



Dennis-Yarmouth Regional School District

Instructional Office Newsletter

Classroom Writing and Speaking Don't Prepare Students for Workplaces

In these two *Education Week* articles, Catherine Gewertz and Sarah Sparks contrast the kinds of reading and writing students do in school with what employers need on the job:

- **Oral communication skills commonly taught in K-12 classrooms:**

- Book report presentations;
- PowerPoint presentations;
- Debate and argumentation;
- Discussion skills like stating an idea, listening respectfully, and asking questions.

- **What employers want (and say they rarely see in new hires):**

- Constructing a clear, concise message and tailoring it to different audiences;
- Interacting well with a team, discussing ideas respectfully, formulating good questions, and being prepared to give thorough answers;
- Public speaking: preparation, confidence, eye contact;
- Listening and responding well to guidance and constructive criticism.

- **The most common writing tasks in secondary schools:**

- Note-taking while listening;
- Short-answer responses;
- Worksheets;
- Reading analysis and interpretation;
- Explanations.

Continued on page 2)

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IMPORTANT DATES

February 2	Groundhog Day
February 5	Chinese New Year
February 11	100 th Day of School
February 14	St. Valentine's Day
February 18	President's Day
February 18-22	Winter Vacation

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

Central office is a **fragrance-free zone** so please be respectful and plan accordingly when you visit.

Due to one of our members at the CO being highly sensitive to any type of fragrance, we ask that staff visiting/meeting at the Administration building refrain from using any scented products. Fragrances from personal care products, air fresheners, laundry and other cleaning products have been associated with adversely affecting a person's health. We ask that we all work together to make the environment a safe and healthy workplace for everyone.



Thank you very much for your cooperation!





(Continued from page 1)

• Writing tasks most often demanded on the job:

- Clear and courteous e-mails;
- Succinct explanations of concepts and situations;
- Evidence-backed persuasive writing;
- Conveying the same information to different audiences;
- Conducting and responding to a written interview.

“Elevator Speeches’ and Other Skills Students Are Missing” by Catherine Gewertz, and “When Book Reports and Essays Aren’t Enough” by Sarah Sparks in an *Education Week* supplement, “Literacy for the Workplace” September 26, 2018 (Vol. 38, #6, p. 7-9, 15-17),

<https://bit.ly/2OYu9xR> and <https://bit.ly/2ltBdAI>

Toward a Better Understanding of Bloom’s Taxonomy

In this *Education Week* article, Ron Berger (EL Education) says that Benjamin Bloom’s Taxonomy of Learning, originally published in 1956 and revised in 2001, has served as a useful reminder of the need to balance lower- and higher-level thinking. “Classrooms that don’t allow students to become experts in rich content knowledge are missing a vital foundation and contribute to a knowledge-equity gap in America,” says Berger. “Conversely, classrooms that focus almost exclusively on content and memorization with little application, analysis, and creation cause a different problem.”

But many educators believe that students need to progress up the taxonomy pyramid step by step –

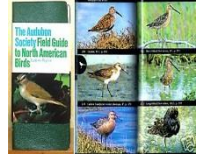


Remembering, Understanding, Applying, Analyzing, Evaluating, and Creating.

“This hierarchical vision of discrete, sequential steps in learning was not Bloom’s intent,” says Berger. “Nevertheless, it is now widespread among teachers and is as deeply troubling as it is fundamentally wrong.”

If you wanted to learn the guitar, computer coding, or yoga, says Berger, “It is unlikely you would want to separate learning from doing. You would not want to sit at a desk for months listening to someone lecture about carpentry tools or musical instruments without being allowed to pick up a chisel or guitar... But that is often what school is like for our students.” Could that be why so many are turned off school and forget most of what they’ve learned after taking a test?

The key is *integrating* the levels of Bloom’s taxonomy in natural ways and hooking students’ interest and engagement through authentic projects and applications in their communities – for example, producing books on local history, field guides, and water quality reports. Students who are taught this way, says Berger, “are learning content, analyzing data, and building understanding of both local issues and the broader fields of science and history at the same time as they are applying that learning to create and contribute.” Berger believes that when teaching and learning are orchestrated in this way, racial/economic achievement gaps close.



