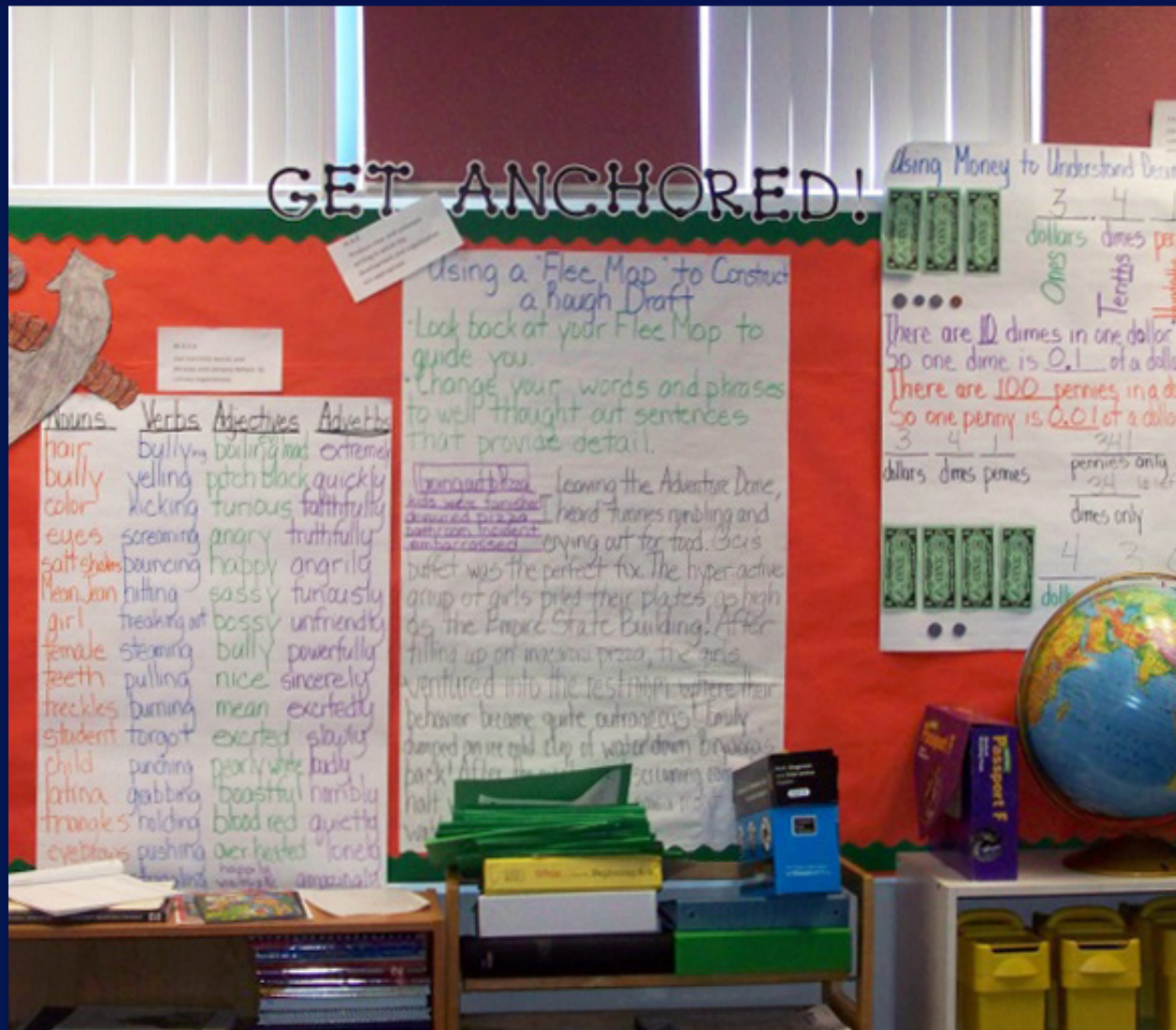# Motivating Readers, Inspiring Teachers

Imitate and Innovate Anchor Charts

by Ekuwah Moses and Holly Lee

Millions of pristine anchor charts, descriptive anchor charts, and vibrantly illustrated anchor charts are all over the Internet and described in a multitude of professional publications. Why? Are they worth the hype and virility? Are anchor charts archaic and pointless now that we have interactive boards? Are they distracting in the classroom? Is the artistic ability of the teacher a factor when choosing commercially produced learning posters over co-created anchor charts? No matter what your answers are to these questions, anchor charts are invaluable to teaching visibly and explicitly for all students learning academic discourse.

What Exactly Are Anchor Charts?

Anchor charts are organized mentor texts co-created with students. Charts are usually handwritten in large print and displayed in an area of the classroom where they can be easily seen. Used to anchor whole-group instruction, the charts provide a scaffold during guided practice and independent work. The co-creation makes content engaging and ensures that all students think about and grapple with challenging content.

Effective anchor charts foster character by inspiring each student to develop craftsmanship, perseverance, collaborative skills, and responsibility for learning. Charting promotes critical thinking by asking students to make connections, perceive patterns and relationships, understand diverse perspectives, critique the reasoning of others, supply evidence for inferences and conclusions, and generalize to the big ideas of the discipline studied.

There is a plethora of online and print sources of anchor charts aligned to every standard, skill, or strategy. The purpose of this article is to guide teachers to become wise consumers and discern the rigor and relevance as it pertains to the intended outcome for their classroom. One sample chart does not fit all lessons or classrooms and yield the same results.

Before we start, let's tap into your prior knowledge of anchor charts, just as we expect of our students in the classroom, by answering the questions in the anticipation guide in Figure 1. The guide will be a pathway to make connections between previous learning and to challenge initial understanding in order for learning to take a professional hold—just like Ekuwah's childhood experiences spearheaded her efforts to imitate and innovate anchor charts professionally.

