Uncommon Schools

EXCELLENCE NORTH★STAR COLLEGIATE TRUE NORTH PREPARATORY

INCREASING RIGOR THROUGHOUT THE LESSON: DATA-DRIVEN CLASSROOM BEST PRACTICES

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1. **Re-Write/ Tighten Objectives with Assessments in Mind**
   - Connect objective to how the students will be assessed
   - Write "know/do" objectives: Students will know _____ by doing _____.
   - Look at test questions beforehand to be sure the skills assessed on the test were worked into the daily lesson
   - Write an assessment of the skills immediately after the objective, at the top of the lesson plan
   - First write assessment questions that align to objective; then break the objective into smaller chunks that will ensure mastery of all the skills needed to answer the question correctly
   - Use verbs from Bloom's taxonomy to ensure rigorous objective

2. **Do Now (brief 5-10 minute individual exercise to start class)**
   - Use Do Now as a re-teach tool: write questions that students struggled to master on the last interim assessment
   - Use mixed-format questions for a skill: multiple choice, short answer, open-ended, etc.
   - Organize questions sequentially according to difficulty
   - Spiral objectives/ skills/ questions from everything previously learned to keep student learning sharp
   - Develop Do Now tracking sheet for teachers and students that shows student performance on the skills in each Do Now
   - Make Do Nows that look like a test question and make sure it is reviewed in class
   - Observe students answers during Do Now and note kids with wrong answers to follow-up with them during oral review
   - Add multiple choice questions to Do Now to allow real-time assessment
   - Add how/why questions (e.g., Why did you choose this answer? How do you know your answer is correct?) for different levels of learners and to push thinking
   - Revisit yesterday's objectives in the Do Now
   - Collect and grade four straight Do Nows, and for the 5th day let students correct their previous four Do Nows for extra points towards their Do Now grades

3. **Questioning to Checking for Understanding & Increase Engagement:**
   - Develop whole class responses to student answer (e.g. snap if you agree, stomp if you don't) to engage 100% participation
   - Use cold call: avoid just calling on students with hands raised
   - Move from "Ping Pong" to "Volleyball:" instead of teacher responding to every student answer, get other students to respond to each other: "Do you agree with him?" "Why is that answer correct/incorrect?" "What would you add?"
   - Script questions in advance of the lesson to make sure they scaffold appropriately and address rigor at varied levels
   - Have observer record teacher questions: highlight where students are succeeding and where they can grow

Student Error: Techniques for Helping Students Encounter the Right Answer

- Have student who struggled initially repeat correct answer produced by the class

- Use whiteboards to have every student write down response to question: whole class shows answers simultaneously so teacher can immediately check to see how many students answered correctly
- Write questions in plan to specific students who are struggling with a standard; jot down their responses in the plans during class
- Note in your book or lesson plan what questions students answer incorrectly; call on them again when you re-visit that sort of question later in the week
- Choose "No opt out": do not let student off the hook when struggling with an answer
- After getting to the right answer, have student articulate their original error and how to avoid making the same error in the future

"Think" Ratio: Techniques to Reduce Teacher Talk & Push Student Thinking

- Require students to support answers with evidence from the text
- Feign ignorance (e.g., write wrong answer that student gives on the board, let students find the error rather than correcting it yourself; pretend you don't even know that the answer is wrong)
- Ask students: "put it in your own words" about a classroom definition, concept, etc.
- Reword question to force student to think on feet about same skill
- Use Wait Time to give more students the chance to think through the answer
- Model "Right is right": press to get the 100% correct answer
- Check for student use of specific strategies and not just correct answers
- Ask "what if" question: "What if" I took away this information from the problem, how would you approach it?

4. Differentiated Instruction: Teaching Students at Different Levels

- Create leveled questions for assessments
- Include a Bonus section of challenging questions
- Utilize different Do Nows, worksheets, etc.
- Use data (tracking sheets, IA, exit tickets) to determine the degree of scaffolding/extra support each student needs
- Group students according to the skills they need to develop
- Communicate and collaborate with Skills Room/Special Education teachers to develop appropriate scaffolding for special needs students
- Implement station work
- Create individual "work contracts"—student has clear path of what s/he is working on
- Use Do Now, exit tickets and assessment data to drive small group re-teach
- Create assignments with menu options by level (easy, medium, hard) – students can choose or teacher can assign
- Plan a seating chart so that struggling students are seated where you have easy access to support throughout the class
- Have observers sit by a lower-achieving student during an observation to provide extra support

5. Peer-to-Peer Support Strategies

- Observe student work carefully during independent work – leverage strong students to help weaker students determine right answer during review of assignment
- Have students teach parts of the lesson to small groups of their peers
- Have students run stations
- Train peer tutors –teach student tutors how to ask questions instead of giving answers and how to get tutee to do most of the talking

- Think, pair, share: have students think of answer, talk with partner and then share as a large group
- Turn & talk: students turn towards a partner and explain answers to a question
- Peer to group: student models think-aloud
- Implement peer editing and revision
- Develop study groups that jigsaw activities and content
- Create mentoring relationships: 12th to 10th grade, 11th to 9th grade, etc.
- Share strong anchor papers and have students lead other students in identifying how their essays have errors

6. Student Self-Evaluation:

- Create weekly skills check with a tracking chart: students track their own progress on each skill
- Go over tests afterwards – "Why is choice A wrong," etc.
- Have students grade own paper based on rubric
- Give students independent practice worksheets with answers on the back so that students can check their own work once completed
- Create a cumulative rubric (add skills as taught): have students do periodic self-evaluations with the rubric

7. Exit Tickets (brief class-ending activity to check for understanding of that day's lesson)

- Create a tracking sheet to match the exit ticket
- Assess the same skills through varied methods
- Align format to interim assessment
- Grade immediately
- Immediately follow up (breakfast, lunch, home-room)
- Answer essential questions on Exit Ticket
- Follow up data from Exit Ticket with following day's Do Now
- Use exit ticket to determine small group re-teach
- Leverage instructional leaders to design effective exit tickets for newer teachers
- Monitor whether exit tickets reflect scope and sequence

8. Homework

- Develop homework center targeted on specific skills identified by interim assessments
- Review problem areas within homework assignment in class soon after assignment
- Have students fix homework errors and teach them how to scrutinize errors
- Make tracking sheet by skill
- Incorporated spiraled review in homework assignments: include questions/tasks from previously learned standards
- Create leveled homework (student-specific)
- Design homework that is aligned with interim assessments, state test, SAT
- Use homework for open-book quizzes
- Incentivize homework completion with class-wide competition or school-wide competition
- Include above-grade-level challenge problems
- Differentiate homework based on exit ticket results