“We Learn by Doing: Bloom’s Taxonomy, Revised” by Ron Berger in *Education Week*, September 26, 2018 (Vol. 38, #6, p. 20), <https://bit.ly/2xSceS8>; Berger can be reached at rberger@eleducation.org.

Getting Students Deeply Engaged in Learning

In this article in *Principal*, Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey (San Diego State University) say that many students pretend to be engaged when their minds are elsewhere. Principals observing classes can be fooled by students sitting up straight with their eyes on the teacher, when in fact very little learning is taking place. Effective teachers, on the other hand, ensure that their students are cognitively engaged, see themselves as learners, and take responsibility for continued learning. Here is what’s going on in those classrooms:





- **Students know their current level of understanding.** “It’s hard to know where you’re going if you don’t know where you’re starting from,” say Fisher and Frey. Self-assessments and pre-tests are key tools; they also save class time that might be spent teaching things students already know.

- **Students see where they’re going.** “Learning targets, objectives, or intentions are not a secret,” say the authors, “and students should not have to infer what they are learning.” It’s also helpful for students to know specific criteria for success.

- **Students have options.** “When students have more choices,” say Fisher and Frey, “their commitment is often higher, and their willingness to struggle through a task improves.” A range of learning tools – graphic organizers, note-taking approaches, other resources – can empower students to choose those best suited to the task at hand.



- **Students seek feedback.** “When feedback is unsolicited, it is easier to ignore,” say the authors. Some teachers give students nonverbal ways to signal when they need help.

- **Students see errors as opportunities.** There’s little anxiety about making mistakes; in fact, the teacher might highlight the most interesting error of the day for the whole class.

- **Students monitor progress and adjust strategy.** This comes naturally when students know their starting point and destination and have rubrics and probing questions to guide them along the way.

- **Students know what they’ve learned and can describe it to others.** There are also opportunities for them to engage in peer tutoring.

“Six Factors Define Assessment-Capable Learners Who Are Cognitively Engaged” by Douglas Fisher and Nancy Frey in *Principal*, September/October 2018 (Vol. 98, #1, p. 14-17), <https://bit.ly/2Ra3boJ>; the authors can be reached at dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu and nfrey@mail.sdsu.edu.



Principles for Effective Teaching of English Language Learners

In this article in *American Educator*, Diane August (American Institutes for Research) summarizes seven principles representing the current research consensus on teaching English language learners:

- **Provide access to grade-level course content.** This is essential as it gives ELLs the concepts and skills needed to master grade-level coursework, move up through the grades, and become fully proficient in English. “It is important to keep in mind,” says August, “that many skills and types of knowledge transfer from students’ first language to their second, and that ELLs may have already acquired core content in their first language.”

- **Build on effective practices used with English-proficient students.** Many best practices for regular-education classes also apply to ELLs, says August – for example, in the early grades, hearing the individual English sounds and phonemes within words; using letters and spelling patterns within words to decode the pronunciation; reading texts aloud with appropriate speed, accuracy, and expression; using various strategies to learn new words; thinking about the meaning of what is being read; and writing appropriately for the task and the audience.

- **Provide supports to help ELLs master core content and skills.** These include visuals (pictures, diagrams, tables, concept maps, short videos, and graphic organizers to represent complex concepts and vocabulary) and verbal supports (glossaries, sentence and paragraph frames, teacher-chosen words in context, and whole-class, small-group, and partner discussions focused on clarifying key ideas). It’s also helpful to provide core content in the home language for some students.

- **Develop ELLs’ academic language.** Becoming proficient in the language used in school, in written communication, in public presentations, and in formal settings is crucial for English language learners. Academic language varies by subject area, with science especially challenging, and researchers have found that embedding instruction within the subject area is a promising technique.

- **Encourage peer-to-peer learning opportunities.** “One of the key principles of





instruction in a second language,” says August, “is enabling students to interact via speaking, listening, reading, and writing with peers in their second language.” Peer talk, in pairs or small groups, is most effective when it focuses on curriculum content. The Peer Assisted Learning Strategies (PALS) program has proven to be an effective strategy.

