# Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observations

## PAM GROSSMAN

CSET
center
to **support**
**excellence**
in **teaching**

## STANFORD UNIVERSITY

# What does good teaching in ELA look like?

# Origins of PLATO

- How do classroom practices of more effective teachers differ from those of less effective teachers?

- Are value-added measures identifying teachers who score higher on measures of classroom practice?

# Using a tool to rate instruction

- Provides a common technical vocabulary for describing instruction

- Provides consistent lens for looking at instruction

- Allows for rating teachers across different components of instruction

- Allows us to compare quality of instruction across classrooms

# Development of PLATO

- Based on research in effective practice in ELA
  - Agnostic with regard to particular curricular approach

- Able to capture multiple content domains within ELA
  - Reading, writing, literature, grammar, speaking, listening

- Built around 4 primary underlying constructs
  - Instructional scaffolding
  - Disciplinary and cognitive demand of activities and classroom discourse
  - Teachers' representation and use of content
  - Teachers' management of time and behavior

# Instructional scaffolding

- Instructional scaffolding
  - Explicit instruction in strategies for reading, writing, etc.
  - Opportunities for guided practice
  - Degree of support provided by teachers
    - feedback
    - modeling

# Cognitive demand of activities & discourse

- Disciplinary and cognitive demand of activities and classroom discourse

  - Intellectual challenge of questions and student activities
  - Extent to which instruction is centered around text
  - Opportunities to engage in more extended discussions in which to develop ideas and interpretations

# Teachers' Representation and Use of Content

- Teachers' representation and use of content during instruction
  - Quality of examples, explanation, analogies
  - Accuracy of representations
  - Connections between prior knowledge and current content
  - Use of students' personal/cultural experience in connecting to ELA content

# Classroom Environment

- Teachers' use of time
  - Instructional learning time ("time on task")
  - Efficiency of transitions
  - Preparation of materials

- Teachers' behavior management
  - Appropriateness of student behavior for task at hand
  - Teacher's responses to disruptions

# PLATO 4.0 (Protocol for Language Arts Teaching Observation)

- Purpose
- Intellectual challenge
- Classroom discourse
- Text-based instruction


- Representations of content
- Connections to prior knowledge
- Connections to personal/cultural experience

- Strategy Use and Instruction
- Modeling
- Guided practice
- Accommodations for language learning


- Behavior management
- Time management

# PLATO*Prime* (Version of PLATO for MET study)

## Disciplinary Demand

- Intellectual challenge
- Classroom discourse
- Text-based instruction

## Classroom Environment

- Behavior management
- Time management

## Instructional Scaffolding

- Modeling
- Strategy Use and Instruction
- Guided practice

# Keeping Track of Content

- Scoring sheet requires raters to keep track of domain of instruction
  - Reading
  - Writing
  - Literature
  - Grammar/Mechanics
  - Vocabulary
  - Research Skills

# Activity Structures of Class

| | |
|---|---|
| Teacher talk / lecture | ☐ |
| Short student responses to teacher questions / recitation | ☐ |
| Small group / partner discussions | ☐ |
| Whole group discussion | ☐ |
| Student presentations | ☐ |
| Independent work | ☐ |
| Teacher-led small group | ☐ |

# Instructional Techniques for Language Learning:

| | Yes | No |
|---|---|---|
| Teacher (or student) uses students' primary language (other than English) to introduce or explain key concepts, terms, etc. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Teacher provides differentiated assignments, instruction, or assessments. | ☐ | ☐ |
| Teacher has materials that students can use as referents/prompts (charts, sentence starters) | ☐ | ☐ |
| Teacher makes easier or more familiar text available to students. | ☐ | ☐ |

# Scoring Process

- 15-minute segments for scoring

- In live observations, raters observe 15 minutes then score for approximately 8-10 minutes

- In video captures, raters pause the video to score after 15 minutes and then continue