FIGURE 1. Anchor Charts Anticipation Guide

Before Reading		After Reading
T F	1. Anchor charts should be posted and organized before the start of the school year to establish the learning environment.	T F
T F	2. Once an anchor chart is posted, the teacher seldom refers back to the chart; it is the students' responsibility to use it.	T F
T F	3. Anchor charts increase engagement and raise student achievement when co-constructed with students.	T F
T F	4. The size and color of the paper is crucial when formatting an anchor chart.	T F
T F	5. Color coding and use of color are the same thing.	T F
T F	6. Embedding preprinted graphic images are instrumental when formatting anchor charts to support differentiated learners.	T F
T F	7. When a co-constructed anchor chart is used regularly in the classroom, the students will recall information listed on it even when it is removed or covered up.	T F
T F	8. Anchor charts should be posted in one common location in the room.	T F
T F	9. The commercially produced posters are equally as effective as co-constructed anchor charts.	T F
T F	10. I can laminate and use the same anchor charts from year to year.	T F

Childhood Lessons

As an instructional coach who now specializes in high-leverage visual and environment cues, I (Ekuwah) look back and thank my mother for her impromptu commercial art lessons. It was a blessing and curse when I was young, but now I have harnessed much of those private art lessons in my instructional delivery and coaching to capture the eye when marketing academic vocabulary and content to enhance student achievement.

My mother, Carolyn Coffield Mends, has a degree in commercial art and was highly skilled in portraiture. In the 1980s, my mother once climbed on rickety scaffolding to paint a billboard for my childhood daycare. She sat for hours painting the most delicate and intricate portraits for clients. I watched in awe, but unfortunately never learned to draw realistically. I, rather, helped set up the art show materials, fumbled with crafting projects, and arranged the yearly summer garage sales where she sold her extra frames.

We needed to make signs for the garage sales, and that task was left to my older sister and me. At the discount store, my mother taught us to look for solid color poster board, wide-tip markers, and bright stickers. When I thought I had done a splendid job on my sign, she would be quick to say, "Your letters are not thick enough. You have to go over them again. People in cars will not be able to see your words from a distance. Make the letters bold and prominent." To my dismay, she would always focus on the lettering. I would bitterly complain about her feedback and mock her under my breath.

When my father drove us around town posting the garage sale signs, he would gently nudge us to compare and contrast our signs with the visibility of the other signs: "Your mother knows what she is talking about. One day you will argue less and value her critical eye." He was right!

In middle school, my teachers frequently assigned book reports as accountability for independent reading. I can recall several nights of torturous brainstorming about what book to present and how to cleverly format the poster. Fortunately for me, my mother often came to my rescue and saved my projects.

On one account, I remember a book report about frogs. My mother asked, "What's your topic? I want to see a short and concise title centered at the top. The audience always looks at the title first. It must be short and sweet and specific." After working on the title, "Types of Frogs," and making the letters bold and thick, I looked for graphic support because I did not know how to draw a frog. My artistic mom, who just happened to be less busy with clients, came to the dining table to observe my progress, and happily completed my drawing of the frog.

She scolded me about not color coding my subheadings and made me trace over them in triplicate with a contrasting color. Mom said, "We use color to help the consumer—your classmates and teacher—clearly organize the information and recognize what's important. The subheadings are in a different color and smaller in size. The graphics are important to trigger a personal connection and visual experience."

My mother told me repeatedly about the consumer's eye and how we perceive visual aids for marketing. The frog poster was an artistic treat for my middle school teacher, who saved it (unbeknownst to me). During my student teaching, she told me she still had my poster to provide current students with a model of how the design elements of its construction captured the audience and sold a complex text.

Professional Application

I carried these childhood memories with me as I finished my master's degree in literacy and was hired as a learning strategist at a school in the seventh year

Robert Kneschke/Shutterstock.com

of "needs improvement." This is the time I realized I needed the marketing design elements my mother taught me, to make visible evidence explicit (while implicit) to all stakeholders, including teachers, students, parents, and community members.

My first year as a strategist was rough after being a successful classroom teacher for six years! A state support team of district coaches and principals frequently observed classes, wrote evaluative reports, and mentored the Title I school. During the monthly debriefing and planning sessions, we were told by the state support team: "This is not an academic environment. We do not see evidence of learning in the monthly data and teaching in the classrooms." How was that possible? Our walls were adorned with commercially produced poster sets, teachers were teaching from basals, and students were in their seats. We were just like any other traditional elementary school. Consequently, our teachers were perplexed and disgruntled by these conclusions.

This redundant and vague statement started my quest and passion for the components of rigorous and language-rich environments. What did successful environments look like? What did we need to do differently to make our environment exude teaching and learning? Together, we needed to prove to all stakeholders that our school was an academic environment with serious learning and teaching occurring. We did it by the second year! The school made Adequate Yearly Progress for the first time since the inception of No Child Left Behind.

How? By implementing a range of visual and environmental cues that I had spent months reading about in professional literature and by composing a schoolwide guide to disseminate the synthesis of research. I appealed to Holly Lee, a knowledgeable and experienced project facilitator for school improvement, for support. Our school needed more than random and cookie-cutter ideas; rather, it needed endlessly repeatable and sustainable structures that were engaging, relevant, and simply high yielding. Additionally, the solutions could not include another "new" program. The teachers' plates were already overflowing from the state team's directives for data collection and lesson planning. I had to be sensitive to the saturation point of my colleagues.

I chose to refine visible cues, as Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (2014) outline in the second edition of *Better Learning Through Structured Teaching: A Framework for the Gradual Release of Responsibility*, to make the school an environment of teaching and learning that captures students' attention to drive them toward higher order thinking.

Visual cues range from simple colors or sizes, to graphics such as images and organizers that temporarily and strategically scaffold students' thinking or understanding of complex concepts, skills, or strategies of both initial content and synthesis. This also applies to environmental cues that encompass our walls as well as tactile resources within the classroom.

I learned that our students were not using these two cues for success during the gradual release of responsibility instructional framework. Teachers needed to use explicit cues to support students in taking the responsibility for their learning. Through reflection and conversation with administrators, I realized that our environment lacked the cues to properly anchor students' oral and written communication of the standards.