- **Capitalize on students’ home language, knowledge, and cultural assets.** This might involve previewing and reviewing material in students’ first language; connecting the concepts to students’ prior knowledge and home and community experiences; giving first-language definitions of targeted vocabulary; drawing attention to cognates that provide a bridge between first and second languages; and providing opportunities for students to talk about the content during a lesson in their first language.

- **Screen students to find the root cause of language and literacy difficulties, monitor progress, and support ELLs who are falling behind.** “Historically, ELLs have been both over-identified and under-identified as having a disability,” says August. Both are problematic, and the key is accurate assessment, timely intervention when there are problems, and educator training. It’s essential to distinguish between language-learning challenges and a genuine disability. August lists the literacy skills that are vital in the early grades, and stresses that teachers need to use good assessments to monitor each child’s progress and understand how to use assessment data in following up with students.

“Educating English Language Learners: A Review of the Latest Research” by Diane August in *American Educator*, Fall 2018 (Vol. 42, #3, p. 4-9, 38-39), <https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2018/august>

Five Misconceptions About Teaching ELLs

In this article in *American Educator*, Aída Walqui and Margaret Heritage (WestEd) address five common misconceptions about developing the oral language of English language learners:



- **Misconception #1:** *Sentence frames that support students in their ideas about specific situations are helpful.* The problem with sentence frames is that they are a fill-in-the-blank activity that invites only one correct answer from students. A better instructional scaffold is sentence starters (for example, “The main character in *The Pearl* is a modest and loving man, furthermore...”), or other scaffolds that are more open-ended and help develop vocabulary that can be used in many situations.

- **Misconception #2:** *Correct students’ mistakes as they talk or the errors will “fossilize.”* This idea was common in the 1980s, driven by a focus on correctness and the fear that if a mistake wasn’t fixed immediately, it would become permanent. “Our perspective,” say Walqui and Heritage, “consistent with that of multiple applied linguists, is that language keeps evolving as a result of continuous practice. It may fossilize if it is no longer used productively or receptively. However, in their schooling, students will be invited to engage in uses of language continuously, and thus, they will have ample opportunities to correct themselves or be corrected by others.”

- **Misconception #3:** *Rather than correcting students’ ungrammatical oral language, it is better to repeat what they said with corrections.* The thinking behind this is that rather than putting students on the spot by correcting them, modeling correct grammar teaches them and saves face. But research has found that these implicit corrections may not be effective – students take them not as corrections but as reiterations of the idea and acceptance that the comments were correct. At appropriate times, and handled with tact, explicit correction is better.

- **Misconception #4:** *Sustained, focused interactions are possible starting in fourth or fifth grade, but primary-grade students are not mature enough to carry them out because they get too impatient with the task and with each other.* To the contrary, say Walqui and Heritage, when primary-grade teachers structure literacy activities effectively, young children are able to notice and use language in purposeful ways.

- **Misconception #5:** *All students in a class need to master the same levels of oral development as a result of participating in a lesson.* Not true, say the authors. Students enter a classroom with different levels of proficiency, and a well-planned lesson has multiple entry points so all students can be engaged.





“The important idea,” say Walqui and Heritage, “is that they should all be gaining – not that all of them will arrive at the same point, in exactly the same way, developing at exactly the same level. This would only be possible if what is learned is limited, and if the learning demands recall.”

“Meaningful Classroom Talk: Supporting English Learners’ Oral Language Development” by Aída Walqui and Margaret Heritage in *American Educator*, Fall 2018 (Vol. 42, #3, p. 18-23, 39),

https://www.aft.org/ae/fall2018/walqui_heritage

**CERTIFIED
TEACHER**

*****DESE License Renewal Information*****

Here is the distribution to renew:

Effective July 28, 2017, the required distribution of PDPs for all academic educators renewing a Professional level license has been amended as stated in the regulations (CMR 603 44.05). The required minimum breakdown to renew a Primary area is as follows:

License Renewal:

- At least 15 PDPs in content (subject matter knowledge)
- At least 15 PDPs in pedagogy (professional skills and knowledge)
- At least 15 PDPs related to Sheltered English Immersion (SEI) or English as a Second Language (ESL)
- At least 15 PDPs related to training in strategies for effective schooling for students with disabilities and the instruction of students with diverse learning styles
- The remaining required 90 PDPs may be earned through any combination of “elective” activities that address other educational issues and topics that improve student learning, additional content, or pedagogy.
- The renewal of each additional area license(s) will require 30 PDPs, of which 15 out of the 30 must be content related.