# How would you describe the teaching in this clip?
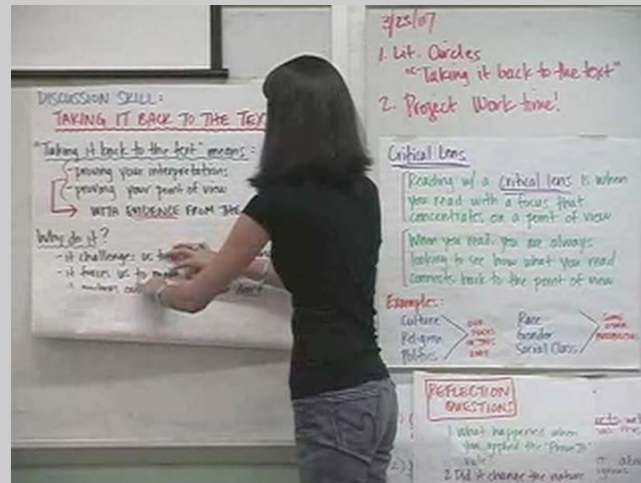
# Strategy Use and Instruction

**STRATEGY USE AND INSTRUCTION**

The element of **Strategy Use and Instruction** focuses on the teacher's ability to teach strategies and skills that support students in reading, writing, speaking, listening, and engaging with literature. ELA strategies may help students read for meaning, generate ideas for writing, and figure out the meaning of unfamiliar words. Strategy instruction does not include the teaching of rules (e.g., grammar/spelling rules, definitions of parts of a story). The teacher can use a variety of methods for teaching explicit strategies, including modeling strategies, providing opportunities for guided practice, etc. At the high end students have the opportunity to develop a repertoire of strategies and skills that they can use flexibly and independently, depending on their purpose. At the low end, where strategy instruction is minimal or insufficient, teachers may repeat definitions and rules when students are stuck. Evidence of teacher's prompting of strategy use should be interpreted as evidence of prior strategy instruction that is being reinforced.

|  | 1<br>Provides almost no evidence | 2<br>Provides limited evidence | 3<br>Provides evidence with some weaknesses | 4<br>Provides consistent strong evidence |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Strategy Use and Instruction | Teacher **does not** prompt or provide instruction about strategies or skills. | Teacher **introduces or refers** to a strategy or skill, but does not provide explicit instruction. Teacher prompts students to use a strategy or skill. | Teacher **provides explicit instruction** about a strategy or skill, **including how or why** to use it. However instruction may be **inconsistent or insufficient** for students to implement strategies independently. | Teacher **provides explicit instruction** about a range of strategies or skills, or detailed instruction about a single strategy, including how, when, and why to use them. It is reasonable to infer that **instruction is sufficient for students to implement strategies independently**. |

# Modeling

| MODELING | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| The element of **Modeling** focuses on the degree to which a teacher visibly enacts strategies, skills, and processes targeted in the lesson to guide students' work before or while they complete the task, the extent to which they are analyzed or not, and whether they are used to illustrate for students what constitutes good work on a given task. Teacher might model metacognitive or discussion strategies, a think aloud on how to identify theme, demonstrating how to support a statement with textual evidence, and so on.  Modeling often includes think-alouds and role-plays.  Modeling should support students in completing the task at hand rather than hypothetical or longer term tasks.  Students may also be involved in modeling. A teacher who completes the student task while the students are completing the task with no additional instruction (e.g., reading during SSR or journaling while students are journaling) receives a 2 on this element. | | | | |
| | 1<br>Provides almost no evidence | 2<br>Provides limited evidence | 3<br>Provides evidence with some weaknesses | 4<br>Provides consistent strong evidence |
| Modeling | Teacher **does not visibly enact strategies**, skills, or processes targeted in the lesson. | Teacher **partially demonstrates or enacts strategies**, skills, or processes targeted in the lesson, but the **modeling is incomplete**, **only available to some students, or inaccurate or unclear**. | Teacher clearly, accurately, and completely enacts strategies, skills, or processes targeted in the lesson. The modeling is complete and available to most students. | Teacher clearly, accurately, and completely enacts strategies, skills, or processes targeted in the lesson.  In addition, the teacher **decomposes or draws attention to specific features of the process, strategy, or skill** being modeled.<br>It is reasonable to infer that modeling is sufficient to assist students in completing the task independently. |