I would be selfish not to mention the administrators and their role in supporting these actions. Together we were creative and innovative in mentoring, affirming, and motivating classroom teachers to reflect and implement multiple instructional cues—foremost, anchor charts.

Anchor Charts

As you have learned, anchor charts are organized mentor texts co-created with students, handwritten in large print, and displayed in an easily visible area of the classroom. They anchor whole-group instruction and provide a scaffold during guided practice and independent work. As you see, Mrs. Holloway is gesturing to her small writing group about drafting a conclusion (Figure 2).

The charts provide a rich context for active and ongoing learning to meet the needs of ALL (Academic Language Learner) students. They are a constant work in progress as students practice along the continuum of the standard, linking prior knowledge to new learning.

We abandoned our stagnant, commercially created wallpaper and adopted a student-generated environment of shared visuals, as described in Chapter 4 of Jeff Anderson's (2005) *Mechanically Inclined: Building Grammar, Usage, and Style Into Writer's Workshop*. The focus should not be on displaying cute teacher-created visuals on the wall, but rather the proper acquisition and organization of student-generated content. Anderson said,

> There are no prefab, purchased posters and wall charts—only organic, growing, changing charts that address what kids need to know to survive in the world of writing. And these wall charts are used, referred to, pointed at, moved, and looked at. These wall charts are a living part of my class's meaning-making journey. (p. 51)

Visible evidence with relevance to the students!

In addition, Stephanie Harvey and Anne Goudvis (2007) discussed literacy anchor charts in *Strategies That Work: Teaching Comprehension for Understanding and Engagement*: "Anchor charts provide a record of our instruction. Anchor charts make both the teacher's and the students' thinking visible and concrete" (p. 50).

Anchor charts serve numerous purposes:

- Provide a shared visual for students to help them independently clarify thinking, make connections,

FIGURE 2. Students in Small Writing Group Refer to Anchor Chart
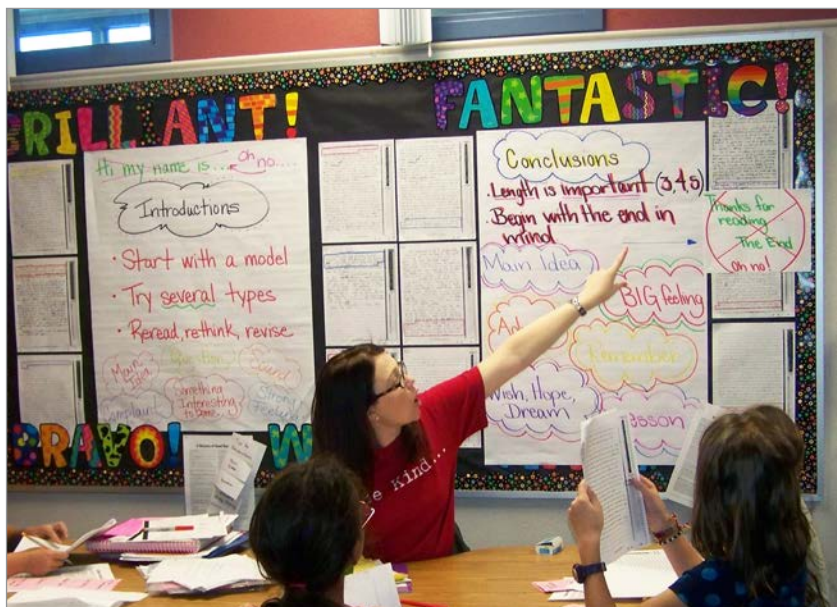
and remember academic commands of the content standards

- Establish an exemplar model of mentor text for students to imitate and innovate
- Magnify what students need to know and do in order to be proficient
- Create a vehicle for helping students communicate (in both oral and written forms) the complex content vocabulary
- Promote comprehension and synthesis in writing to convey knowledge across all grade levels and content areas

Getting Started

Before beginning the "meaning-making journey" with anchor charts, think about the organization and visual presentation of the entire classroom. Break the elementary tradition of commercially prepared posters, elaborate colorful themes (polka dots, zebra print, sports, etc.), and motivational posters. Tell students during the Meet the Teacher event that this space is a shared teacher–student space and you need their help to fill the walls with relevant and personal learning. Start the year with bare walls—this seems extreme, but it is powerful. Anderson (2005) stated, "Wall charts and posters should go up not all at once, but one at a time over the first months of school and

anytime you find a new need" (p. 59). He continued, "My classroom walls are a gigantic scaffold, a place to hang and categorize new knowledge, to see connections, to form patterns" (p. 59).
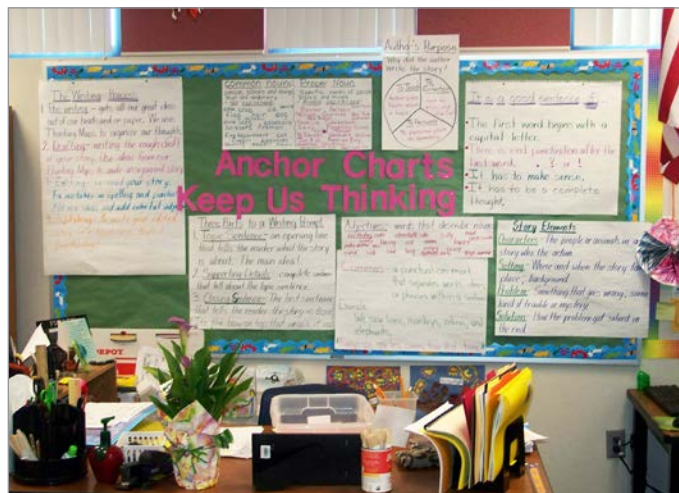
For example, Mrs. Jiron did not want her students to see blank bulletin boards and walls during the Meet the Teacher event, so she posted the words "Anchor Charts Keep Us Thinking" (Figure 3). The charts were added over time during the opening weeks of school. The title spurred conversation and helped ease the confusion of traditional parents.

