



## Learning Target 4: I can plan effective debriefs.



**Challenge #8:** I always run out of time for the debrief at the end of my lessons. I struggle to prioritize it even though I know it's important.

### TRY THIS: ESTABLISH A NEW ROUTINE

As any teacher can attest, lessons don't always go as planned, and time can be one of the most elusive elements of classroom instruction. There's never enough. Since it happens last in a lesson, the debrief is often the first thing to go when time is tight. However, a good debrief or synthesis helps students name their take-away from the lesson so that they can bring it back in the following lesson and learn more—this is called “transfer” and it's the key to learning how to learn. The debrief is an important 5 or 10 minutes!

If the debrief routinely falls off the map, it might be time to establish some new routines in your classroom:

- Invite a student to be the timekeeper and give the student permission to “stop the train” at least five minutes before the period ends so that you can debrief.
- Teach students to circle up or move to a designated part of the room quickly. When this becomes a routine, you will have more time for the debrief and you and your students will get into the habit.
- If you haven't had time to plan a debrief that is specific to the day's lesson, use debrief questions that are effective for any lesson: “What did you learn today?” “How did you learn it?”
- Develop a repertoire of protocols to use during a debrief, such as Concentric Circles, Think-Pair-Share, or Back-to-Back and Face-to-Face. Using protocols will help ensure that all students have an opportunity to reflect on their learning. Even when you're short on time, all voices can be heard.

An effective debrief is the last chance during a daily lesson for a teacher to check for understanding, help students synthesize learning, and promote reflection so that students can monitor their own progress

—*from Leaders of Their Own Learning, p. 74.*

### TRY THIS: DEBRIEF DURING THE LESSON (YOU DON'T HAVE TO WAIT FOR THE END)

It is not always necessary to think of a debrief as a separate and distinct final five minutes of a lesson. In fact, sometimes synthesizing learning and getting a true sense of student progress toward a learning target can take much longer and is a valuable lesson (or chunk of a lesson) in and of itself. What follows is a sample script to give you a feel for what this might look like.

#### Sample Script

Third-grade learning target: *I can represent my mathematical thinking using both a model and a number sentence.*

**TEACHER:** Let's circle up on the carpet to discuss your progress.

**TEACHER:** Carlos, can you read our learning target for us again?

**CARLOS:** Our learning target was "I can represent my mathematical thinking using both a model and a number sentence."

**TEACHER:** Show me a thumbs up if you think you met the target today.

**STUDENTS:** (All but three show a thumbs up)

**TEACHER:** Karen, how do you know you met the target? Can you share your math journal with us and explain your mathematical thinking?

**KAREN:** (showing her math journal) I made a picture of squares next to each other to show each inch in the placemat. That gave me 15 inches in a row and 10 rows. It took me a long time to make 150 squares! Then I did it the short way. I just wrote  $15 \times 10$  and added the 0 to the 15 to get 150.

**TEACHER:** Help me understand. Did you add the 0 to the 15?

**KAREN:** No, I mean I multiplied 15 times 10. I moved the 1 over to the hundreds place, the 5 to the 10s place, and the 0 in the ones place.

**TEACHER:** Turn and talk to a partner about Karen's model. Is this how you made your model? How is it the same and how is it different?

**TEACHER:** (after a few minutes): William, I noticed that you didn't put your thumb up. Did talking with your partner help you feel better about representing your thinking using a model? Tell us about your model. How was it the same or different than Karen's?

**WILLIAM:** Actually, it was the same! I didn't really understand before that the model could be a drawing. I thought it had to be using blocks or something like that.

**TEACHER:** Kaila, you also had your thumb up. Which of Karen's strategies do you think is a more efficient way to get the area of the placemat?

**KAILA:** Probably the number sentence. You get the same answer, but the squares take forever.

**TEACHER:** We were working on perseverance today. What helped you meet our learning target about mathematical thinking?

**ERIK:** I got started right away, so I'd have enough time to build my model. And it helped me to work with Carlos. He's a good explainer.

**TEACHER:** So when you come to math tomorrow, we're going to use the number sentences again, but this time we'll have even bigger numbers to practice with! Be sure you do what Erik did. Choose a partner who helps your thinking rather than someone who distracts you.



**Challenge #9:** When debriefing a lesson, I'll have students turn and talk or reflect with a peer, but I'm not capturing what they've learned.

### **TRY THIS:** USE EXIT TICKETS STRATEGICALLY

Exit tickets are a great way for you to take something with you from the lesson that will help you assess individual students' understanding. With this evidence of student understanding in hand, you can more effectively plan subsequent lessons. It's important to be clear about the purpose of an exit ticket so that it gives you the information you need. You want to avoid exit tickets that are the same every day, that feel like a rote routine, or that are used as an accountability structure (e.g., "Your *completed* worksheet is your exit ticket from class").