II. What is your vision for your students and how is that reflected in your goals?   What are the most important things you do to achieve these goals? Did students achieve your goals last year? If so, what led to this? If not, what are you doing differently this year?

I was asked about my educational vision a few years ago, when interviewing for my current high school. I was a kindergarten teacher (who loved teaching kindergarten) transferring to a high school English classroom. My new administrator asked me exactly what my vision was for my high school students. And I remember looking at him and saying that it was the same vision I had for kindergarten students: "I envision a classroom where students are successfully pushed to new academic heights everyday." And so, he took the chance and hired me; I took a leap of faith and jumped (almost blindly) into a new job role. And for the past six years I have never forgotten where I came from--the kindergarten classroom. I tell this story because I believe it has been this transition from an early childhood classroom to a high school setting that has truly helped me define who I am as a teacher, coworker, and mentor. I learned from this experience that great teaching looks the same at every educational level. Thus, with this experience, every year I begin with the end in mind and set my instructional goals based on the End-of-Course exam, or this year the LEAP 2025.

I believe that all students can and will achieve high academic standards. Thus, I feel the date from end-of-year high-stakes tests, in combination with Louisiana's reading, writing, and language standards guide me in setting high standards for my students and myself. With this said, I do know that every child's ability to demonstrate excellence is different. It is important to know each student's potential and how to push them into the next realm of learning. And so, every year, I learn about my students. I look at their previous data, I assess their strengths, I determine their weaknesses, and I discover their personal interests. I use this information to help them set their own goals. We track our progress together, we struggle together, and we celebrate together. Part of learning is understanding how you grow. And I have learned that every child must feel success in order to want to continue on their learning journey.

During the learning process, we have good days and we have bad days. But, at the end of every day, my educational goals are formed out of a core belief that was instilled in me from a young age. Coming from a family of educators, I learned early in life that it is important to believe in revision. My goal is for every student to understand that revision is essential for growth, academic and personal. Learning is a recursive and reflective process for all, which is the foundation upon which I build all my teaching goals. Just as it is essential that all educators work together to constantly revisit goals and evaluate efforts, students must do the same. Students must be afforded this opportunity because it is through correcting our errors that we learn the most valuable lessons. And accordingly, every student whom I teach knows that they can never be satisfied with their current situation; my students and I must always strive to raise the bar higher.

Finally, everyday I remind myself that students need to know that failure is not an option. I cannot fail in educating my students, just as they cannot fail in their own daily trials. In my classroom, we may struggle, but we do not fail. I believe this is the bottom line in education. Just as I make a promise to my students every year that I will do everything I can to help them grow as learners, they make a promise to me every day to do their very best in all that they do. In my classroom, we all know that learning is not always easy. However, we also constantly remind ourselves that the most rewarding things in life are never truly easy. And no matter how arduous the journey, I find a way to make sure every student is prepared to successfully finish the race.

I believe because of my teaching philosophy and the rigorous goals that I set for my students, my overall EOC proficiency last year was at 97%. Still, 97% is not 100%. And so, this year I have started a new class (which I discuss in another reflection question) to reach that small percentage of students who have experienced academic trials throughout their learning journeys. This year I plan to further move that 3%.

IV. Describe how you demonstrate innovation and leadership qualities that contribute to the work of the profession. Also include if you have invested and inspired colleagues, families, students and the community in efforts which lead to student success.

A leader believes and achieves. My students know that I believe in them. I always tell them that they need to believe in themselves. And that together, we can achieve. By choosing the teaching profession, an educator is saying that they believe in kids. Education is always changing, and thus we must continually strive to navigate and find answers for our kids.

An educational leader must persist in finding solutions that will ensure every child will succeed. As a parent, I am constantly reminded by my family that it takes a village to raise a child. As educators, we are integral members of that village. I have first-hand experience with young struggling students. I worked three years as a teacher in a kindergarten inclusion class. After working three years, I realized I needed to become a voice for these children. But, I also knew actions speak louder than words. So, I entered the high school setting as an advocate for kids who have struggled all along. I wanted to create change for my struggling kindergarteners. Every child can graduate from high school, and if we believe this then we can make this happen. This is the reason I worked with my school administration to create our freshman technical writing course. This course takes a cross-curricular approach to teaching reading and writing to pre-identified struggling ELA students. It serves to close the learning gaps for our freshman and thereby enable their ability to graduate in four years. I work with a special education inclusion teacher and a social studies teacher to give our students applicable cross-curricular writing and reading strategies to make them successful in all coursework, not just ELA. We believe our success is measured every day when students are excited about learning, and when they express their ability to finally feel successful at school. Ultimately, it is my hope that, in four years, I will be sitting front row at every one of my technical writing students' graduations.

