

Creating Literacy-Rich Middle Schools

Douglas Fisher
dfisher@mail.sdsu.edu

Three Big Ideas

- Develop a level of instructional consistency.
- Internalize an instructional framework.
- Examine student work, with colleagues, on a regular basis.

Develop a Level of Instructional Consistency

- Are all teachers teachers of reading?
- Are schools building habits that are transportable and transparent?
- As students develop habits, are discipline-specific practices taught?

“7 Literacy Strategies that Work”

- Anticipatory activities (building background)
- Read alouds / shared reading
- Vocabulary development
- Graphic organizers
- Note-taking
- Writing to learn
- Reciprocal Teaching

For example, vocabulary . . .

- General vocabulary
 - Words used in everyday language, with agreed upon meanings across contexts (e.g., *pesky*, *bothersome*)
- Specialized vocabulary
 - Multiple meanings in different content areas (e.g., *loom*, *in*, *expression*)
- Technical vocabulary
 - Specific to a field of study (e.g., *concerto*, *meiosis*)

Vacca & Vacca, 1999

Catherine the Great, a minor aristocrat from Germany, became Empress of Russia when her husband Peter, the grandson of Peter the Great, was killed.



5 Part Vocabulary Initiative

- Independent reading & SSR
- Teacher read alouds / shared readings
- Content vocabulary study
- Academic vocabulary
- Words of the Week

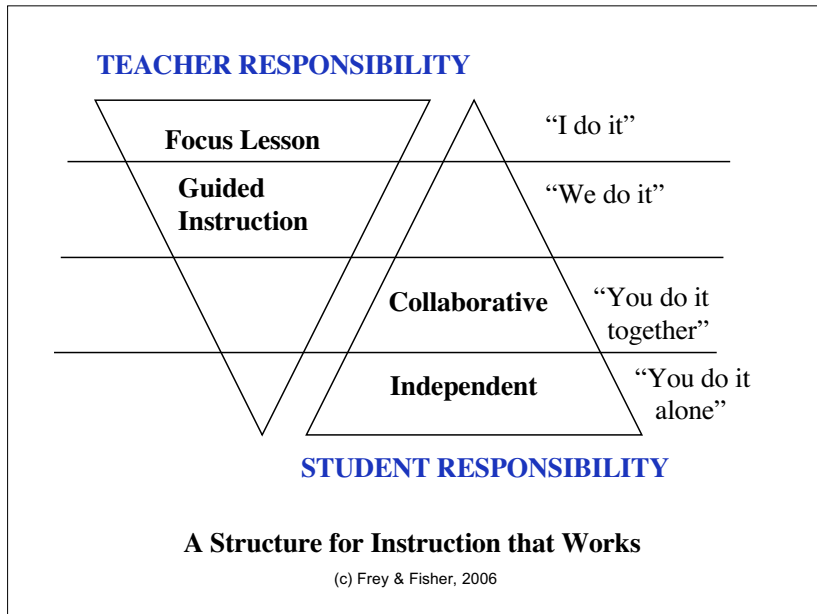


Internalize an Instructional Framework

- Do I know why I'm doing what I'm doing, or am I a "strategy junkie"?

