Fairfield's C&I Update

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Six Things We Say with Good Intentions, But...

Have you ever said something, with the best of intentions, but it wasn't understood the way you hoped? Eric Fritz is an assistant principal at River Bend Middle School in Loudoun County, Virginia. He previously taught seventh and eighth grade English, and he completely understands this feeling. As a matter of fact, Eric has written about six thing educators often say to students, which may leave them feeling, well, not the way intended.

The following is his article published October 2018 on amle.org.

At first glance, the six statements below seem common; and it is easy to argue how they could have a positive impact on students. The purpose of this article is for educators to think about their practices and how common "help" can easily reduce student agency and enthusiasm. With that said, think twice before uttering the following:

"Let's do a quick review before the quiz."
Teachers often say that this allows students to seek clarification before tests and quizzes. If we are completely honest, our motivation is that we want our students to score well. However, what typically happens is that teachers reteach and remind their students of the content moments before passing out the assessment. Students now have the information stored in their working memory; they are able to regurgitate it for the day (or class period) so to appear to have understanding, yet they quickly forget it. When teachers make this a part of their practice, students learn that they don't have to review new information over and over, which is how it becomes embedded in their long-term memory. This helps explain why students earn A's in class; yet, they still fail end of course state tests. More importantly, it affects students' ability to truly learn the material.

Instead, frequently assess students with both low stakes checks that are not graded along with quizzes, tests, essays, projects, etc. that do impact grades. Although I would not recommend "pop quizzes," students should not have an opportunity to cram facts and details into their working memories so they get a good score. Even better, teachers should begin classes with an assessment (whether graded or not) to use the results for targeted instruction.

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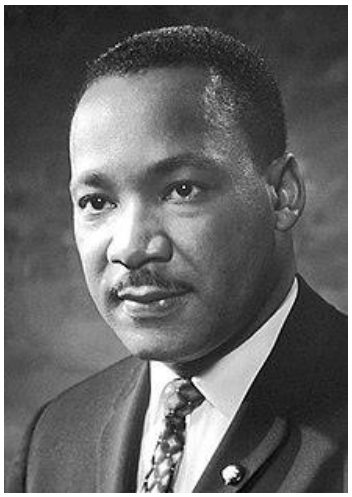
The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character - that is the goal of true education.

Martin Luther King, Jr.



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"Let me help you."
Of course teachers should help students. However, students learn through struggle. For students to have deep learning experiences, they must think critically, which entails that students find their own answers to questions through research, reasoning, and investigation. As Carol Dweck details in *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success*, students must embrace challenges and temporary failures before they truly develop a passion and skill for learning.

Even though I would suspect that everyone reading this article has heard of growth vs. fixed mindsets, teachers still have difficulty watching students struggle with new concepts or higher-level thinking. They quickly "rescue" students by providing guidance, direction, or even answers. Teachers often err on the side of protecting their students' self-esteem, which is short-sighted and ultimately detrimental. Ask any athlete about beating a superior team vs. beating a weak team. Ask any musician about mastering a difficult piece vs. a simple piece. Although most students will not admit it "in the moment," they crave challenges, appreciate teachers who expect each student's best, and take great satisfaction in meeting lofty goals.

Instead, after directly teaching students the value and philosophy behind struggling, remind students to either try to figure information out themselves or collaborate with their peers with an understanding that after 5, 10, or 20 minutes, you are there to assist with feedback or guidance to help them find answers. Embrace temporary failures.

"Are you sure?"
Is there any clearer clue that a student answered a question wrong than when a teacher sweetly responds with "Hmm" or "Are you sure"? When students hear either of these, they know they just answered incorrectly and are prompted to answer again without much thought. If it is a low-level question, they just answer the opposite without true understanding.

Instead, reply "Why?" whether the answer is correct or incorrect. When students must justify their responses, they have the chance to self-correct, which leads to a deeper understanding. Teachers can simply expect that an answer is followed by "because …" When it becomes routine for teachers to solicit the reasoning behind student answers, the level of critical thinking increases dramatically.

"You need to know this for the test."
Okay, this is typically stated long before assessments, but it certainly contributes to the inauthenticity of learning. When teachers try to motivate students through grades, they are often successful. But they

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are also contributing to the development of a fixed mindset and causing more harm than good. As teachers, we are frustrated when students ask, "Is this going to be on the test?" However, we are the reason why so many students ask. To steal from a 1980s public service announcement, "I learned it from watching you!"

Instead, assessments should be focused on big ideas and higher level responses to facilitate independent and critical thinking rather than the regurgitation of facts.