# Classroom Discourse

**CLASSROOM DISCOURSE**

**Classroom Discourse** focuses on the opportunities students have for extended conversations related to ELA content with the teacher and among peers and the extent to which the teacher and other students pick up, build on, and clarify each other's ideas. Student talk unrelated to ELA content does not count as discourse. At the low end, the teacher does the majority of the talking and accepts minimal or unclear student responses. Re-voicing a student comment without academic language or further clarification would be a 2-level for uptake. Re-voicing a student's comment in academic language or with further clarification is at a 3 level. At the high end, students engage in extended, coherent, and focused discussions, in which the teacher and other students build on each others' ideas and prompt each other to clarify and specify their understandings.

|  | 1<br>**Provides almost no evidence** | 2<br>**Provides limited evidence** | 3<br>**Provides evidence with some weaknesses** | 4<br>**Provides consistent strong evidence** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Uptake of Student Responses** | Teacher or students **do not** respond to student ideas. | Teacher or students **respond briefly** to student ideas, but response does not elaborate or help develop the ideas (e.g., "Good job," "Okay"). Teacher accepts answers without asking for clarification or elaboration. | Teacher or students engage in **a mixture of brief responses and limited uptake**. Teacher or students ask for some clarification or elaboration, but the exchanges **do not consistently push** students to specify or refine their thinking. | Teacher or students **consistently engage** in uptake of students' ideas, responding in ways that **expand** on student ideas **or enable students** to further explain, clarify and specify their thinking. |
| **Opportunities for Student Discussion** | Talk is brief, didactic, and **teacher directed**. Teacher lecture or extended introduction (including giving directions) to an assignment or activity would fall in this category. | Talk is tightly teacher directed, but there are **occasional opportunities** for discussion about an ELA topic. "Recitation formats" would fall into this category. | Teacher provides **opportunities for extended conversation** about an ELA topic. Some students participate in the discussion, but **a few students might dominate**. There is still a substantial amount of teacher direction. Student-directed discussions that fail to stay on track would also be at this level. | Teacher provides **opportunities for elaborated conversations** about an ELA topic between teacher and students, and among students. **The majority of students participate** in the conversation. The conversation may be student directed, and the focus is clear and stays on track. |

# Research Findings

- 2 studies of PLATO in NYC
  - 2007-08
  - 2008-09


- PLATO currently being used in 2 additional studies:
  - Understanding Teaching Quality (ETS)
  - Measures of Effective Teaching (Gates Foundation)

# Study Design, Year 1

- Identified teachers from the top and second to bottom quartile on two measures of Value-Added within the same school

  - 24 teachers matched within schools

  - 9 middle schools

- Observed 6 days of instruction per teacher

  - Observers did not know teacher quartile

- Captured additional measures of practice, including teacher logs, student work, and open-ended notes

# PLATO findings Year One:

- Teachers in higher value-added quartile scored higher on measures of instructional practices across every dimension


- Strategy Instruction was strongest predictor of VA quartile

# Year 2 Study Design:

- 179 teachers in 13 middle schools in NYC
    - Attempted to get all ELA teachers within a school
    - Fewer teachers at the highest VA quartile than expected

- 12 raters who received in-person training and reached 80% reliability on the instrument

