

Increasing Rigor Throughout the Lesson

Data-Driven Classroom Best Practices

1. Objectives: Rewrite and tighten with assessments in mind.
 - Connect objective to how the students will be assessed.
 - Write "know and 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 the 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 that the objective is rigorous.
2. Do Now (five- or ten-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, and so on.
 - Organize questions sequentially according to difficulty.
 - Spiral objectives, skills, and 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 they are 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 why and how questions (for example, 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 fifth day let students correct their previous four Do Nows for extra points toward their Do Now grades.
3. Question to check for understanding and increase engagement.
 - Develop whole-class responses to student answer (for example, snap your fingers if you agree, stomp if you don't) to engage 100 percent participation.

Increasing Rigor Throughout the Lesson (*continued*)

- Use cold call: avoid just calling on students with hands raised.
- Move from ping-pong to volleyball: instead of responding to every student answer yourself, get students to respond to each other: "Do you agree with Sam?" "Why is that answer correct or 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 an 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 eventually 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 revisit that sort of question later in the week.
- Choose "No opt out": do not let student off the hook when struggling with an answer.

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

- Require students to support answers with evidence from the text.
 - Feign ignorance (for example, write a 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, and so on.
 - Reword question to force students to think on their feet about the 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 percent correct answer.
 - Check for student use of specific strategies and not just correct answers.
 - Ask "what if" questions: "What if" I took away this information from the problem, how would you approach it?
4. Differentiate instruction — teach students at different levels.
- Create leveled questions for assessments.
 - Include a bonus section of challenging questions.

- Prepare different Do Nows, worksheets, and so on for students at different levels.
 - Use data (tracking sheets, interim assessments, exit tickets) to determine the degree of scaffolding and extra support each student needs.
 - Group students according to the skills they need to develop.
 - Communicate and collaborate with skills room and special education teachers to develop appropriate scaffolding for special needs students.
 - Implement station work.
 - Create individual “work contracts”—so students have a clear path of what they are working on.
 - Use Do Now, exit tickets, and assessment data to drive small-group re-teach sessions.
 - Create assignments with menu options by level (easy, medium, hard)—students can choose or teacher can assign.
 - Have observers sit by lower-achieving students during an observation to provide extra support.
5. Peer-to-peer support strategies.
- Observe student work carefully during independent work—enlist 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 and talk: students turn toward 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: twelfth to tenth grade, eleventh to ninth grade, and so on.
6. Student self-evaluation.
- Create weekly skills check with a tracking chart: students track their own progress on each skill.
 - Go over tests after grading them—“Why is choice A wrong?” and similar questions.
 - Have students grade own papers based on rubric.
 - Give students independent practice worksheets with answers on the back so that students can check their own work once completed.

Increasing Rigor Throughout the Lesson (*continued*)

- Create a cumulative rubric (adding 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.
 - Engage instructional leaders to design effective exit tickets for newer teachers.
 - Monitor whether exit tickets reflect scope and sequence.
8. Homework:
- Develop homework center targeting 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.
 - Incorporate spiraled review in homework assignments: include questions and 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.
 - Encourage homework completion with classwide or schoolwide competition.
 - Include above-grade-level challenge problems.