"Are there any questions?"
Again, on the surface, this is not a bad question. However, the issue is assuming that student silence equals comprehension. Many students are too embarrassed to publicly share that they do not understand, and others may be daydreaming or didn't hear the question. There are so many ways students can demonstrate what they know and do not know in an engaging and data-driven way.

Instead, use formative assessments such as exit tickets, the monitoring of small group discussions, quick check games, low stakes quizzes, and a plethora of digital assessment tools such as Kahoot!, Socrative, Mentimeter, Padlets, Poll Everywhere, Quizlet, Quizizz, Nearpod, etc. Good teachers are using these assessments to check understanding. Great teachers are using them to purposefully group students and target instruction and remediation based on student readiness.

"Use your notes."
This is similar to "Let me help you." Instead of the teacher rescuing the student, the student rescues him or herself by finding answers rather than struggling. I still remember copying down definitions from the dictionary … but I don't remember any of them. For students to truly use those higher level thinking skills, they must take what they know and synthesize that information. In *Make It Stick: The Science of Successful Learning*, Peter C. Brown et al. argue that students often have an "illusion of knowing" based on familiarity of information. Unless students are able to recall information in their own words and then apply it, real learning is not occurring; test preparation is occurring in its place.

Instead, remind students that their own self-awareness is the most important aspect of learning. During those multiple low-stakes assessment opportunities, students should recognize what they know and, more importantly, what they do not know. Don't take away this tool by quickly providing the "crutch" of notes.

The best advice… Establish from the first day of school (or start tomorrow) a focus on learning rather than grades and an expectation that *student struggle is part of the learning process*. Remember, the purpose of assessment is to check understanding, not to motivate students.

Literacy Lowdown

Greetings from your Literacy Coaches! Thank you to those of you incorporating more literacy into your everyday instruction. We love hearing your ideas! There are plenty of ways to use literacy in all of the content areas! This idea comes from Jenny Brown, 8th grade math teacher at Crossroads:

"In my Algebra class, to introduce exponential functions, I read aloud part of a picture book, One Grain of Rice and then had students calculate how much rice the main character would have at the end of the story. From this, we wrote an exponential function. I then finished reading the story aloud (by request). I also had students read an article about an outbreak of measles, and we discussed how an exponential function could be written from the information given. The students were required to write a short summary of the article and then explain how the article connected to our current math topic."

Please keep your great literacy ideas coming, and let us know if any help is needed!

Twitter? Blocked. Instagram? Blocked. Facebook? Blocked. Wordpress? Blocked. What? Even Wordpress.com is blocked? What gives? ...

The Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) was enacted by Congress in 2000 to address concerns about children's access to obscene or harmful content over the Internet. CIPA imposes certain requirements on schools that allow them to receive discounts for Internet access or internal connections through the E-rate program – a program that makes certain communications services and products more affordable for eligible schools. Fairfield utilizes E-rate funds to save hundreds of thousands of dollars each year.

Schools subject to CIPA may not receive the discounts offered by the E-rate program unless it is certified that they have an Internet safety policy that includes technology protection measures. The protection measures must block or filter Internet access to pictures that are: (a) obscene; (b) child pornography; or (c) harmful to minors (for computers that are accessed by minors).

Schools subject to CIPA have two additional certification requirements:

1) Their Internet safety policies must include monitoring the online activities of minors; and

2) They must provide for educating minors about appropriate online behavior *as required by the Protecting Children in the 21st Century Act*, including interacting with other individuals on social networking websites and in chat rooms as well as cyberbullying awareness and response. This is currently occurring in our grades 1-5 tech specials and during health classes.

All of the apps previously listed contain material that does not meet the requirements of CIPA and therefore are blocked for student access. More times than not, however, there is a comparable app that gets the job done. A great example is edublogs.org. This site is actually run by Wordpress, but for educational purposes. Students with accounts do not have access to all of the content on the Wordpress.com site, but DO have access to all of the great features.

As always, please do not hesitate to ask questions. We can often brainstorm together to come up with solutions to your technology challenges!

#TogetherWeCan

I Wish My Teacher Knew …

Several students from Crossroads Middle School were asked to finish the statements "I wish my teacher knew…" and "I'm glad my teachers knows …" Here is a summary of their responses:

I wish my teacher knew...

