when a student seems frustrated or ready to give up?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Greet students personally when they walk into the classroom.
- Check in with students privately if they seem upset and ask kindly if something is bothering them.
- Ask students to write you a "Dear Teacher" letter in which they share suggestions for helping them learn better.
- When you perceive that a student is not trying or has intentionally done something wrong, examine your assumptions about that student's motivations and consider alternative explanations before responding.

Visit [www.tripoded.com/teacher-toolkit/](http://www.tripoded.com/teacher-toolkit/) for more strategies, tools, and examples of effective practices in action.





## CONFER

Teachers who confer encourage and value students' ideas and views. They seek and respect students' thoughts, opinions, and input as part of the learning process.

### MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

"I invite, welcome, and respect your ideas and feedback."



### SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- My teacher is a very good listener when kids talk to her/him.
- My teacher wants us to share our thoughts.
- My teacher gives us time to explain our ideas.



### CONFER: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively **confer** through practices like these:

#### RESPECTING PERSPECTIVES

The teacher creates a classroom climate in which ideas are treated with respect.

- The teacher and students work together to create a learning environment that welcomes and values diverse views and opinions.
- The teacher models respectful ways of communicating.

#### PROMOTING DISCUSSION

The teacher engages students in communication and collaboration in support of learning.

- The teacher regularly provides genuine opportunities for students to contribute ideas and opinions as part of the learning process.
- The teacher incorporates interactive practices such as cooperative learning, reciprocal teaching, collaborative problem solving, and peer feedback.

#### INVITING INPUT

The teacher invites and values students' input about their learning experiences.

- The teacher gives students voice in determining aspects of what they learn.
- The teacher seeks students' ideas and feedback about classroom activities and procedures.

CONFER *continued*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

- How often do you invite students to share their ideas and opinions in the context of learning activities?
- How often do you ask students to answer questions or solve problems together and discuss their responses?
- How do you ensure that all students have opportunities to express their views?
- How do you model respect for diverse viewpoints?
- How do you respond when students ask unclear or unexpected questions or share divergent views?
- How often do you provide students with opportunities to share their thoughts about how learning activities should proceed?
- How often do you seek feedback from students about the effectiveness of learning activities?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Establish and model expectations for respectful classroom exchanges, especially in the context of disagreement. For example, ask students what respectful communication looks like, sounds like, and feels like.
- Incorporate small group and whole class discussions into learning activities.
- Invite students to share their views about how to structure specific learning activities or how to handle classroom dilemmas.
- Ask students to give each other feedback about how their work meets established criteria.

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# CAPTIVATE

Teachers who **captivate** spark and maintain student interest in learning. They stimulate and engage students by cultivating curiosity and inquiry and by making lessons interesting, relevant, and enjoyable.

## MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“I find ways to make lessons intellectually stimulating and relevant.”



### SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- I like the things that we are learning in this class.
- I like the ways that we learn things in this class.
- My teacher makes lessons interesting.

## CAPTIVATE: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively **captivate** through practices like these:

### DESIGNING STIMULATING LESSONS

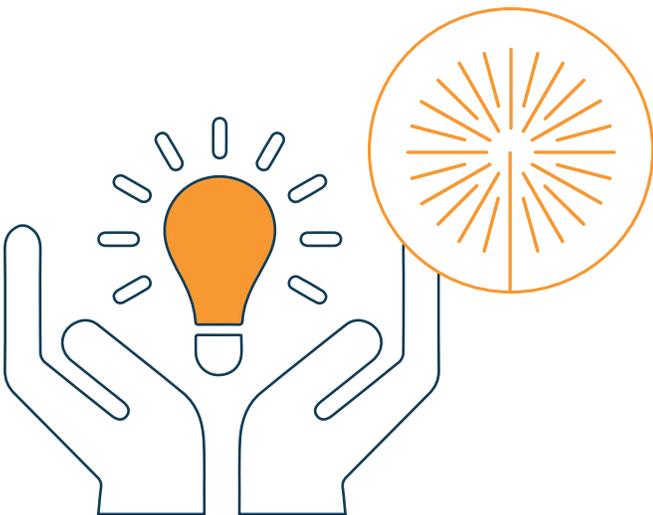
The teacher designs lessons that capture and hold students' attention.

- The teacher designs lessons that are responsive to students' interests, backgrounds, and questions.
- The teacher conveys the relevance or importance of key facts, ideas, concepts, and skills.
- The teacher highlights ways that lessons can contribute to students' lives.

### FACILITATING ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

The teacher engages students in interactive learning experiences.

