The Rigor Ceiling

Foundations and practices for advanced instruction
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The low-rigor teacher…</th>
<th>The high-rigor teacher…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• surprises students every day with new material and expects them to master it in 30-45 minutes</td>
<td>• gives students material in advance of class and expects them to arrive with a basic understanding of it</td>
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<tr>
<td>• thinks that it’s enough for students to use 2-3 sentence justifications for answers</td>
<td>• commonly expects students to give 2-3 minute responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>• tells students to “skip it and come back” when they get stuck</td>
<td>• tells students to “seek out resources and decide the right questions to ask” when they get stuck</td>
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<tr>
<td>• generally reinforces that a few minutes is long enough to spend on a problem, paragraph, chart, or issue</td>
<td>• reinforces that any length of time is acceptable to spend on a problem, paragraph, or chart if looking to understand it completely</td>
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<tr>
<td>• makes homework an exercise in repeated practice or pattern recognition</td>
<td>• makes homework an exercise in preparation for the next class day</td>
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<tr>
<td>• moves on instead of ensuring mastery</td>
<td>• models grit by not moving on until a high percentage of the class has 100% understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>• hears students express that they “get it in class, but just don’t do well on exams”</td>
<td>• hears students express how easy the exams are compared to normal classwork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• keeps most of the class dialogue between student and teacher</td>
<td>• monitors as most of the class dialogue occurs between students</td>
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<tr>
<td>• allows students to equivocate</td>
<td>• holds students accountable for using precise and accurate language</td>
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<tr>
<td>• paraphrases and summarizes student responses</td>
<td>• makes students revise their own responses until 100% correct</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• finishes students’ sentences for them</td>
<td>• waits patiently as students work to find the right words to express themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• leads every class</td>
<td>• uses students to lead each other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• talks about the importance of culture</td>
<td>• reinforces the importance of culture through consistent action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Value of High Rigor

Student academic growth results vs. Time

- Rigorous classroom and school
- Rigorous classroom, non-rigorous school
- Non-rigorous classroom, rigorous school
- Non-rigorous classroom and school
The Spark Model

A prioritized set of instructional behaviors which focus on academic success

- Prioritized = ~80% of all previous levels should be mastered before focusing substantial time on the next

Level 5:
The individual need of each student is met so as to maximize his/her potential.

Level 4:
Students create efficient and innovative frameworks to effectively solve new, ambiguous problems.

Level 3:
Students exhibit internal motivation to excel, succeed and persevere.

Level 2:
Measurable standards and outcomes are supported by a clear path which facilitates logical connections. Regular data analysis help redefine the path when necessary.

Level 1:
A) Management is clear, consistent, positive, and firm.
B) Lesson plan is objective-driven, assesses mastery, and fosters student engagement. Directly connects to management.
Significance is the greatest motivator

I matter because...
Creating great culture

A student who finds their identity in your class is hooked. Culture is a means through which investment can occur. Any culture is defined by a choice of few, clear priorities that are consistently reinforced. Core values are the list of priorities that define your culture. In this way, values are behaviors.
Two Key levers

I want to be liked
I want to be good at stuff
Self efficacy

As long as you can get someone to believe differently about themselves and their capabilities, they’re hooked.

For those who came in with low expectations, only the actual experience of doing what was previously thought as impossible (along with the requirement to fail repeatedly) will permanently change their perspective.
Group Accountability

We don’t want to let other people down
Acceptance is a powerful motivator
Failure is a real fear because of this
We must be the first to create a culture of acceptance –
inside vs outside world
The Internal Struggle

It’s introspective
Kids will look to you as a mirror for who they should be
This means facing our own insecurities
Can we look stupid? Get laughed at? Speak Spanish? Fail at math?
Fight against the fear of vulnerability
Core values require modeling and enforcement

Fail well. Good failure makes us better.
Good is the enemy of great. Attention to detail makes the difference.
No fear and no embarrassment. For growth, it’s necessary to look stupid.
The goal is 100% understanding for everyone. Support others and you’ll find yourself.
Lack of effort and belittlement of someone else are cardinal sins.
You’re capable of much more than you think.
Rigor Defined

Rigor is holding a higher expectation for demonstrated student understanding.

One half of rigor is investment. The other half is thinking and problem-solving.
3 Tenets of a Rigorous Classroom

Homework as preparation for students
Discussion or performance-based class structure
High-quality student answers and performances
Homework as preparation

Prep is given in advance of the class
Prep covers conceptual understanding of “why”
Depth is preferable to breadth
Prep is aligned to achieve results
Prep unites concepts cumulatively
Prep is a dragon that builds investment
Discussion or performance-based classroom structure

Students spend the majority of class time interacting directly

Students are organized into smaller groups or squads; class oscillates between smaller groups and whole group

A mix of Hot, Warm, and Cold prep

Students are given specific feedback

Repeated opportunities until the standard is met
High-quality student answers or performances

Students always answer why
Student answers are 100% correct
Student answers are exhaustive
Answers are more than 1 minute in length
Students use few vague pronouns
Students use standard academic English and avoid “like” as a filler word