My Health Related Issues
- OCD
- ADHD
- Hypoglycemia
- Allergies

More about my Home Life
- huge family
- very busy
- pastor dad
- teacher mom
- fighting at home
- Jehovah's Witness
- no time for homework

My Hobbies and Interests
- sports
- tumbling
- crafts
- animals
- running
- art
- music

What I Need to Learn Better
- need space when upset
- hate to sit
- works fast but accurately
- creative
- works better in groups
- works better alone
- does not like or need repetitive instruction
- prefers videos to lectures
- loves extra credit
- not a fan of CNN10
- likes to celebrate birthdays and other special occasions
- willing to help teacher and/or students
- not challenged enough

My Personality Traits
- shy
- care about school
- want to get good grades
- sometimes I am quiet
- hard time making friends
- hard worker
- afraid to ask for extra help
- positive/happy
- very talkative
- gets nervous
- does not like attention, even when upset
- not like everybody else

I'm Glad My Teacher Knows …

My Learning Style
- learns quickly
- Ok with change
- strengths and weaknesses
- enjoys participating
- loves to read
- stresses over grades
- finds pictures helpful
- loves to use computers

My Behavior Traits
- organized
- talkative
- social
- a good kid
- hard worker
- very quiet or loud
- likes to joke
- high energy
- lots of fun
- kind

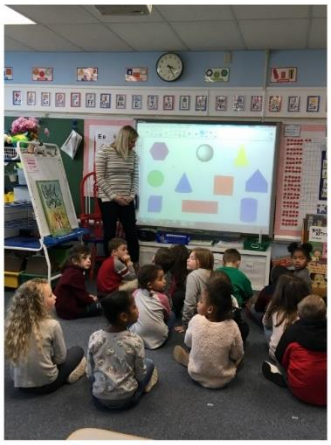
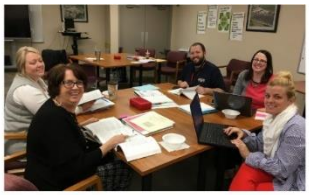
Personal Tidbits about Me
- parents are teacher
- cheerleader
- my hobbies
- understands me as a person
- good at sports
- knows my friends
- accepts that I am awkward or weird or clumsy
- speaks Spanish at home
- loves dogs
- very busy
- plays a musical instrument
- cares about grades and wants to succeed

Improving Student Engagement Together

Recently our district participated in an Engagement Analysis, utilizing PIES (positive interdependence, individual accountability, equal participation, and simultaneous interaction) with the help of Jackie Minor, a national expert on student engagement. Administrators and teachers visited classrooms and discuss the level of student engagement they saw. One of the big takeaways for me, as a teacher, was that even when I think I'm engaging all students, there may be students "hiding" within my classroom or I may even have some students doing work for others.

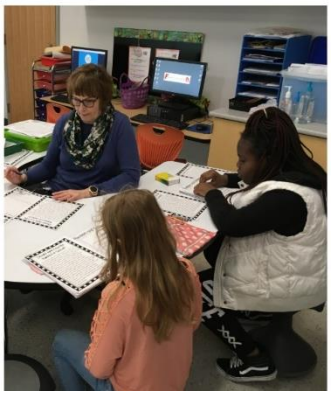
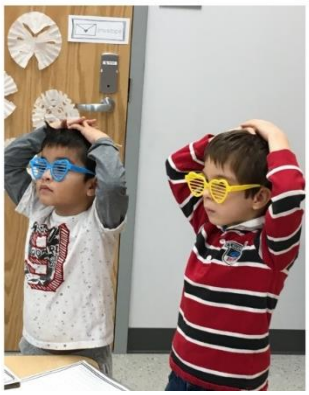
I'm sure I'm not the only teacher who thinks when I have students "talk to a partner" I am engaging 100% of my students. I now realize that I'm not. By participating in these classroom visits, I learned that small tweaks to the way I conduct an activity can ensure all students are engaged. Jackie reminded me that if a classroom activity isn't structured clearly, then in students' minds it becomes optional, and it is left up to the kids how engaged they will be. Using a Kagan structure is one way to ensure student engagement through PIES, but it is not the only way. OWP strategies, Orton Gillingham, interactive notebooks, and many of our literacy strategies all meet the PIES criteria.

Since the classroom visits, I have taken a step back during one of my activities and really watched my own students – Are they meeting the PIES criteria? Are any students hiding? Are some of my students doing the work for others? Asking myself these questions has made me really reflect about how I need to change things to ensure all of my students are engaged and accountable. The ideas Jackie suggested are not hard. It can be as easy as using a timer for equal participation, setting clearer expectations when students are working together, or ensuring each student in a group talks and writes. Maybe there are small thing can you do in your classroom today to ensure all students are engaged, too.





Around the District...