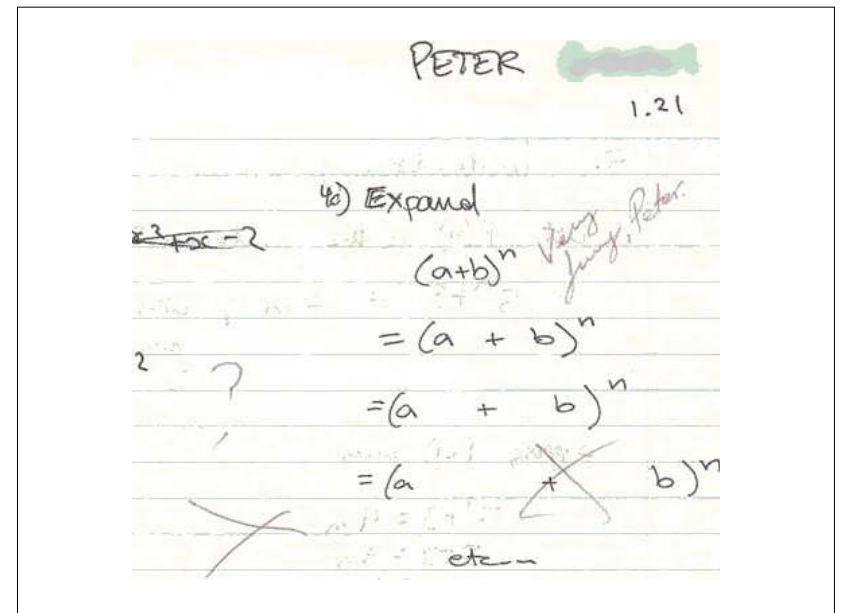
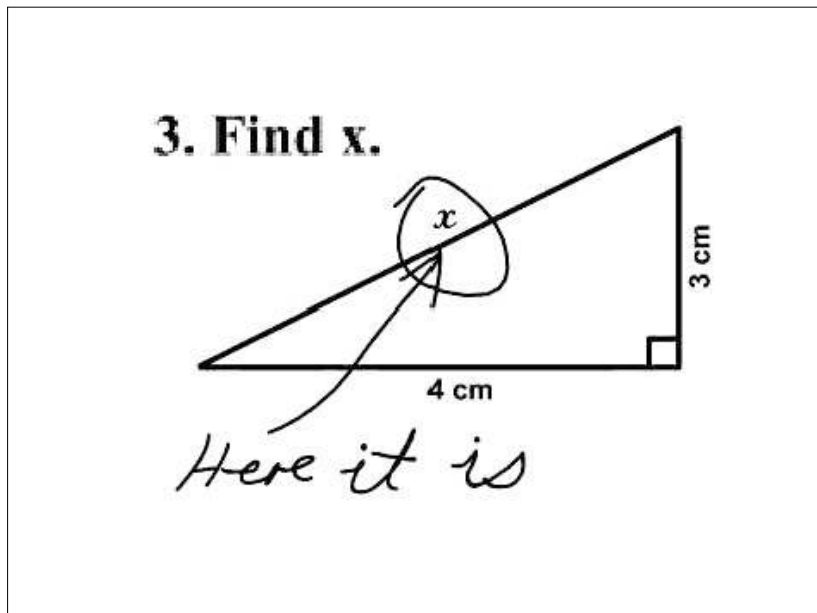


Thanks to P. David Pearson and Robert Pritchard



Examine Student Work, With Colleagues, on a Regular Basis

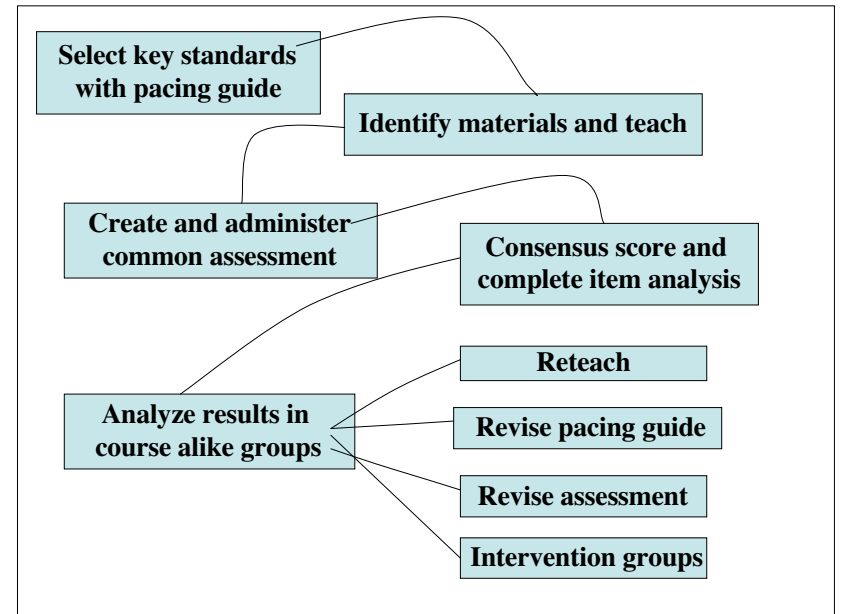
- Teacher-created, common formative assessments are the goal
- Teachers need time to develop, administer, and discuss the assessments
- Tests are a genre



For what purpose did Parliament vote during the Restoration?

- A. To restore Puritan religion in England
- B. To restore the monarch in England
- C. To restore Charles I to power
- D. To restore the idea of the divine right of kings

37.5% of the students chose A
7.5% chose B (the correct answer)
17.5% chose C
37.5% chose D



Creating Literacy-Rich Middle Schools

- We can do this.
- To do this, we must increase precision teaching (*Breakthrough* - Fullan, Hill, & Crevola, 2006).
- Precision requires access to assessment information, consistent instructional routines, and an understanding of the role language plays in learning.