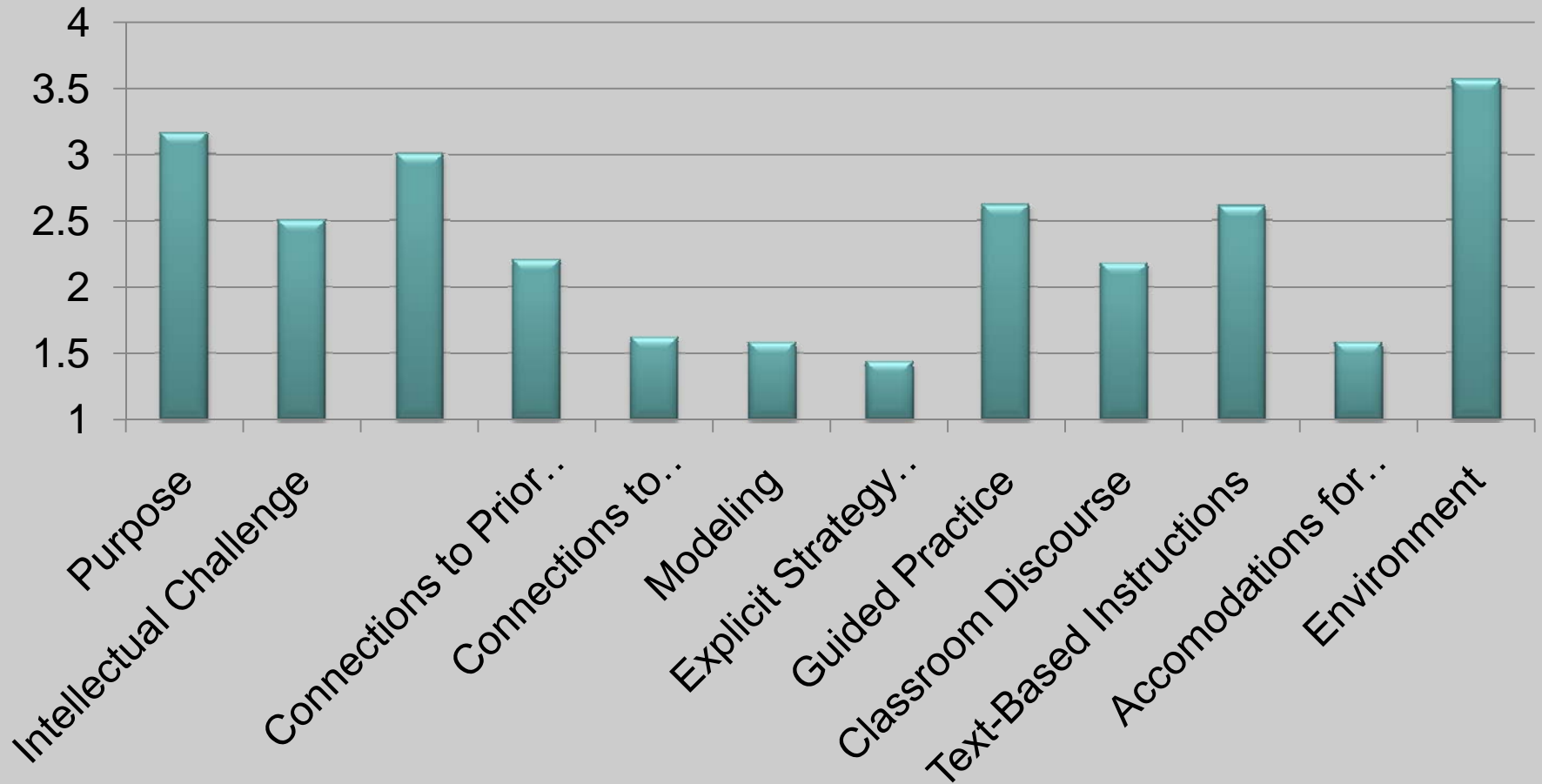- Observed 3-4 classes per teacher, 15% of classes double-coded

