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Please enjoy this complimentary excerpt from *Planning Powerful Instruction, Grades 2-5*. In this excerpt, Chapter 3 introduces how to use the empower canvas for teaching and learning.

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# Chapter 3

## INTRODUCING THE EMPOWER CANVAS

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

**How do we empower our units and lessons for transformational teaching and learning?**

Architects capture their art in blueprints, painters in sketches, composers in scores. On what “canvas” can teachers capture and express *their* art?

Usually, an educator’s “canvas” is whatever unit or lesson plan template their district, school, or curriculum provides. This template, in theory, should line up with both the criteria for **flow** and the **mental models of teaching and learning** (see Chapters 1 and 2) that promote deep engagement and learning. Unfortunately, the traditional unit or lesson plan seldom meets these standards.

Various educational approaches, from project-based learning to balanced literacy to the workshop model, can all be supercharged by adding EMPOWER elements. However, collegial conversations around curriculum are hard to achieve when everyone has a different understanding of and language for their instructional designs. Since all of these pedagogies share a common goal—empowering learners to become expert thinkers and doers—then it follows that they should all contain the elements of EMPOWER, which represents a research-based “filter” for *all* teaching and learning (see introduction, Figure I.1).

For the sake of consistency, clarity, and ease across grade levels, subjects, and districts, we advocate that teachers use an **EMPOWER canvas**, a one-page form, to formally capture all the necessary elements of an effective teaching and learning design. This way everyone is on the same page, both literally and figuratively.

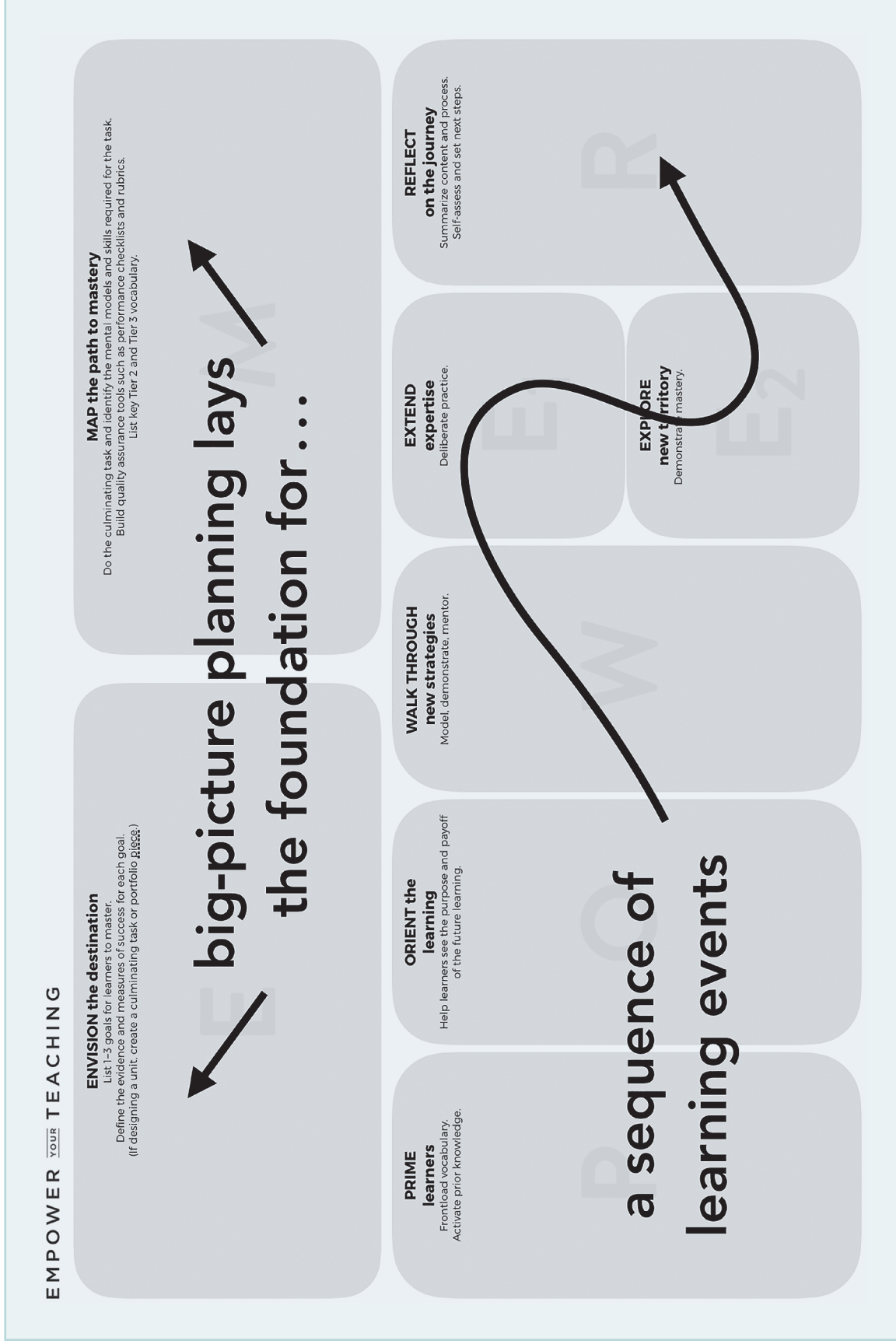
### INTRODUCING THE EMPOWER CANVAS

The EMPOWER canvas is meant to serve as a convenient tool to reinforce the seven *must-make moves* that expert educators enact in designing effective and transformational instruction. The framework naturally organizes into two categories: behind-the-scenes, big-picture planning and learner-facing instructional implementation, as demonstrated in Figure 3.1. Digging one level deeper, Figure 3.2