A study by Barrett, Zhang, Moffat, and Kobbacy (2012) in *Building and Environment* discussed the impact of highly decorated classrooms on kindergartners. The researchers concluded that less is more. Each and every year our teachers are reminded in the principal's welcome letter not to spend time decorating classrooms and walls. New teachers cringe, but the continuing staff members typically embrace the student-centered philosophy. The study is consistent with the noted authors' and our guidelines, and it can be accessed here.

Consider the availability of bulletin boards and blank walls. Some teachers choose to designate each wall with a content area: math, ELA, science and social studies. Content labels can go up in advance and remain constant throughout the year. The brain searches for patterns and consistency, so this is a perfect way to organize.

Further, think about where anchor charts will be posted in conjunction with alphabet strip and word wall(s), interactive boards, and architectural limitations. Consider basic mounting materials such as magnets, tacks, and adhesives in order to post charts at students' eye level. If their view is obstructed, students cannot adequately reference charts. The power of the cue is lost.

For example, Mrs. Wallace used magnetic clips on her dry-erase board to layer multiple charts on the topic of identifying the main idea (Figure 4). She has visible evidence of teaching and a well-planned chart to cue the third-grade students.

Basic Chart Construction

Again, there are many publications about anchor charts on the market; however, the best chart is the chart co-created with students, for students, and with a strategic outcome in mind. There is no foolproof chart or "right" construction; therefore, blindly copying from Pinterest will not yield the results

FIGURE 4. Multiple Anchor Charts on One Topic

FIGURE 3. Beginning-of-the-Year Anchor Chart
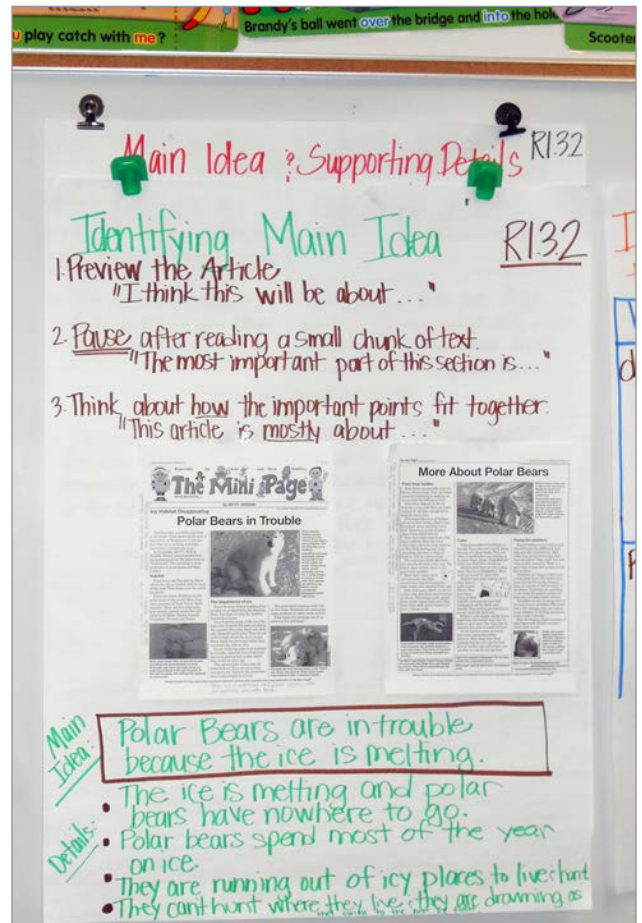
equitably. Meaning, what works in one room will not always work in every room; thus, we must be a wise consumer of preformatted charts.

Holly has a board on Pinterest with more than one thousand anchor charts. Pinning multiple charts on the same topic provides her and her followers with opportunities on how to imitate and innovate on the basis of the classroom audience's needs. The student data comes first, and finding appropriate pins to mix and match comes second. The power lies in the teacher's ability to synthesize students' prior knowledge with new content needing a scaffold towards mastery.

Understanding the fundamentals of chart creation is essential to replication. With that said, there are a few construction tools needed for success.

Paper. Choose solid, light-colored paper that does not distract from the organization of the content. This is important, as dark-colored paper absorbs color and makes it difficult to decipher the text from the background. Even black ink on dark paper is hard to read.

Graphed, lined, or unlined chart paper is acceptable. What takes precedence is the size of the (adhesive or nonadhesive) paper, as the size of the paper is dependent on the students' viewing proximity, lesson purpose, and amount of content planned.

Do not reduce the size of the font because of the paper size. This is a common problem. Teachers write small, which reduces readability from across the room. If a person cannot read the text from the back of the classroom, the writing is too small. There are certain lessons whereby the amount of text is better suited to the use of a document camera or to the projection of typed text.

For example, when teaching how to construct an informational paper, type and project the shared writing so students in the back of a room can see it. The same typed or handwritten informational piece can be amplified with a poster maker and then manipulated into an anchor chart for student reference on how to organize and construct an independent paper. In Figure 5, Mrs. Japczyk typed

**FIGURE 5. Anchor Chart Showing Annotated Text**
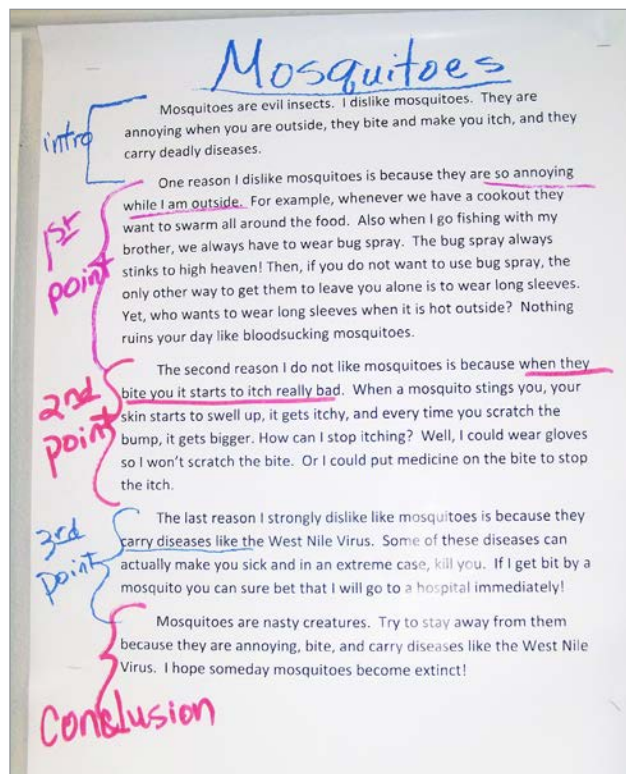
a formulaic text about mosquitoes and clearly annotated the paragraphs.

