

Real-Time Coaching to Strengthen Student Understanding

Learning accelerates when gaps are surfaced and addressed on the spot. At Henderson Collegiate, leaders use tools and practices from Relay GSE to coach teachers on how to check for and address misconceptions in real time—seen here as Principal Supervisor Carice Sanchez guides Principal Taro Shigenobu in coaching a biology teacher on a genetics lesson.



1. Aligning on Focus: Examining the lesson plan, related standards, and student data, Sanchez and Shigenobu align on:

- What key understanding are students likely to struggle with?
- How can the teacher check for and ensure that understanding?
- How will he coach the teacher to do so?

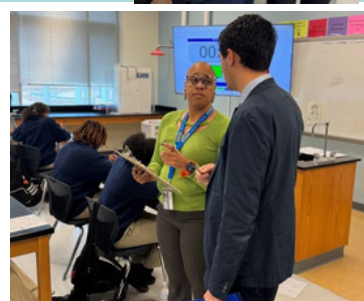
They zero in on epigenetics—when environmental factors affect gene expression—and script how to coach the teacher to solidify the key idea.



2. Checking for Engagement and Understanding: After entering the classroom, Shigenobu makes two laps around the students to check:

- Are all engaged, with notebooks out and on task?
- Do their notes and discussions show evidence of understanding?

He confers with Sanchez after each lap; they agree students are engaged but unclear that DNA stays the same even when environmental factors alter gene expression, and plan how he'll prompt the teacher to clarify it.



3. Coaching with Prompts: While students continue working, Shigenobu checks in with the teacher to clarify her next move, asking:

- What evidence do you see of students' understanding?
- How will you bring them back to ensure they've mastered it?

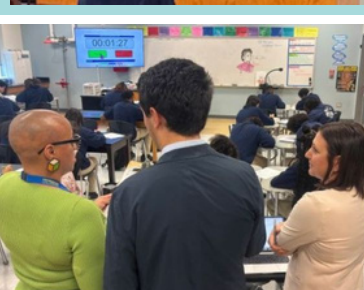
They agree students are still unclear on how epigenetics differs from mutations, and the teacher shares her plan to reinforce the concept before moving on.



4. Coaching by Modeling: The teacher asks students to define epigenetics, but Shigenobu knows more is needed and briefly leads the class. He has students discuss why a clone might not look like the original, then asks:

- "With a mutation, what happens to the DNA?" (Students: "It changes.")
- "With epigenetics, is the DNA changed?" (Students: "It's the same.")

To drive home the point, he flicks the light switch on and off: "The gene stays the same, but the environment turns on or off how it's expressed."



5. Locking in the Learning: After his model, Shigenobu huddles with Sanchez and the teacher, asking the latter:

- "What did you see and hear me do?"

The teacher names his key moves, prompting Sanchez to praise her quick uptake. Her feedback to Shigenobu: Offer to model a practice as soon as it would help. All three see the lesson as a win. Says Shigenobu: "We knew what the most productive struggle would be and we were able to close it."