- The teacher uses a variety of methods for promoting interaction among students as they engage with ideas and materials.
- The teacher asks open-ended questions and encourages students to raise additional questions.
- The teacher uses appropriate technology to engage students in learning.



CAPTIVATE continued

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

- How do you make your lessons relevant to students' lives and the world outside of school?
- How well are your lessons paced? Are they too fast? Too slow? Is pacing differentiated for varying skill levels?
- How interactive are your lessons?
- How successfully do your lessons pique students' curiosity and engage them actively in inquiry?
- How do your vocal inflections, movements, and mannerisms communicate your enthusiasm and contribute to capturing and holding students' attention?
- How effectively do you use appropriate technology to engage students in learning?
- How do your assignments sustain students' interest?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Discuss how news articles or video clips relate to topics or concepts you are teaching.
- Create projects that engage students in applying what they are learning in meaningful real-world contexts.
- Use simulations or interactive online activities to engage students in learning.
- Provide opportunities for students to use digital tools to explore, create, and communicate, both individually and collaboratively.

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# CLARIFY

Teachers who **clarify** help students understand content and resolve confusion. They explain ideas and concepts in a variety of ways, check frequently for understanding, address misconceptions, and provide useful feedback.

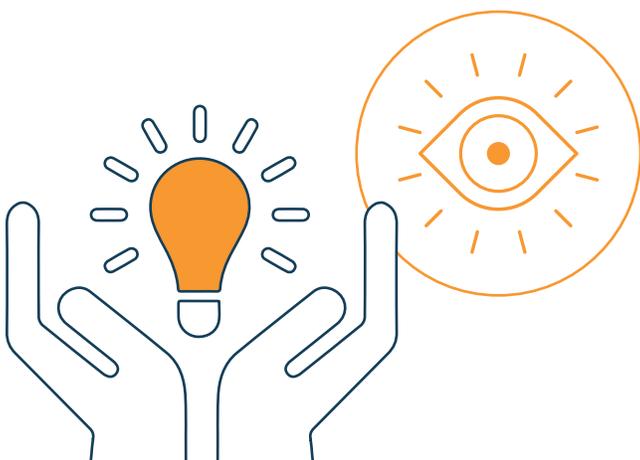
## MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“I can explain in a variety of ways, and when you are confused, I will help you understand.”



## SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- My teacher is very good at explaining things.
- My teacher knows when the class understands, and when we do not.
- The comments that I get on my work in this class help me understand how to improve.



## CLARIFY: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively **clarify** through practices like these:

### EXPLAINING CLEARLY

The teacher explains concepts clearly and anticipates common areas of difficulty.

- The teacher effectively explains key concepts and offers multiple explanations for those that frequently cause confusion.
- The teacher models success by providing examples and rubrics that establish expectations.
- The teacher breaks down complex tasks and provides instructional supports for new skills and concepts as needed.

### CHECKING FOR UNDERSTANDING

The teacher uses a variety of strategies to check for understanding and clear up confusion.

- The teacher checks regularly for understanding using techniques such as questioning, quizzes, exit slips, and monitoring student work.
- The teacher asks students to check their work against rubrics and exemplars.
- The teacher surfaces misconceptions and addresses them effectively.

### PROVIDING CONSTRUCTIVE FEEDBACK

The teacher provides useful, timely, and specific feedback.

- The teacher provides specific, descriptive, concise feedback on student work linked to standards and established criteria for success.
- Feedback on student work focuses on supporting students' thinking and self-directed problem-solving.
- The teacher customizes feedback on students' work to guide their next steps.

CLARIFY *continued*

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

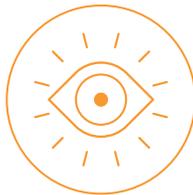
- Do you provide orderly, structured explanations when introducing new ideas, including illustrative examples?
- Do you anticipate questions by considering what students will likely find difficult?
- Do you generate multiple explanations for potentially tricky concepts?
- Do you use a variety of methods and media to present and explain content?
- Do you regularly check for understanding using a variety of formal and informal assessment strategies?
- Do you ask students to explain their reasoning to reveal points of confusion?
- Do you share clear success criteria for student work and provide specific feedback based on those criteria?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Explain concepts using multiple media, including text, images, audio, and video.
- Use rubrics to articulate criteria for success and describe a range of performance levels.
- Use exit slips at the end of lessons to check student understanding and use responses to plan subsequent lessons, clarifying as needed.
- Write comments on student work describing specifically what has been achieved and where more work is needed.

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# CONSOLIDATE

Teachers who **consolidate** help students integrate and synthesize key ideas. They summarize and make connections in ways that help students see relationships within and across lessons, remember ideas, and build understanding over time.

## MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“We review and summarize lessons to help make learning coherent and memorable.”



### SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- To help us remember, my teacher talks about things we already learned.
- My teacher takes time to help us remember what we learn.
- My teacher takes the time to summarize what we learn each day.

## CONSOLIDATE: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively **consolidate** through practices like these:

### REVIEWING AND SUMMARIZING

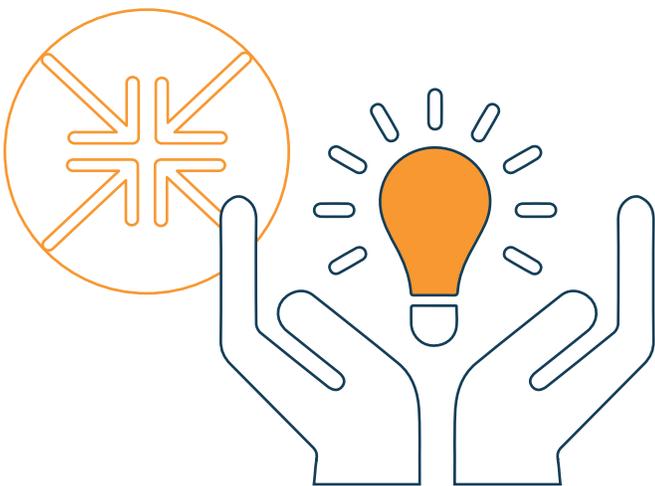
The teacher consistently reviews and summarizes content with students.

- The teacher reviews and summarizes what has been taught at the end of each lesson, highlighting relationships among ideas.
- The teacher facilitates activities in which students summarize what they have learned or apply it in new contexts.

### CONNECTING IDEAS

The teacher effectively organizes and integrates content to make it easier for students to remember and understand.

- The teacher explains connections between current lessons and previously learned facts, ideas, concepts, and skills.
- The teacher invites students to make their own connections across the curriculum.



CONSOLIDATE continued

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

- Do you summarize big ideas at the end of lessons and review them periodically?
- Do you ask students to summarize and synthesize what they are learning?
- Do you make explicit connections between lessons?
- Do you help students make connections within and across the curriculum?
- Do you refer to relevant current events or other meaningful applications of what students are learning to facilitate transfer of knowledge and skills?
- Do your assignments require students to build on prior learning?
- Do your assessments incorporate topics and skills from earlier lessons?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Use KWL charts to track what students know about a topic, what they want to know, and what they learn.
- Explain to students how to underline, highlight, and/or annotate texts and then summarize the main ideas in their own words.
- Begin and/or end lessons with references to previously taught topics and how they are connected.
- Ask students to reflect on what they have learned and how it relates to other ideas or experiences.

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# CHALLENGE

Teachers who **challenge** students insist that they persevere and do their best work. They hold students to high academic standards, encourage persistence, and monitor student effort.

## MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“I insist upon real understanding, not just memorization, and I will not let you give up, even when the work becomes difficult.”



## SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- My teacher makes sure that I try to do my best.
- My teacher makes us explain our answers — why we think what we think.
- My teacher doesn't let people give up when the work gets hard.

## CHALLENGE: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers effectively **challenge** students through practices like these:

### PRESSING FOR RIGOROUS THINKING

The teacher sets high standards for thinking and reasoning.

- The teacher asks probing questions that require students to think deeply.
- The teacher requires students to explain their thinking.
- The teacher encourages students to generate original, creative ideas.

### PRESSING FOR QUALITY WORK

The teacher sets high standards for student performance.

- The teacher requires all students to strive for high quality work and clearly conveys a belief in their capability.
- The teacher requires students to revise work based on feedback.
- The teacher differentiates instruction to provide appropriate levels of challenge for students at different skill levels.

### PRESSING FOR PERSISTENCE

The teacher requires students to work hard and persist in their learning.

- The teacher consistently requires all students to try hard, especially those who may tend to be disengaged.
- The teacher communicates that when work is difficult, effort and persistence lead to personal growth and ultimate success.



CHALLENGE continued

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

- How do you set challenges that are at the appropriate level for each student's growth?
- How do you scaffold instruction to support students in rising to the challenges facing them?
- How do you engage students in thinking deeply about key ideas?
- What do you do when students respond superficially or incompletely?
- How do you model the persistence and rigor that you expect from students?
- How do you respond when students express doubts about their own abilities or begin to give up?
- How do you recognize and provide positive reinforcement for students who succeed beyond their expectations?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Regularly communicate the expectation that all students can achieve challenging learning goals and you will support them in doing so.
- Ask open-ended, higher-order questions and use thinking routines such as Think/Pair/Share to engage students in deepening and explaining their ideas.
- Probe student responses with additional questions that invite them to expand their thinking.
- Ask students to refine their work in light of feedback until it meets criteria for success.