# Year 2 Findings

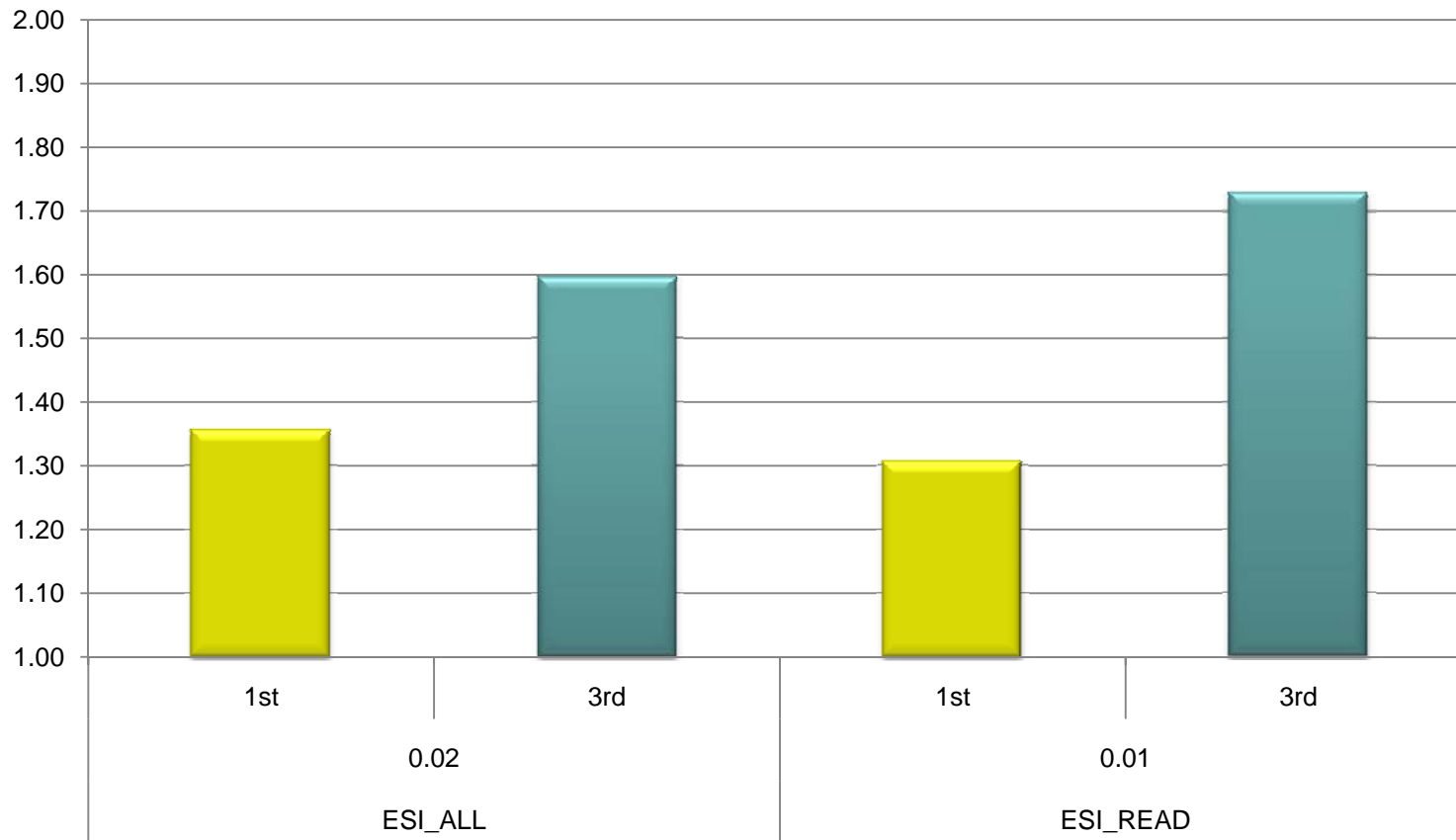- Similar distribution of scores on elements across years 1 and 2
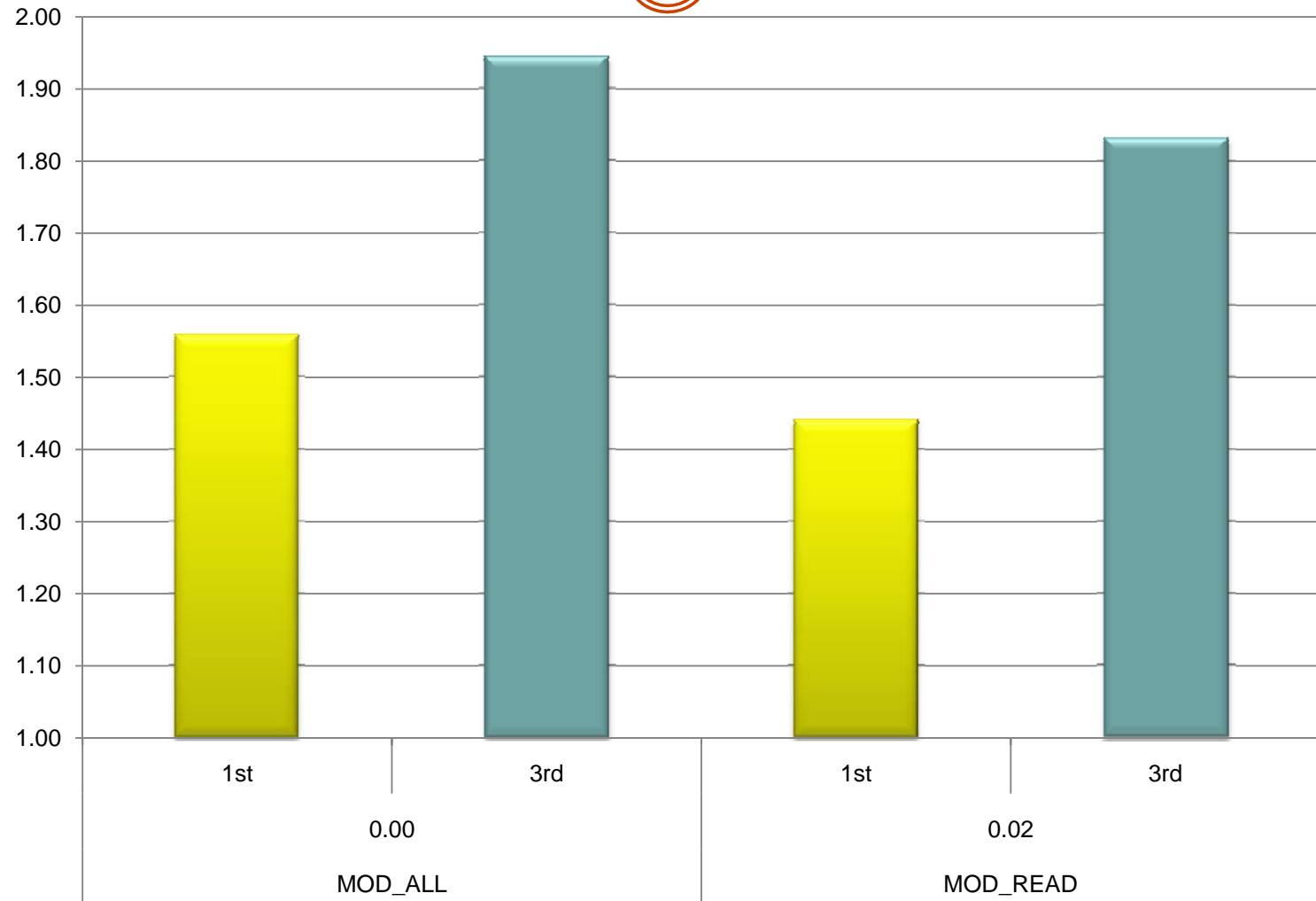
# Year 2 distribution:

