

TRACE: A Protocol for Interpreting Evidence in Educational Contexts

What this is

TRACE is a structured protocol for examining how evidence is produced, interpreted, and used across educational contexts, including AI-mediated contexts. It supports more careful claims about learning and performance and more consistent decision-making in practice.

When to use it

Apply TRACE at routine points of interpretation, such as:

- reviewing student work
- responding to AI-generated feedback
- planning next instructional steps
- evaluating evidence used for decisions

The TRACE Protocol

T – Track the Process

Where did the work occur?

What role did AI-supported tools or other resources play in generating, revising, organizing, or selecting content?

R – Represent the Thinking

What aspects of reasoning are observable in the work?

What remains implicit or difficult to observe?

A – Attribute the Contribution

What can reasonably be attributed to the student?

What contributions came from tools, supports, resources, or collaboration?

C – Calibrate the Claim

What does this evidence reasonably support?

Where might interpretation extend beyond what is directly observable in the work?

E – Evaluate the Use

Was AI or other support used in a way that align with the intended learning or instructional goal?

What adjustments might strengthen that alignment?

A Minimum Use Option

If time is limited, focus on:

- Attribution (A)
- Calibration (C)

These two steps alone can improve the quality of interpretation and reduce over-claiming.

TRACE Protocol

A Key Consideration

In contexts that are AI-mediated or in which other tools and resources are available for students to use, evidence does not function in the same way as in contexts where such tools and resources are not available.

Interpretations depend not only on what is produced, but on:

- how it was produced
- what is observable
- how contributions are distributed

TRACE supports more consistent interpretation under these conditions.

What TRACE is not

TRACE is not:

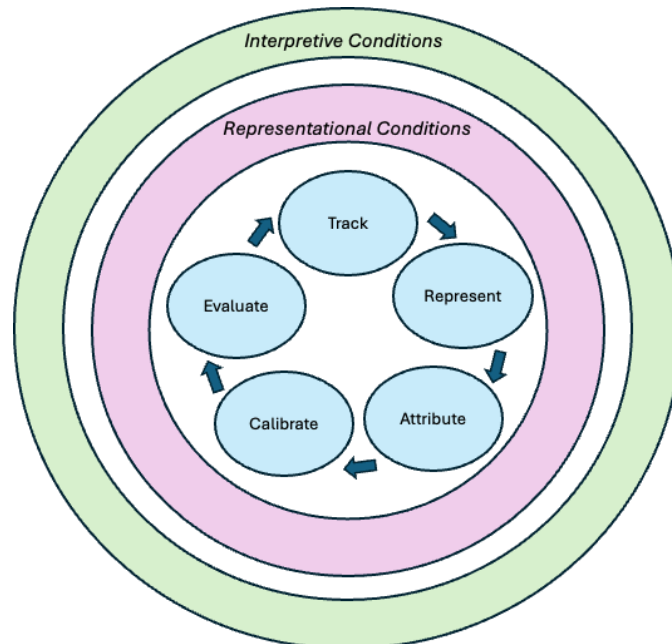
- a rubric
- a scoring tool
- a checklist for completeness

TRACE is a structured approach to improving how evidence is interpreted and used in decision-making.

For whom

- Teachers and instructional coaches
- School and district leaders
- Assessment developers and researchers

TRACE Protocol for Interpreting Evidence in Educational Contexts



TRACE is a structured interpretive routine operating within representational and interpretive conditions that shape what is observable in the work and what claims can be supported.

This tool is part of a broader set of *edblogcast* resources focused on responsible, research-informed practice.

If you have questions or would like more information, you can contact team@edblogcast.com