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# CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Teachers who are effective at **classroom management** foster orderly, respectful, and on-task classroom behavior. They create conditions that enable learning, including establishing a positive classroom climate, teaching self-management skills, monitoring student conduct, and redirecting unproductive behavior.

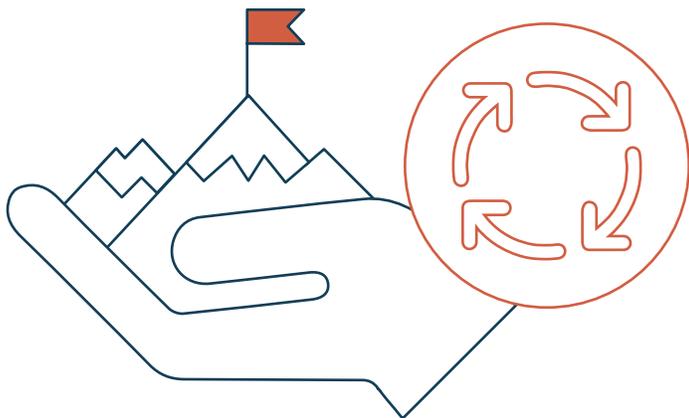
## MESSAGE TO STUDENTS:

“Our class will remain orderly, on task, and respectful, with learning as our first priority.”



## SAMPLE STUDENT SURVEY ITEMS (for different grade levels)

- Our class stays busy and does not waste time.
- My classmates behave the way my teacher wants them to.
- Students in this class treat the teacher with respect.



## CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT: INDICATORS OF AN EXEMPLARY CLASSROOM

Teachers demonstrate effective **classroom management** through practices like these:

### MANAGING ACTIVITIES

The classroom environment is organized and time is used efficiently.

- The teacher explains, models, and implements routines and strategies to systematize classroom processes.
- Classroom activities run smoothly due to materials being readily accessible and time being managed effectively, including during transitions and interruptions.

### MANAGING BEHAVIOR

The teacher effectively guides students in managing their behavior.

- The teacher explains, models, and implements routines and strategies that elicit positive student behavior.
- The teacher establishes and regularly encourages high standards for student conduct, coaches students on how to meet those standards, and holds students accountable in a fair and consistent manner.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT continued

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Consider these questions as you reflect on your classroom practice:

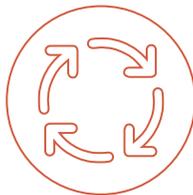
- What expectations and routines do you establish for student behavior?
- How quickly do you get students settled and working at the beginning of class?
- How do you make sure students in class are busy learning and not wasting time?
- How long before the end of class do you start to wind down the work?
- How do you respond when it appears that students are off task?
- How do you respond when students treat you or each other disrespectfully?
- How do you respond when students ignore or disobey what you have asked them to do?

## SAMPLE STRATEGIES

Try implementing teaching strategies like these in your classroom:

- Organize the classroom for optimal efficiency to enable student access to materials, equipment, and other resources. For example, make sure students can easily locate their classroom folders, notebooks, or texts without disrupting others.
- Establish classroom routines for individual and group work, transitions, and class discussions.
- Work with students to develop an agreement about expectations for classroom behavior, ask everyone to sign it, and post it publicly for regular reference.
- Respond with logical consequences when students do not comply with agreed upon behavior expectations.

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## ABOUT TRIPOD SURVEYS

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Tripod has analyzed data collected from millions of students to validate the logic of its framework. Using Tripod student surveys, educators can measure student perceptions in the following areas:

- **Effective Teaching:** Specific feedback about teaching practices and classroom learning conditions organized around Tripod's 7Cs™ framework of effective teaching
- **Peer Support:** The degree to which students support classmates instead of teasing or discouraging them
- **Engagement and Motivational Mindsets:** Students' behavioral and emotional engagement in the classroom, as well as the goals and beliefs influencing student engagement
- **Success Skills and Mindsets:** Classroom-level growth in metacognitive skills and mindsets, which capture concepts associated with executive functioning (i.e., self-regulation), growth mindset, and future orientation — key foundations of grit
- **School Climate:** Students' feelings of safety and security as well as teacher-student and student-student relationships

To learn more about Tripod's surveys and 7C's framework of effective teaching, visit [www.tripoded.com](http://www.tripoded.com).

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