Because we believe in kids, it is important that we empower them. Teachers must Promote Ownership, Work, Excellence, and Responsibility. I, along with my principal, spearheaded the development of the freshmen POWER program. Often, we assume our incoming freshman inherently know our high school expectations. Because of our school's rigorous academic programs and close-knit school community, teachers excitedly begin the school year teaching, but as high school teachers, we sometimes forget an important elementary educational concept--we must acclimate our students to their environment. They have to learn to be a part of our village. A year ago, while reflecting on my school's beginning of the year practices, I was brought back to my kindergarten classroom. My kindergarteners arrived on their very first day of school with their new uniforms and first backpacks filled with learning tools eager to travel their roads of endless possibilities. In this reflection, it dawned on me--our freshman are *not* returning high school students, they are kindergarteners. They too are entering a new school donning uniforms with backpacks filled with learning tools. Although some eager and some jaded, they too have endless possibilities that lie before them. However, unlike my kindergarteners, my freshman have already traveled the educational road and have had experiences that influenced their present journey. So even more than my kindergarteners, they need to learn their surroundings to feel secure and ready to take chances. When feeling safe, true learning occurs. They need to be explicitly taught our school's expectations. Importantly, they need to understand their educators are not only there to help them learn, but also help them navigate life. With our POWER program, from the first day of school, new Patriots are taught that they are important members of our school family. We created an individualized mentoring program for every freshman. And, it is because of the POWER team's (1) persistence to make this program work and (2) creation of student-teacher relationships that we are already seeing positive results. Our freshman participation in school activities is at an all-time high, and their grades indicate future success. Thus, by believing and emPOWERing our new students, we are achieving the ultimate goal in education--life readiness.

And, in conclusion, there is NO way that I can write a conclusion statement for the qualities and skills of educators and educational leadership. Our careers are a calling. And this calling is a never-ending, cyclical process of trying to better ourselves for our youth. If we believe, then we will achieve.

Instructional Practice and Reflection

Reflect on your video lesson and respond to the following questions. What was the objective in this lesson? To what extent did students meet the objective? How do you know? How is this lesson connected to your overall goal for students this year? Cite specific examples.

When I plan a lesson, I ask myself: (1) What is my goal in this learning unit? and (2) What is my overall goal for the year? In terms of *Romeo and Juliet*, I used the LDOE's objective: students will understand how multiple aspects of complex characters propel the storyline; further students will identify language patterns and how motifs reveal central ideas. Lastly, they will make connections between the teenage brain and major characters in the play. In terms of my second question, my yearly goal is for students to be independent and successful readers and writers. Not only do I want them to succeed on high-stakes tests, but I want to hear from their future teachers how well-versed they are when communicating, in writing and speech. Therefore, the overarching objective for this lesson is for students to communicate knowledge using one of the most complex forms of expression--writing.

As my students' first high school English teacher, my job is to build a solid reading and writing foundation. Therefore, I find grouping students gives me the opportunity to thoroughly reach multiple objectives quickly. It also allows to me to focus on a small group of students, thus giving me the ability to really track each student's progress. My kids enjoy learning this way. It's fun, fast, differentiated, and tactile. So, this type of lesson is a regular in my classroom.

The overall lesson, a portion of which is evident in the video, encompasses five to six days. Students rotate through three literacy centers, each rotation lasting two days. Day one in each center focuses on compiling textual evidence, and day two in two of the three centers focuses on crafting an essay. This video relays the first day of the last rotation.

In the "Reading for Information" literacy center, students make connections between a nonfiction text about the teenage brain and *Romeo and Juliet*. They determine the purpose of a nonfiction text and discover how a writer supports his claims. They then relate this to *Romeo and Juliet*. On day two, they write an essay that mirrors the Research Simulation Task on LEAP 2025.

In the "Reading Comprehension" center, students are to independently comprehend a complex text. Students track self-selected literary/figurative devices from the play to aid in their total comprehension. Over the course of two days, through informal assessment, students are given mini-tasks to bridge comprehension gaps. For example, a group may go back and re-track the motif of light and darkness and explain its significance. I always remind myself of the importance of this group. I am not a teacher of content, I am a teacher of skill, I am a reading teacher. To be literate is to be able to read independently, and so this group is of central importance.

In the "Literary Analysis" center, students assess character traits, culminating in a five paragraph essay analyzing the traits of a character. I keep these essays, because in my Act IV groupings, students will use their characters to complete a narrative writing task similar to that on LEAP 2025. Additionally, in Act V, students will revise their original characterization essays to explain how these characters propel the plot. This center models how writing and learning are recursive processes.

In reflecting on this lesson and the week of learning in my classroom, I feel my goals were reached. Students were intellectually and independently discussing complex texts. They were making deep connections between the real and written worlds. And finally, they were expressing this knowledge in a tangible form of communication--writing. Are my students prepared for academic life after Ms. Jackie's English I class? Yes, they are. Are my students practicing integral skills for life beyond the walls of academia? Yes, they are. Did any of my students fail at this lesson? No, they did not. I feel my students are making connections between life and literature. They are speaking to each other about complex topics in an intelligent and respectful manner. They are problem-solving and helping one another in the process. And although not every student's demonstration of knowledge looks the same, every student showed me they understood the objectives and could perform the

tasks to the best of their abilities. And just as I expect their learning to be a recursive, reflective process, I must model that reflection. Now, comes the fun part--examining each individual student's learning process and written work, and using this information to push them to their next realm of understanding.