Furthermore, consider leaving space for the chart to expand over time. When considering the complexity of the standards, a checklist approach is no longer sufficient. Standards are, rather, a natural continuum of readiness, and leaving space allows for robust expansion, acceleration, revision, or differentiation.

Media Instruments. Markers, crayons, and highlighters add necessary color to facilitate the visual process during the shared writing experience. Color coding is assigning specific colors to specific purposes. Using color, rather, is randomly adding color on the chart for aesthetic appeal. For example, Mrs. Gennaro color coded the steps with baby blue, wrote the word *napkin* in burgundy, and continued assigning on the basis of the components of the syllable lesson (Figure 6).

Highlights and possibly shadowing of letters should be in light colors. Broad-tip markers ease the

FIGURE 6. Color-Coded Anchor Chart

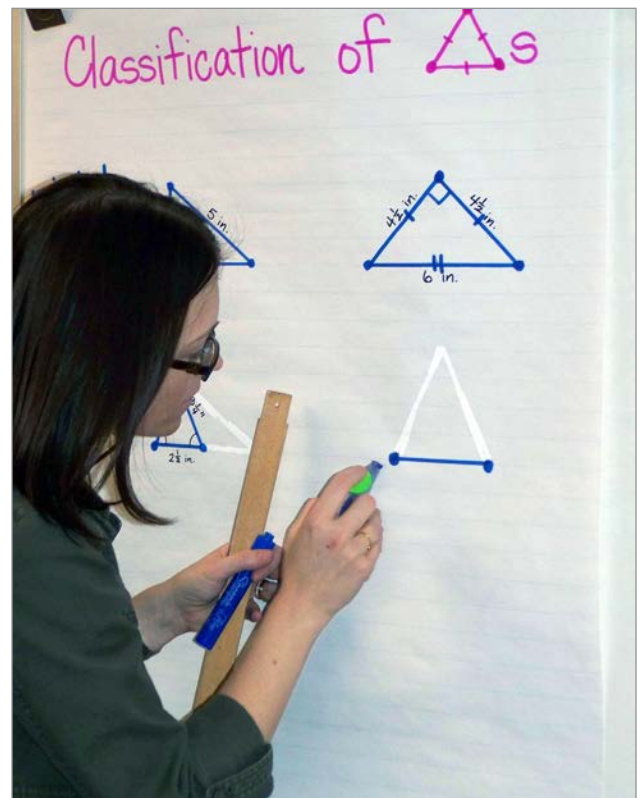**FIGURE 7. Error Correction on Anchor Chart**
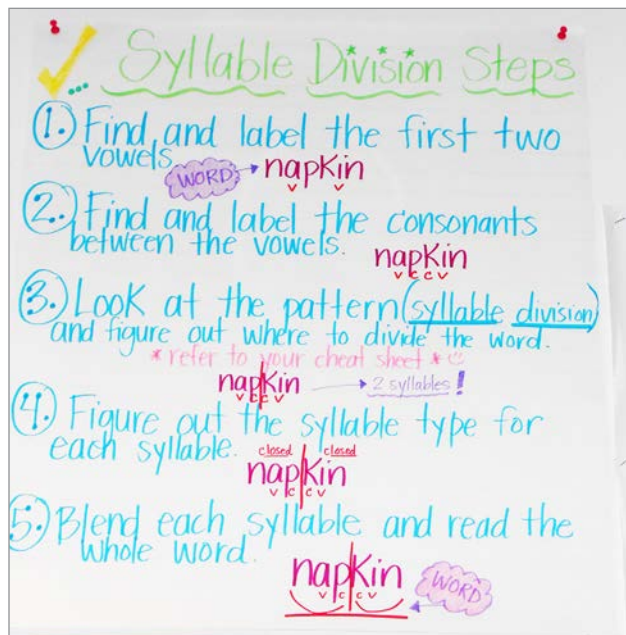
formation of making bold lettering. Well-intentioned teachers reduce visibility by using the narrow tips of markers. Thin letters can become lost when viewed from afar.

Correction Fluid or Tape. Many teachers are reluctant to make anchor charts because of their inevitable mistake or their desire for perfection. Mistakes are essential to the learning process. When the teacher is vulnerable enough to make a mistake, it gives students the opportunity to see how an expert solves a problem and uses fix-up strategies. The teacher should see that as a teachable moment to think aloud the process of metacognition and self-correction (Frey & Fisher, 2011).

In Figure 7, Mrs. Holloway models the acute scalene and acute isosceles triangles in the same manner as she did the other triangles. Notice she is fixing her own mistakes on the anchor chart with correction tape—this is ideal and authentic teaching! Mrs. Holloway used this opportunity to explain her difficulty in measuring the accuracy of the length and what she would do to correct it.

Graphics and Images. Anchor charts are the ideal examples of authentic mentor expository texts. We use text features to clarify meaning and to add visual

support, especially for our English learners (ELs) and low-socioeconomic students.

Vivid visuals can be instrumental to the formatting of anchor charts (not used in replacement of anchor charts). Cut and paste preprinted graphics, existing charts, or computer-generated lettering or images onto the chart. Remember to add manipulatives to make the chart visibly engaging, such as the beans and square tiles Mrs. Barton used to cue her kindergartners' number sense (Figure 8). Anchor charts can also be shaped into a nonlinguistic representation to support the processing of informational content.

Annotate visuals placed on an anchor charts to deepen the content and move student learning forward. Contextual visuals can be strategically placed to further support and enhance the purpose of the focus lesson. This is not about aesthetic appeal, but rather adding text features to support the content.

