Increase the Rigor

Without the Stress!

By

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What do we need to push our students above and beyond what is expected of them?

I propose that we need a rocket to boost our students to the next level. Most secondary teachers teach more than 100 students in a day.

We will need a lot of rocket fuel!
Some Very Special Rocket Fuel Ingredients
1. **Standard/Objective/Skill Based Grading**

Traditional grading methods can lead to an average at the end of the term that could mean that the overall the student is an excellent, good, average, below average (but still passing), or a failing student.

How helpful is this “average”?

Does it tell you, the students, or the parents how much he or she has learned?

Does it tell you how many objectives each student has mastered?
With objective/skill based grading there is a shift in focus.

Students become more focused on which objectives or skills they have mastered on a specific test and less focused on the overall “traditional” score of their test.

This is hard to imagine until you just see it happen.
Students are not interested in traditional scores anymore.

Students are now interested in how many “qualifying” scores they get on one test.

In the past when I used traditional teaching methods, I would hear a student say to another student…”I got an 84”.

Now I am more likely to hear things like “I got 3 out of 4. I only need to work on one of them. I need to figure out how to….. Or I need to learn more about ….”

“I’m a Triple Qualifier again!”
When do we celebrate a “50”? 

A student who makes a “50” on a practice test is halfway to the finish line and the race hasn’t started yet!
2. Opportunities for Improvement

Pretest, Practice Tests, Tests, Retests, Tutoring, Peer Helpers, Differentiated Assignments etc.
3. Recognition and Positive Attention

Stickers, Clip Art on Paper, Certificates etc.
Mrs. Young, What do I need to do to earn a “pumpkin”?

“Can we make a 71 be a qualifying score?”

71, 100, 100, 85
“Good, so now I can get my Easter Basket!”
4. Enrichment Opportunities

If a student achieves mastery then he or she is rewarded by being allowed to do an enrichment activity.

Puzzles, games, snap circuits, interactives….
5. Objective/Skill Based Small Group Instruction

Do the Buzzards get together?

Or

Does the 91, 85, 71, 59, and 51 get together?

Why does the 57 not get invited?
She did not know that 0.9 was less than the number 1.

0.9<1.0 ….. Really?

2,000 is not equal to 2.000

…….hmmmmmm…….
6. “No Fail” Learning Activities

Convince students that they cannot fail “while still learning”. Do not take points off for classwork or homework that was attempted, but misunderstood.

If you bench a student during practice then it will be hard for him or her to learn that skill. They just have not learned it “yet”.

Students can become more interested in cheating to get the right answer on homework or classwork than spending the time to learn it.

It never hurts to try..... Does it hurt for students to keep trying in your classroom?
No Fear Learning Zone

If your students cannot “fail” while learning then your classroom will be a “No Fear of Learning Zone”.

In this zone, each student can focus on his or her own thinking. It is now okay for each student to think for himself or herself.

The focus will no longer just be on what your best students think. The focus will now be on what each student thinks.
Give me your best!

They know that I will not take points off during the learning process.

I will not penalize them for learning at a different rate or in a different way. They in return give me more! They let me know what they think! I am less likely to just get what the textbook, Google, or a neighbor thinks.
7. Assess Reading and Writing (and Math if possible) along with Content

Use a writing rubric for discussion questions. (Easy Writing Rubric)

Incorporate reading passages on test

Include math problems that are related to content.
Rocket Fuel Ingredients - Review

1. Standards/Objective/Skill Based Grading
2. Opportunities for Improvement
3. Recognition and Positive Attention
4. Enrichment Opportunities
5. Objective/Skill Based Small Group Instruction
6. No Fail Learning Activities
7. Assess Reading and Writing (and Math if possible) along with Content
Credits

Clip art by Scrappin Doodles
Rigor/Level of Difficulty

It is important to note that the strategies that I use do not reduce the amount of rigor in my classroom. It does not make the class easier. It does the opposite. I am able to hold my students to a higher standard because of the strategies that I use. If I held them to the high standard that I do without using strategies then I would be called to the office regularly for having too many low grades. To keep this “office” thing from happening I would have to reduce my standards.