Abstract
Analyzing Instruction in Mathematics using the TRU framework (AIM-TRU) is a research-practice partnership that is investigating the pressing problem of supporting teachers in increasing their capacity to implement high-quality instructional materials in the classroom with fidelity. Drawing upon the design of research-practice partnership, the practice of analyzing instruction using the TRU framework is a model for research-practice partnerships that can be used to support teachers. Students engaged in carefully constructed tasks that are grounded in research on what makes for powerful classrooms. Implications for future research include the need for more research on how to support teachers in implementing high-quality instructional materials in the classroom with fidelity.

The capacity to use curriculum well
As recent work shows, one of the critical factors in supporting teachers to engage the curriculum with integrity in the classroom is supporting teachers in understanding not just the curricula itself but also the way that it is designed in order to optimally use the materials within the context of their classroom (Chapin, 2011). Remillard & Kim, 2017). The AIM-TRU research-practice partnership was founded on this problem by developing a coherent system involving a video-based learning cycle focused on the investigation of the use of high-quality instructional materials in the classroom grounded in the Teaching for Robust Understanding (TRU) framework. Here, we introduce the TRU framework and Formative Assessment Lessons (FALs) before talking about the AIM-TRU learning cycle in the next session.

In order to build a framework to discuss teachers making teachers more mathematically powerful, Schoenfeld distilled certain core ideas found over multiple years watching classrooms, resulting in the development of the Teaching for Robust Understanding (TRU) framework, which has five dimensions that are essential in creating powerful learning environments and “necessary and sufficient for the analysis of effective classroom instruction” (Schoenfeld, 2013, p. 607). These dimensions are: (a) The Mathematics, (b) Cognitive Demand, (c) Equitable Access to Content, (d) Agency, Ownership, and Agency, and (e) Formative Assessment.

If it is known what makes for powerful classrooms, then an important step would be to design materials aligned with the TRU framework in order to support teachers in creating rich learning environments. The first set of materials developed by the AIM-TRU research-practice partnership with TRU were 100 “Formative Assessment Lessons” designed to support the kind of rich instruction proposed by the five dimensions of TRU as well as the Common Core State Standards. These lessons, which span middle and high school, are designed so they can be inserted within the curriculum that teachers are currently using to help teachers formatively assess students by having them engage in carefully constructed tasks that are grounded in research on what students find difficult (Schoenfeld, 2014). When FALs are implemented with integrity, learning environments that are well-aligned with the five dimensions of TRU are created.

About the AIM-TRU Learning Cycle
Participants engage in the AIM-TRU learning cycle by focusing on one lesson and its associated video case. Each session begins by starting to think about the big mathematical ideas behind the lesson. This may take the form of understanding the diversity of representations within the lesson, or placing it in the context of what comes before and what comes after. Once participants have started to think about the central mathematical ideas, they then grapple with the same mathematical task in the formative assessment lesson that videotaped through the TRU classroom. This practice of doing the math before video watching is similar to other video-based professional development models (Borko, Koehler, Jacobs, & Stago, 2011). After participants have worked through the task, discussed the various solution pathways that students could take, and relate those solution to the central mathematical ideas, they gain context for the video case, which is often taken from a participant’s classroom. At this point, participants watch a short video clip where students are engaged in mathematical talk as they grapple with the task. The video case is discussed using one of the dimensions of TRU in order to give video watching a perspective on the classroom that is not purely focused on the mathematics of the task. Finally, the participants and facilitators plan the next session.

Participants also take the role of members of the video case team (Figure 1), where they volunteer their classroom as a site for case development as they implement one of the formative assessment lessons. In this role, teachers work with the research team to select the segment of video in order to use the video case, as well as the dimension of TRU that they feel would yield the richest conversation with other teachers.

While we encourage videotaping to occur between sessions, we understand that there are contexts where that would not be possible. In order to help, we have a built a video case library that others may pull from. For more information on our learning cycle, please see our supplementary files for a video explaining our cycle, a few tips, and other materials.

Methodology
The AIM-TRU learning cycle was implemented in three different sites: Buffalo, Chicago, and New York City. In each site, the model is led by a pair of teacher facilitators, allowing the principal investigators at each site to become participant observers. In New York City and Chicago, one group met during year one, while in Buffalo, two groups (one representing middle school and another representing high school teachers) met. Each site meets around once a month, and working through the AIM-TRU learning cycle takes around 2.5 hours. Overall, 8 teacher facilitators led the AIM-TRU learning cycle for 42 public middle and high school teachers.

A pre-post survey was conducted in order to understand how confident teachers felt about their understanding of the instructional materials as well as how the TRU framework. The pre-survey asked how frequently they used the curriculum in their classroom. A paired sample t-test or Wilcoxon signed rank test was used as appropriate considering whether the data was parametric. Classroom observations were also taken, with results based on the TRU Math Rubric forthcoming as a part of later work of the grant.

Discussion
Our early work with the AIM-TRU learning cycle involved using a conjecture map in order to iterate on the design for maximum effect (Russell, DiNapoli, & Murphy, submitted). However, an important part of the design-based research paradigm is putting theory in harm’s way (Brown, 1992), and ensuring at the same time that the facilitators’ goals are met. In the first year of our work, our pre-post survey gave us the earliest opportunity to validate our design by seeing an increase in teachers perception of their capacity to enact FALs within their classrooms. It showed us that teachers were not only gaining in knowledge of the curriculum, but by increasing their pedagogical design capacity, they were also increasing the likelihood that they would use the curriculum in their classrooms.

The AIM-TRU research-practice partnership looks forward to continued work to validate the model by drawing from participants’ classrooms. However, we don’t want to undervalue the importance of these preliminary results: through our initial model, we get our teachers invested in the model and this helped them feel more confident in their ability to understand and implement the curriculum in their own classrooms with an integrity gained by their understanding of a framework that supports mathematics teaching. Not only this, but through greater understanding, they are also more likely to use the curriculum in the first place.

References

Acknowledgments
This project is funded by the National Science Foundation, grant numbers 1908311, 1908185, and 1908319. Any opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in these materials are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the views of the National Science Foundation.

Figure 1. The AIM-TRU Learning Cycle
Figure 2. PrePost Survey results from Year 1 around knowledge of TRU and Formative Assessment Lessons
Figure 3. PrePost Survey results from Year 1 around use of Formative Assessment Lessons