# Year 2 Findings

- Similar distribution of scores on elements across years 1 and 2

- Strategy Instruction and Modeling significantly associated with teachers'value-added scores
  - Teachers with 1 point higher score on Strategy Instruction more than 4 times as likely to be in higher quartile

# Average Strategy Instruction score by quartile overall and within reading

# Average Modeling Score by quartile overall and in reading:

# Year 2 Findings

- Similar distribution of scores on elements across years 1 and 2

- Strategy Instruction and Modeling significantly associated with teachers'value-added scores
  - Teachers with 1 point higher score on Strategy Instruction more than 4 times as likely to be in higher quartile

- Conducted a generalizability study to look at the reliability of the instrument

# Reliability of PLATO

- Based on g-study PLATO Prime has a reliability of over .80
  - across 5 15 minute segments of instruction

  - Greatest variability is by teacher by segment

# Uses of PLATO in Teacher Evaluation

- ## Would require multiple observations of teacher practice
  - PLATO captures elements that do not occur continuously over a lesson
    - E.g. Strategy Use and Instruction, Modeling
    - At least 5 segments of instruction across several days

- ## Would require trained raters
  - Rater qualifications
    - ELA background
    - At least 1-2 years of teaching experience
    - Openness to a new framework

# Training in PLATO

- Helping people make quality decisions using the PLATO rubric is a 3 day process
  - Current training is face-to-face
  - Online training is in development

- Raters certify at 80% reliability on each element
  - Ongoing calibration of raters is recommended

- Training of district personnel can be an investment in expertise regarding ELA instruction.

