Critical Teaching Behaviors (CTB) Framework

- **Evidence-based**: The Critical Teaching Behaviors (CTB) framework synthesizes research on teaching in higher education into six categories of evidence-based instructor behaviors proven effective in increasing student learning gains and retention.

- **Focused on observable behaviors & strategies**: A focus on observable behaviors and strategies allows instructors and observers to identify concrete areas of strengths and need for improvement in course delivery and design.

- **Promotes shared language & expectations**: Faculty, staff, and administrators may choose to use the CTB framework as the foundation for a common language to showcase, discuss, and evaluate good teaching.

How to use the CTB Teaching Observation Worksheet

The worksheet provides an overview of the six categories of Critical Teaching Behaviors and lists select examples of concrete instructor actions in each category.

- **Strategies listed in each category are intended to provide examples rather than serve as an exhaustive list**: observers will likely identify other strategies that can serve as evidence of achievement in the six Critical Teaching Behaviors.

- **It is not expected that instructors demonstrate all strategies listed in every single class**: However, it is important that behaviors from most, if not all, categories are present in the class period observed and that they are well integrated into the outcomes and flow of the class.

- **In addition to feedback from others, the process of critical self-reflection can lead to improved teaching**: To encourage this behavior, the worksheet is designed to serve as a conversation starter between colleagues that considers both the observer’s notes from the classroom and the instructor’s reflections on the class observed.

- **Teaching Observations are an important source of data for evaluating effective teaching**: However, documentation of teaching quality should be comprehensively based on multiple sources of data.
Recommended Peer Observations Process

**Recommendations for the observer:**

- **Prior to observation:** Ask the instructor to share their course syllabus and complete a reflection on the course (see template below) and review their notes. Be familiar with the CTB categories and possible strategies in each area.
- **During the observation:** Take notes on what is happening in the classroom. Consider bringing a copy of the CTB observation form to prompt your note taking.
  - How is the instructor presenting information?
  - Are students engaged in learning? Are they attentive?
  - What do the instructor's and students' behaviors indicate about the learning environment in this course? How does the environment feel?
  - How does the instructor use technology?
  - How do class structure and activities support each other and prepare students to perform desired tasks?
  - How does the instructor know students achieved the learning outcomes for the lesson (assessment)?
  - Jot down any questions you want to ask the instructor – what additional information do you need?
- **After the observation:** Review your notes and write comments on each of the CTB categories. Be sure to note CTB categories in which the instructor demonstrates particular strength as well as categories for potential growth. Schedule a meeting with your colleague to discuss the observation.

**Recommendations for the instructor:**

- **Prior to the observation:** Share a copy of your syllabus and your reflection on the course (see below) with the observer as well as any additional materials you would like your observer to have (i.e. lesson plan, student worksheets, etc.). Review the CTB categories and strategies in each area.
- **During the observation:** Relax! Teach the class as you would normally to ensure a realistic observation.
- **After the observation:** Reflect on how the class went – What went well? What would you do differently in the future? Write reflective comments for each of the CTB categories.

**Follow-Up Discussion**

- Allow time for both instructor and observer to share their thoughts on the class period observed. Address any questions that emerged.
- Discuss a professional development plan based on both the strength and improvement areas. Determine 2-5 concrete action steps; these may include ideas for relevant professional development options, ideas for strategies to incorporate in future classes, recommendations for strategies to continue using, etc.
- Observer should update worksheet based on the discussion and share a final version with the instructor. The instructor may choose to include the observation worksheet in their portfolio as one component towards documenting effective teaching.

**Notes on Evaluative Observations**

- For Evaluative Observations it is especially important to use common standards and expectations to increase the fairness of reviews; the CTB framework provides such a tool to define these.
- When using the CTB framework for evaluative purposes, we recommend following the same observation process outlined above to ensure that instructors have a chance to self-assess, receive feedback, and reflect on appropriate professional development goals to promote growth.
- The final report of an evaluative observation will likely emphasize the summary report of observed strengths and weaknesses more heavily than specific observations and instructor reflections to increase its readability for an audience beyond the instructor and observer.