Sticky Notes. Sticky notes scream student ownership (Figure 9). Students write personal

FIGURE 8. Anchor Chart Showing Manipulatives

FIGURE 9. Students Affix Sticky Notes to Anchor Chart

examples from word hunts, sentence stalking, individual or group brainstorming, and problem solving. This is the tactile ownership piece imprinted in the brain—the experiential learning allows for better recall because it is stored in a different part of the brain than are facts and figures. To keep pacing quick, the sticky notes can also be added by the teacher after independent practice.

Structures and organizers that are reused repeatedly are perfect for sticky notes. The classic K-W-L chart, narrative elements, and Tony Stead's

(2006) R-A-N chart are typical examples of reusable and interactive charts.

Sentence Strips. Sentence strips are ideal when supporting oral and written discourse. We encourage teachers to use sentence frames to provide all students with an opportunity to rehearse academic vocabulary before writing. For ELs, sentence stems support conversation. Over time, as students become more proficient in applying these skills and behaviors, support gradually fades and students assume more responsibility for independently conducting the conversation using academic vocabulary and language. Sentence strips can be employed in a similar format as the one used by the first-grade teacher in this Partner Talk video.

Types of Charts

According to Dr. Rozyln Linder (2014), "The category is not the most important thing here; the teaching is" (p. 17). Again, there are multiple labels for categorizing charts, and it's easy to get caught up in semantics. For brevity, we have condensed the categories to three for this article. Anchor charts can be used in all subject areas.

Classroom Management and Procedures. These are the charts we see misused the most. Teachers with classroom management difficulties typically fail to reinforce clear, concise, and consistent directions. The purpose of co-creating these charts at the beginning of the year is to establish the classroom norms. These norms must be revisited as part of the social objective(s) of each lesson and center/station rotations, as well as before facilitating classroom discourse. We usually see these charts covered up, moved to corners, faded, or ignored, disappearing into the wall as though they were never created; thus, the purpose is lost.

Mrs. Barton asked her kindergarten students to "sit like Sam" (Figure 10). She used a pair of binoculars to see who was sitting like Sam. This was explicit and effective: "I see ____ is sitting like Sam. I see ____ is also sitting like Sam." The students immediately demonstrated readiness for the lesson!

FIGURE 10. Example of Classroom Management Anchor Chart

These charts are applicable and beneficial to all students, but especially to students needing structure and predictability, such as Autistic students (including Asperger's syndrome), students from homes without discipline, ELs new to the country, and students who exhibit chronic behavior problems.

Content and Examples. The Common Core State Standards (CCSS; National Governors Association Center for Best Practices & Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010) describe an integrated model of literacy and stipulate that each standard should not be taught in isolation. A master teacher can tuck and weave many objectives into a lesson; however, students may become lost and not know what to focus on. Students must be able to communicate what they are learning, why they are learning it, and how they will know that they have learned it.

To support our students and teachers, we advise prominently centering academic command words such as the following at the top of the chart: "Main Idea," "Theme," "Classifying Polygons," "Point-of-View," "Comparing Texts," "Text Features," "Elements of Folk Tales." These words are specific, concise, and actionable. They are harvested directly from the Standards. In her book *Teaching the Critical Vocabulary of the Common Core: 55 Words That Make or Break Student Understanding*, Marilee

Sprenger (2013) identifies 55 critical nouns and verbs to be used and explicitly taught.

The content and examples charts have a clear title consisting of academic command words. The chart does not have to be titled at the beginning of the lesson, but rather where it fits naturally (Doug Fisher explains this thoroughly in his [video](#) about the Gradual Release of Responsibility). Furthermore, the content and examples charts can be used for closure. The teacher can return to the chart at the end of the lesson and think aloud its construction process. Television shows such as *Sesame Street* and *Yo Gabba Gabba* are excellent with closure: "Let's take a moment to remember what we did today!" and "Today's letter was…"

This type of chart is usually completed over a series of engaging lessons. Multiple texts may be used for comparing and contrasting elements. On the continuum of yearlong standards, content and examples are added as the standard is revisited, which necessitates planning to avoid listing undefined terms without support. Examples provided need to be supported with graphics, definitions, and so on.

Steps and Strategies. We employ content and examples charts before we use steps and strategy charts: "Students must understand information before a memory technique is employed. Memory techniques should help not only the recall of information but also the understanding of that information" (Marzano, 2007, pp. 37–38).

Examples of steps and strategies include the outlined problem-solving procedures in mathematics, the scientific method, heuristics on finding the main idea, steps to writing a constructed response, the strategies for chunking a word, how to play an instrument, how to use an application, and mnemonics strategy cues (e.g., CUBS, SOLVE, CUPS, THIEVES, RAP, SWAG, SWBST, THINK). These charts support struggling students by providing them with problem-solving strategies for self-regulation. In addition, the increased modeling by teachers provides struggling students with more scaffolds towards independence.

Planning

We readily acknowledge that innovation sometimes comes at the cost of isolation; however, there are tremendous benefits from the professional learning community process and co-planning with a grade-level team. Experience and expertise are invaluable in the days of new standards and uncertain curriculum materials. When teachers gather their arsenal of ideas and freely share with one another, everyone saves time. After implementing a chart for years, the insight about what was successful or unsuccessful can help another teacher avoid disaster.

Teachers' editions and teachers' guides also contain templates and worksheets to be imitated and innovated into an anchor chart. I had the pleasure of chatting with author Lori Ockzus at the airport coming home from the International Reading Association's annual conference in May 2014. We discussed her new book about close reading, *Just the Facts! Close Reading and Comprehension of Informational Text*. I immediately noticed the reproducibles in the book and recognized the possibility of repurposing them into anchor charts. She concurred and said that when she models the contents of her books she never uses worksheets. Teachers' guides, professional texts, and Pinterest are always entry points and are not the final destination or ceiling on the potential for rigorous outcomes of the CCSS.