# Use in high-stakes decisions

- **Would require further validation studies for high-stakes decision-making**
  - Is PLATO equally effective at capturing high quality instruction across different curricular programs (e.g. Open Court vs. Writing Workshop)?
  - How to sample ELA lessons across the various content domains to capture stable estimates of practice?
  - How to weight elements differently for a literature lesson versus a writing lesson?
- **Many of these questions could be answered through the MET study**
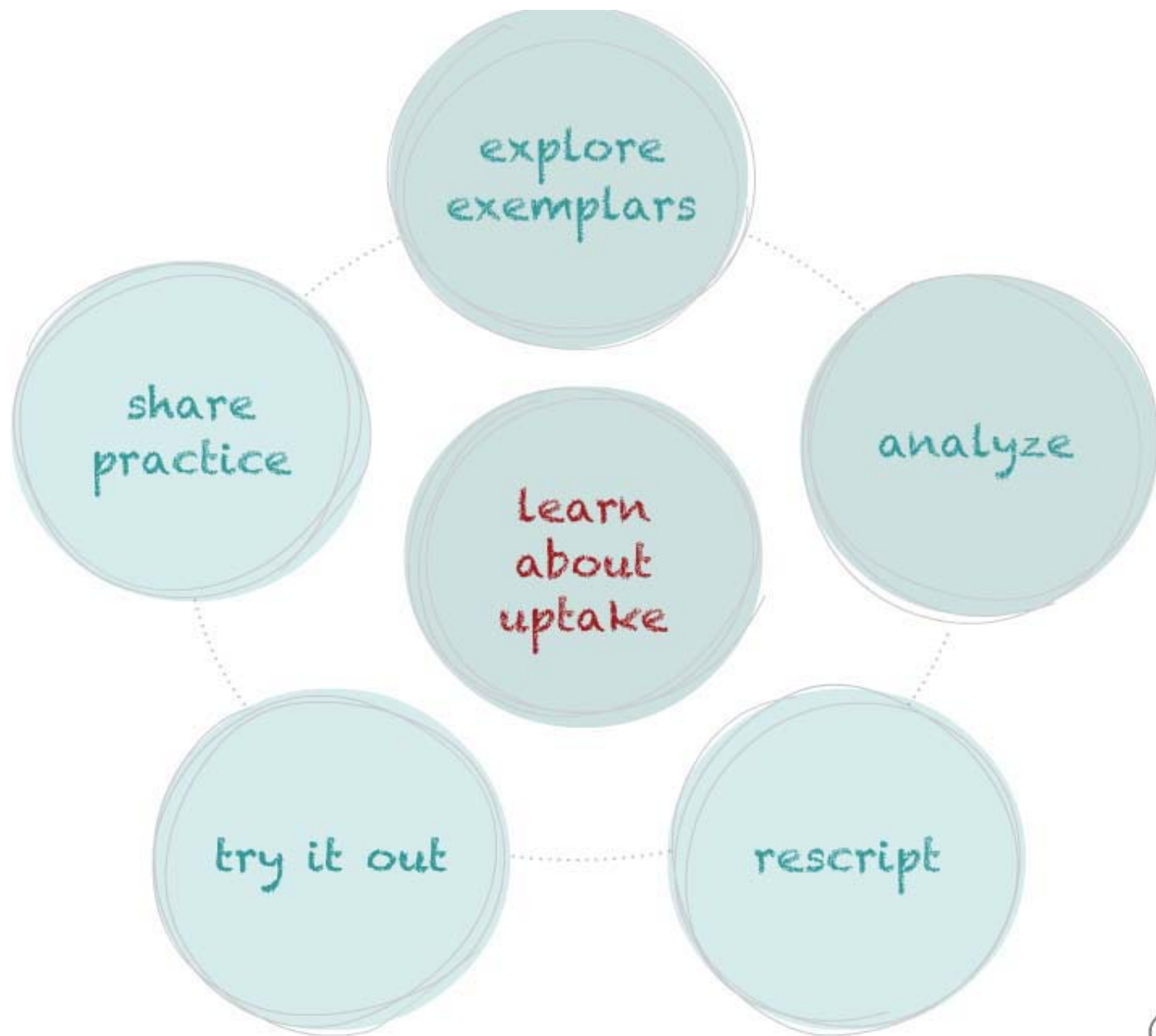
# The Future of PLATO

- Using PLATO to identify instructional coaches and other instructional leaders for ELA
- Using PLATO for formative assessment
  - Identifying areas for professional growth
- Training principals in PLATO to give them a better feel for elements of high-quality instruction in ELA
- Using PLATO as a tool for professional development
  - Identify practices to target in teacher education & professional development

# Diagnostic feedback regarding instruction

- Observation protocols provide a snapshot of instruction
  - For an individual teacher across lessons
  - For a school or department
  - For a district

- Identifies practices to target for professional development

# Thank you!

**ANY QUESTIONS?**