Teams Using On-The-Spot Assessments to Close Achievement Gaps

In this article in *The Learning Professional*, Nancy Love (Research for Better Teaching) and Everett, Massachusetts principal Michelle Crowell describe a pivotal moment as a grade-level teacher team worked to write an exit ticket that everyone would use to check for understanding at the end of a lesson. A special-education teacher said, “My students couldn’t do that; it’s too hard for them. They’ll get discouraged.” Another teacher said, “I think with modifications this assessment can work for all our kids. Let’s see if we can modify the task to make it more accessible to your students. We want all our students to hit the standard.” An ELL teacher chimed in that a modified exit ticket might be helpful for her students. The team created two versions of the assessment, leaving it up to individual teachers to decide which to use.

When the team met a week later to look at the results and plan follow-up, special-education teachers reported that their students did well. “We just weren’t expecting enough of them,” said one teacher. “They know they’re doing the same work as their classmates.”

This dynamic in teacher teams, say Love and Crowell, is one of the most powerful ways to “chip away at low expectations, racism, and cultural biases that have marginalized special-education students, English language learners, students of color, and others who have not traditionally been served well by schools.” Many schools have mission statements about high expectations, but those values really come to life when teacher teams collaborate on common assessments and follow up on the results.

Love and Crowell describe the turnaround in an Everett, Massachusetts school when grade-level teams began using common planning time to craft quick end-of-lesson assessments and plan immediate next steps for reteaching and extending learning. Special-education teachers and language development specialists were regular members of teams, contributing insights about modifications and teaching strategies. The school showed significant gains in student achievement as a result.





In many schools, teacher meetings like these won't happen spontaneously. Here are the steps Love and Crowell believe are necessary to create a successful dynamic:

- **Spell out specific success criteria.**

Students need to know up front what good work looks like, along with the expectation that they can achieve it. (If students have to engage in a guessing game about what the teacher wants, that gives an advantage to students whose backgrounds are similar to their teacher's.) It's helpful if teachers gather information about their students through surveys, interviews, and one-on-one chats, picking up culturally relevant examples and metaphors to fine-tune learning experiences.



- **Frequently check for understanding.** This is much more than asking, "Any questions?" say Love and Crowell. It means using "quick quizzes, exit tickets, responses to writing prompts, or entries in science or math journals... that align with learning targets, assess success criteria, and surface gaps or errors in student thinking." In classrooms using this process, teachers communicate these beliefs to students:

- **I want to know how you are doing during learning so I can take next steps.**
- **Errors are a vital part of learning.**
- **It's persistence, not first and fastest, that matters.**

Love and Crowell report research on the dramatic impact of this process: "When teachers and students use assessments to make timely adjustments in teaching and learning tactics, they can effectively double the speed of learning."



- **Analyze assessment results.** "Individually, teachers might do this on the fly," say Love and Crowell, "quickly sorting student work to determine who's got it and who doesn't, and regrouping or reteaching accordingly. In a team, teachers use protocols to take a deeper dive into student work to determine whether the success criteria are met or not and plan for next instructional steps." An example: teachers in one team noticed that Asian students performed worse on a math assessment than their classmates. Digging deeper, teachers realized that these students were reluctant to estimate, taking extra time to come up with precise answers. Teachers were able to help



the Asian students overcome a misconception and grasp one of the big ideas of mathematics: there is a time for precision and a time for estimation.

- **Follow up.** Love and Crowell say this is the crucial part, and should include taking FIRME action:

- **Feedback – Objective, descriptive information about students' performance on the standards and success criteria;**
- **Investigation – Looking closely at student thinking revealed by assessment results;**
- **Reteaching, re-engaging, regrouping – Teachers use appropriate approaches to help students who need another opportunity to reach mastery.**
- **Moving on – When almost all students have attained proficiency, it may be time to move on.**
- **Extension – Additional challenges for students who master learning targets before others.**

"While important for all students," say the authors, "these practices are vital for marginalized students..." by catching learning problems in real time and giving teachers insights on the supports these students need to catch up and reach mastery.