In Figure 11, Mrs. Japczyk imitated Jeff Anderson's (2005) Dialogue Rules! chart by adopting his heuristics, but used sentence strips with student-generated examples to personalize the lesson.

As previously stated, there is a plethora of online and print sources of anchor charts aligned to every Common Core Standard. Pinterest, teacher blogs, and Google Images are the reigning champions for viewing and downloading sample charts. Be a wise consumer to discern the rigor and relevance of the intended outcome for identified students. One sample chart does not fit all lessons or classrooms and yield the same results.

FIGURE 11. Example of Imitated Anchor Chart
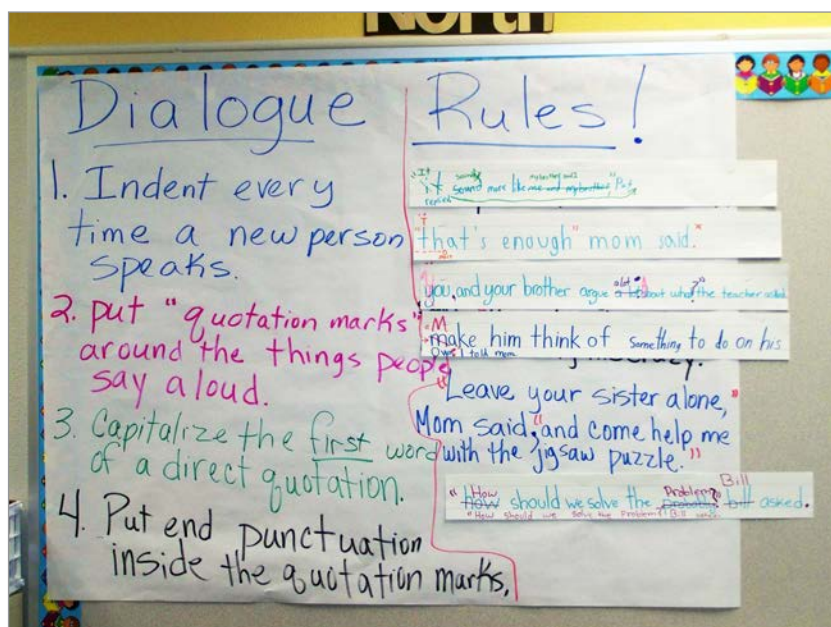
Our Guide for Teachers

We have clustered our construction guidelines and synthesized the research throughout this article into a handy reference for teachers (Figure 12). When it comes to charts, consider readability, legibility, reliability, clarity, balance, consistency, icons, patterns, comparison, color, and accessibility. Classroom charts that use these principles, as the commercial world does, will receive the same benefits. However, we must not forget that the world of advertising also uses these tools to convert and colonize, rather than inspire deeper understandings and independent thinking. We chose to use these tools for the greater purpose of educating and empowering students.

Student Participation

What are the students doing during the co-creation of the anchor chart? First and foremost, the students are listening and participating with some form of accountability. Typically, when the teacher is carrying the cognitive load of the lesson she or he stops periodically to ask probing questions to feed-forward the lesson (Frey & Fisher, 2011). The discourse and quick pacing keep the lesson engaging. (Discourse includes oral and written

FIGURE 12. Anchor Chart Guidelines

Anchor Chart Guidelines		
Paper	Adhesive or nonadhesive paper, lined or unlined paper, light and solid color paper	**Evident** **Not Evident**
A Single Focus	Title identifies the "noun" and "verb" of the standard	**Evident** **Not Evident**
Co-Constructed	• Observed construction between students and teacher • Collaboratively reused, repurposed, and/or altered for new learning	**Evident** **Not Evident**
Font Size	Large enough to be read from all points in the classroom	**Evident** **Not Evident**
Media Instruments	Use color and color-coded academic commands and related terminology	**Evident** **Not Evident**
Vivid Visuals	Pictures, symbols, nonlinguistic representation, maps, physical models, drawings, photographs, graphs, charts, realia	**Evident** **Not Evident**
Placement	Chart is easily accessible for quick reference, revision, or interactive board utility	**Evident** **Not Evident**

communication.) The teacher is listening for errors and misconceptions and using that information to immediately monitor and adjust the content of the chart. The chart may need to be halted for the day, expanded for more clarity, or linked to a previous chart to achieve the intended outcome.

Dry-erase boards, personal responders, tablets, backchannels, one-to-one devices, or response cards are completely encouraged to get rapid responses to use formatively. The tool is not as significant as the teacher's mindfulness and the content adjustments he or she makes based on students' responses.

Academic notebooks in all of the subject areas can help to keep engagement high, facilitate discourse, and serve as a formative assessment tool. Through the think-aloud process, the teacher is showing and telling how and why she or he chose the title, the organizer, the colors, the text features, and other components of the chart. Then the students can choose what note-taking method is suitable to the way their brain processes the information. Teachers tend to want to keep control of the class by always teaching note-taking when using notebooks. The main purpose of the

notebook is the construction of knowledge, not the transfer of information for handwriting practice or osmosis.

The simple caution is to avoid students' verbatim copying or far-point copying of the anchor chart. To further clarify this point, please watch Rachel Smith's amazing [video] about the benefits of drawing in class and allowing free formation of note-taking. She also models easy techniques that students and teachers can replicate in anchor charts and notebooks.

Revisiting Anchor Charts

When a student is struggling or needs a cue, she or he may not risk asking for help for fear of embarrassment. Thus, the organized placement of anchor charts provides struggling students with consistent support. An anchored classroom is active and has cues readily available for all types of learners. Teachers and students gesture to current and previous charts that provide a link to prior lessons. This means heads are turning, arms may be waving, and feet may be scurrying to a chart that jogs a memory or experience. Accompanying

the visible gestural cues, we also hear discourse about the content of previous charts. Noting items of importance, difficult concepts, and additional examples as well as annotating the mentor text for new aha moments keep the charts active and relevant.

I created a chart to remind our teachers about a myriad of options to keep charts active and purposeful. Teachers must manipulate anchor charts to provide the cues necessary to support student input, errors, and misconceptions. The PD chart in Figure 13 uses mathematical operators to describe the moves that should become automatic for teachers.