#### PLC Connection

Use the EMPOWER canvas (see Figure 3.1) as a tool for designing quality professional development (PD). Just as with classroom instruction, when planning PD there is behind-the-scenes planning as well as learner-facing instructional planning. EMPOWER will help you to begin with the end in mind, considering the goals of the PD and the tools, questions, strategies, and mental models that will support your adult learners to succeed, as well as in planning a powerful sequence of learning events. As we explore in this chapter, the EMPOWER canvas can be used at the unit and lesson levels and, thus, works for long-term PD planning as well as planning individual PD experiences.

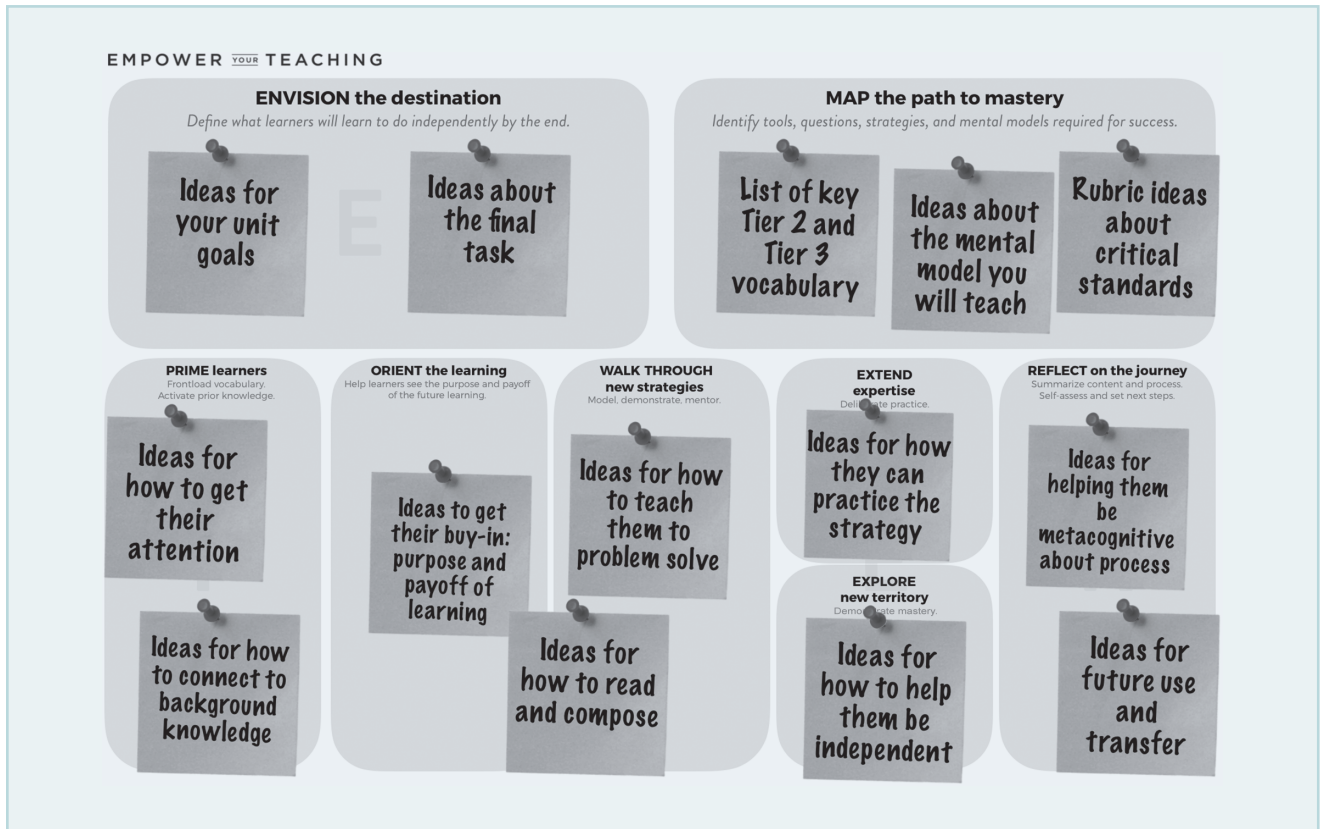
■ FIGURE 3.1: TWO CATEGORIES OF THE EMPOWER FRAMEWORK



*Planning Powerful Instruction, Grades 2–5: 7 Must-Make Moves to Transform How We Teach—and How Students Learn* by Jeffrey D. Wilhelm, Jackie Miller, Christopher Butts, and Adam Fachler. Copyright © 2020 by Corwin Press, Inc. All rights reserved.

breaks down what we have briefly explained about each phase of the framework in previous chapters.