For this kind of teacher teamwork to take hold in a school, conclude Love and Crowell, four steps are necessary: **(a)** thoughtful rollout, so teachers understand the rationale and customize the process to their unique circumstances; **(b)** structures and schedules, including regular common-planning times that include special-education and ELL staff; **(c)** coaching support for teacher teams until they're able to self-facilitate; and **(d)** monitoring and support by school leaders, including dropping in on meetings, joining in analysis and planning, seeing how things are going during classroom visits, and celebrating successes. "Our administrators are the backbone that has made this successful," said an Everett fourth-grade teacher. "Because they are so passionate about it, they made us passionate about it."

"Strong Teams, Strong Results: Formative Assessment Helps Teacher Teams Strengthen Equity" by Nancy Love and Michelle Crowell in *The Learning Professional*, October 2018 (Vol. 39, #5, p. 34-39),

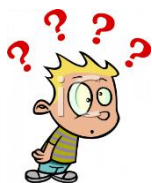




e-link for members only; Love can be reached at love@RBTeach.com, Crowell at mcrowell@everett.k12.ma.us.

Getting Teachers Past Their Math Phobia

“If we want students to see themselves as capable of learning and doing mathematics, then teachers must possess confidence in their own abilities to understand and use mathematics” say Sue Chapman (University of Houston/Clear Lake) and Mary Mitchell (Math Solutions) in this article in *The Learning Professional*. “If we want students to see mathematics as relevant to their lives, as worthy of their time and interest, then teachers must proclaim the importance of mathematics in their own lives and have a passion for empowering students with mathematical tools and ways of thinking. If we want students to recognize the satisfaction that comes from tackling and persevering through challenging mathematics problems, then teachers must also see themselves as mathematics learners.”



Teachers’ mindsets about math influence the learning tasks they assign, the way they orchestrate classroom interactions, their response to mistakes, and how they assess and follow up on learning – all of which have an impact on students’ attitudes, effort, and achievement. Is it possible for teachers to reset negative attitudes about math and develop a more productive mindset? Yes, say Chapman and Mitchell, “because mindset awareness and choice are metacognitive processes that can be learned and strengthened through practice.” They recommend a “coaching cycle” in which teachers and a facilitator go through these steps:

•Read about mathematical mindsets.

Teachers peruse articles and reflect on how mindset affects their students’ math achievement. Teachers might conduct surveys of their own and students’ attitudes about math.

•Pose key questions. Teachers explore questions like, How can I tell if my students are experiencing the right level of cognitive struggle? How can I encourage a sense of joy and wonder in my math class? How can I celebrate mistakes as opportunities

for learning?

•Gather data through classroom observations, video or audio recordings, surveys, and student journaling.

The coach and teachers get information on the number of students who volunteer to answer math questions; how often students explain their thinking; how often students respond to peers’ thinking and ideas; whether students engage in a rigorous task when given choices; and students’ reactions when they get wrong answers. One possible survey question: What advice might you give another student who is having trouble with math?



•Reflect on the data. Teachers draw conclusions about themselves and their students and implications for daily classroom practice. The ideal takeaways from this process would be a set of productive beliefs about mathematics, such as these from the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (2014):

- Mathematical ability is a function of opportunity, experience, and effort – not of innate intelligence.
- Finding answers to a mathematical computation is not sufficient. Is the answer reasonable? How does it apply to a given context?
- Math learning should focus on developing understanding of concepts and procedures through problem-solving, reasoning, and discourse.
- Assessment is a process that should help students become better judges of their own work, assist them in recognizing high-quality work when they produce it, and support them in using evidence to advance their own learning.
- Mathematics is a dynamic and ever-changing field.
- Teachers of mathematics continue to learn throughout their careers.

“Mindset for Math” by Sue Chapman and Mary Mitchell in *The Learning Professional*, October 2018 (Vol. 39, #5, p. 60-64), e-link for members only; Chapman can be reached at chapmans@uhcl.edu, Mitchell at mmitchell@mathsolutions.org.