Removing Anchor Charts

When do you remove anchor charts? What do you do with retired charts? The answer goes back to

purpose and relevance. The purpose of an anchor chart is to be a temporary and visible scaffold or cue until a majority of the class reaches independence. This purpose distinguishes anchor charts from yearlong, wallpaper-like decorations and posters. Thus, room organization is critical to avoid the distractions of cluttered walls while the class juggles multiple objectives in different subjects.

To manage the potential clutter, some teachers choose to layer the charts, bind the charts with clips, or use large paper clips on the wall. At Holly's school,

FIGURE 13. PD Anchor Chart Using Mathematical Operators

Reusing and Repurposing Existing Anchor Charts… *Mathematically*	
+	• Add color to emphasize and highlight academic vocabulary • Add more examples during one-one conferences, small-group, and whole-group instruction • Add sticky notes of student-generated examples and connections • Add more visuals (pictures, props, stickers, photographs) • Add rigor, relevance, repetition • Add QR codes for long-term retrieval at home and school
−	• Subtract the time students spend passively copying (without accountability or interaction) • Subtract errors from the chart and explain the corrections to students (oops!) • Subtract the extra space on each chart and fill with relevant examples • Subtract premade clutter from your walls to make additional space for more anchor charts • Subtract anchor charts that are not currently being used from the classroom walls
X	• Multiply the number of anchor charts used to teach the same concept • Multiply the number of examples over time • Multiply the number of gestural cues to draw attention to the chart • Multiply the amount of discourse (oral and written) pertaining to the contents of the chart • Multiply the amount of language frames • Multiply the amount of teachers and resources used to plan effective anchor charts • Multiply the feedback and utility of anchor charts by sharing on social media and teacher blogs
÷	• Divide the lesson over multiple class periods • Divide or cut the chart into meaningful sections as needed for the lesson • Divide the class into groups • Divide the content area planning between grade-level teachers

Mrs. Gennaro uses hangers to organize her charts on an easel for easy access. Ms. Barber teaches in a small classroom but manages the charts with large paper clips on poster board attached to the wall (Figure 14). The charts are organized and labeled with thought bubbles by subject.

Once the teacher's formative and summative data indicates mastery from at least 80% of the class, charts can be removed from sight. We have seen classroom teachers roll them and slide them into a storage bin. Other teachers take pictures of their charts for their professional files and store the images on a flash drive or in a binder. Innovative teachers also use those photos to share on Pinterest or teacher blogs.

At the end of the year, many of the teachers who rolled the charts into a storage bin send them home with their students. I tried to do an "anchor chart roundup" several years in a row at different campuses, with no success. The teachers insisted upon sending the charts home with the students! This was bittersweet! I wanted to save them to share in future professional development sessions, but the teachers were adamant about the student ownership. I must say I am thrilled that the teachers and students understood the power of the instructional tool.

FIGURE 14. Organization of Multiple Anchor Charts

There is no point to laminate charts and keep them for the following year. As these teachers clearly communicated, the source of the magic is the relationship piece fostered during the co-creation. Commercially purchased charts cannot generate the same results.

Longevity

In closing, please revisit the anticipation guide in Figure 1 and complete the "After Reading" column to see what pathways were affirmed and what new learning occurred.

Anchor charts are an effective instructional tool that promotes equity and high expectations for all students. They make content engaging, and they ensure that all students think about and grapple with challenging content. Effective anchor charts foster character by inspiring each student to develop craftsmanship, perseverance, collaborative skills, and responsibility for learning. They promote critical thinking by asking students to make connections, perceive patterns and relationships, understand diverse perspectives, critique the reasoning of others, supply evidence for inferences and conclusions, and generalize to the big ideas of the discipline studied.

The school demographics are irrelevant to the success of anchor charts. The contents of this article are replicable as described in both high- and low-socioeconomic schools. Holly and I are still mentoring, affirming, and motivating teachers in using anchor charts in multiple schools. As we become more knowledgeable about the depth and complexity of the Common Core Standards, we continually feed-forward and raise the instructional sophistication of the anchor chart, for what counts as quality changes over time in multiple situations. Anchor charts are not an encroachment of a new idea or program, but rather an embellishment of an old tool that requires repeated clarification and enhancements so the substantive utility is not diminished.
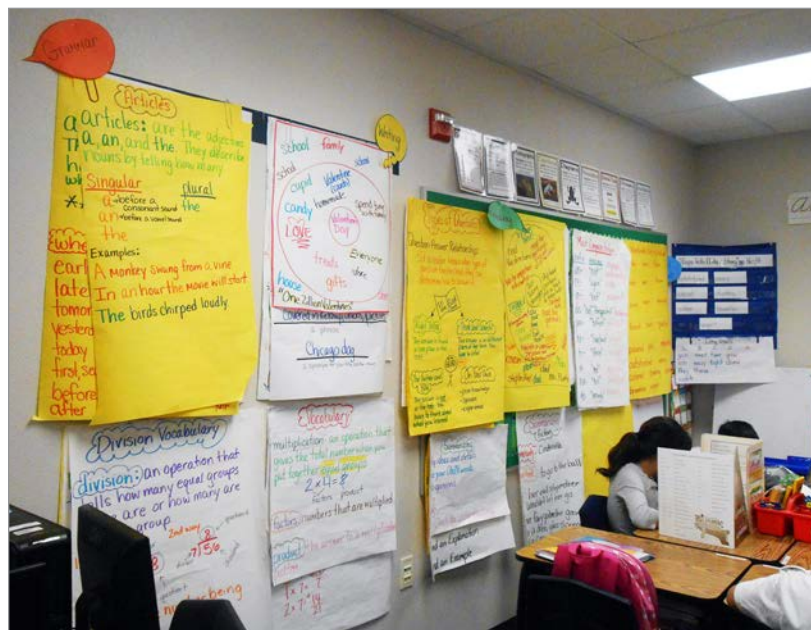
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