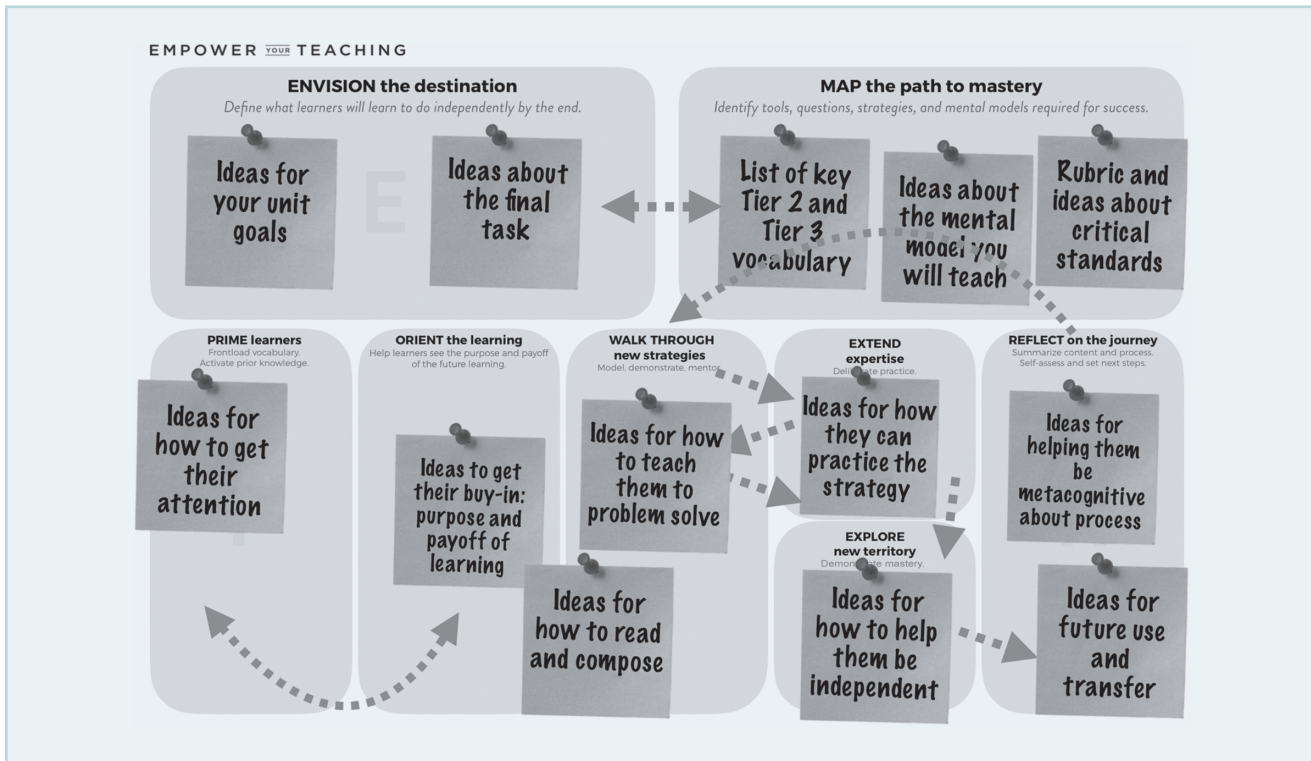
■ FIGURE 3.2: PHASES OF THE EMPOWER FRAMEWORK



Educators often have personal approaches to planning and benefit from using different entry points that make sense to them. Of course, it's still important that we begin with the end in mind, because knowing our destination allows us to choose the best path for getting there. The EMPOWER tool is called a *canvas* instead of a template to emphasize its flexibility. Educators begin with the end in mind by *envisioning* and *mapping*, although they often bounce between these two “big-picture” planning pursuits that complement each other. As educators proceed with their planning, they consider lessons or events early in the unit to *prime* their learners and *orient* student thinking to the purposes, payoffs, and big ideas. For the remaining lessons in the unit, educators bounce back and forth between *walk-throughs* of new strategies and *extension* and *exploration* opportunities (real-world transfer and performance tasks) for learners. Ongoing *reflections* (after a lesson or series of lessons, for example) are strategically interwoven throughout the lesson for the teacher and learners to monitor their growth over time (see Figure 3.3). The following chapters provide many models of the EMPOWER canvas to help you think through the phases of EMPOWER as you begin to create your own.



■ FIGURE 3.3: FLEXIBILITY OF THE EMPOWER CANVAS



Educators who wish to build a new canvas work through each stage of the framework, populating it with ideas that can be captured via sticky notes or by writing on a physical or digital canvas.