Right Start Newsletter

Secondary Edition March, 2008

Help every student write an A paper

It's important for students to be writing, but a pile of ungraded essays can ruin your plans for Sunday afternoon.

English teacher, Denise Morton of Moutain View High School in El Monte, California, suggests assigning a whole-class essay at the completion of a unit.

Here's how it works:

1. The entire class works together to write the introductory paragraph. Morton guides them to makes sure they have a valid thesis.
2. The class breaks into six groups. Each group writes a paragraph on an assigned topic derived from the thesis. Morton also requires students to include at least two quotations to support their topics.
3. Each group uses markers to write its paragraph on a large page of newsprint.
4. The paragraphs are then posted in order on the walls of the classroom.
5. Students edit the paragraphs as a class.
6. Each student makes a final copy.

Morton says she then has "thirty-five copies of a well-written essay for their portfolios, and I only have to grade it once." Her students have fun working together, finding quotes, correcting grammar and writing sentences.

It's a lifesaver for Morton and it's also a great way to engage students of all abilities in the writing process.

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Contact: Denise Morton, Mountain View High School, 2900 Parkway Drive, El Monte, CA 91732, 626-258-4660.

Monitor the pace of your teaching

Have you ever been halfway through a lesson and noticed that you had "lost" your students? Perhaps you need to adjust your pace.

To keep students engaged:

- Check your "teaching tempo." If possible, videotape yourself teaching a class. Then ask yourself, "Did I talk too fast?" "Did I repeat too often?" "Was my voice animated?" "Would I have been bored?"
- Watch for nonverbal cues that indicate students are distracted.
- Break up longer activities. Next time you show a film, stop at a key point and start a discussion.
- Give students a break if the lesson is more than 30 minutes.
- Vary the type of instruction. Move from a 20-minute lecture to 15 minutes of small-group discussions to 10 minutes of individual work.
- Don't overwhelm students with paperwork. Expect students to complete worksheets, but not for an entire period.

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Source: Vernon F. Jones and Louise S. Jones, *Comprehensive Classroom Management: Creating Communities of Support and Solving Problems*, ISBN: 0-205-31850-9 (Allyn and Bacon, 1-800-666-9433, www.ablongman.com).

Use RAP for reading comprehension

Teaching specific learning strategies to students with disabilities is one way to help them succeed. If reading comprehension is a challenge, teach them the following RAP method:

R • Read the paragraph.
A • Ask questions about the content.
P • Paraphrase the content.

To help students put this strategy into action, create a poster that reminds them of each step. Introduce the three steps. Then model the strategy by reading a paragraph with the students, formulating your own questions and paraphrasing the content.

Create a worksheet for students to complete as they read an assignment. Include spaces for them to identify the main idea and supporting details in each paragraph.

Check how the strategy is working after a day or two. When students have practiced for several days, they will be able to draw on the strategy for other reading assignments.

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Source: William N. Bender, *Differentiating Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities: Best Teaching Practices for General and Special Educators*, ISBN: 0-76194-517-2 (Corwin Press, 1-800-233-9936, www.corwinpress.com).

Set up classroom to support all students

You strive to provide instruction that meets the needs of all your students. But do you set up your classroom to support differentiated instruction, too?

Consider the following tools to help learners with different needs:

- Desks. Arrange your room so you can quickly move desks from a lecture setup to small discussion circles. Set one desk aside in a "quiet zone" for

students who are easily distracted.

- Centers. This tried-and-true elementary concept may also work for students in a secondary classroom.
- Textbooks. Build a collection with different reading levels.
- Computers. Bookmark appropriate websites in languages other than English. Once students understand lessons in their own languages, they can go on to gain understanding in English.
- DVD and CD players. Visual and auditory learners who may struggle with information in print may gain understanding when they can use their seeing and hearing senses.

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Source: Carol Ann Tomlinson and Jay McTighe, *Integrating Differentiated Instruction and Understanding by Design: Connecting Content and Kids*, ISBN: 1-4166-0284-4 (Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, 1-800-933-2723, www.ascd.org).

REMINDER

Please remember to keep your GCS Professional Folder updated. Please be sure to keep all the documentation from this year. The documents that should be in your BT1 folder are listed below. Your third administrative observation should be completed by April 15th. Your administrator may choose to do an unannounced third observation. The only observation that should have been announced was your first one.

As a BT1, you should have 3 administrative observations, 1 peer observation from another career teacher other than your mentor, a summative evaluation, an IGP, and your mentor log. North Carolina requires that you demonstrate continuous professional growth each BT year. The easiest way to document this growth is to earn a minimum of 2 CEUs between July, 2007 and June, 2008 and have it documented on the GCS Professional Development site. You should keep documentation for each BT year.

Documents That Should Be Included For First Year (BT1) Teachers
Mentor Log
FODA 1- Sept. 30th – Oct. 30th Observation 1
FODA 2- Jan. 15th Observation 2
FODA 3-April 15th Observation 3
Teacher (Peer) Evaluation
Summative Evaluation -April
IGP for Year 1
Documentation of Continuous Professional Growth (Example: Transcript from GCS Professional Development Site or GCS Professional Development Log

REMINDER

The 10 month payroll cycle for the 2007-08 school year is August 31, 2007 through May 31, 2007 even though the 2007-08 employment term is August 22, 2007 through June 16, 2008. To provide employees with a full check each month, it is necessary to pre-pay employees. Unless you chose the 12 month salary option or you work in a school that has an alternate school calendar, your last payroll check for the 2007-08 school year will be May 31st, even though you are required to work days in June to complete the 10 month employment term. We thought this might be a helpful reminder as you budget for the coming months.

Right Start Office – 370-8098

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Induction Support Coaches

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Karen Cannon	**Beth Koziol**
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We have moved from Eugene St. to:

Office of Induction and Success
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