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Practicing SBG

A team of four high school math teachers are working to transition away from percentage based grading that historically counted participation and homework. The District has talked about making the shift for all learners and educators and has welcomed teachers to try some new practices. The teachers are excited about a system that honors the reality of all learners needing different amounts of time and instruction to master the content and skills needed. The following “new rules” are in effect for their learners

- Homework is practice and will not be reflected in grades
- Learners can retake tests if they do poorly
- All learners get the rubric before the project or test so they are clear on the expected learning/performance
- The average of the tests or performance tasks results in a letter grade.

After six weeks of using the new system several challenges have been exposed. The four teachers are meeting with the Instructional Coach to try to figure out next steps with the challenges listed below:

1. Some parents want to know why their child who “did it right” the first time gets the same grade as children who needed additional instruction and attempts. They are reporting to the principal that the teachers are just making it easier so everyone feels good and that won’t prepare learners for the “real world”.
2. Many learners have stopped doing their homework. Many of those not doing homework are continuing to do well on the assessments. Some not doing the homework are not doing well on the assessments and continue to retake the assessment until they do well. One of the teachers wants to go back to counting homework while others want to find other solutions.
3. A group of students retake the assessment 2 or 3 times before they are able to show mastery. Their grade is the average of all the times the assessment is taken. Some teachers want to only use the “mastery grade”, others want to use an average of all the grades and a teacher wants to use the most recent grade.

Pre-Assessment

A group of three Chemistry teachers created a pre-assessment for an upcoming unit. They all agree to give the assessment on Tuesday and meet on Thursday to discuss the results and subsequent plans. Below are the data they brought to the meeting:

Number of students who **knew the** concept on the pre-assessment

	Teacher 1	Teacher 2	Teacher 3
Objective 1 (vocabulary)	21/30	19/24	18/25
Objective 2 (lab rules)	28/30	19/24	21/25
Objective 3 (Ionic bonding)	4/30	1/24	6/25
Objective 4 (covalent bonding)	12/30	14/24	11/25

1. What instructional structures are needed moving forward?
2. Are there any efficiencies that can be found across the teachers?
3. What additional information might these teachers need to help learners grow?

Small Group Instruction

A team of teachers agree that they will all begin to use small group instruction for their next writing unit. They use the previous writing assignment as the tool to pull small groups together and intend to meet with each group 2x per week for the next four weeks. Here are the challenges they are discussing at their next meeting after two weeks of enacting this plan:

1. Most groups have at least one or two learners who have already mastered the skills that were intended in that small group's instruction. Do they move groups? Start a new group? Stop coming to the group?
2. One teacher has four of his six groups all getting the same small group instruction. It doesn't seem efficient. He is not sure if he should continue small groups or just do a lesson for the whole class.
3. Each teacher has several learners who already finished the writing piece and there are two weeks to go. What do they do?

Choice boards

A teacher created a choice board for her learners. The board has nine boxes and she created a choice for each box. All of the choices were different methods for learners to practice their reading skills and were generic enough that she could use the board over and over. As the last four weeks of school approaches, she notices that the learners are no longer excited about using the choice board. Some make the same three or four choices each week. She is worried about class control, focused learning and finishing strong.

What should her next steps be?

How could she leverage learners who have had a semester of experience using a choice board?

Learning at Your Own Pace

A group of teachers worked to create self-guided and self-paced units of study using the District's learning management system. Students are able to consume the information using online videos, PPTs, quizzes and videos. When students have completed the online unit they can apply to take the assessment. Teachers have provided a pacing guide for students so they know if they are on-track to finish all the learning by the time the course is over.

After nine weeks of using the self-paced instructional model the teachers gave a survey and met with learners for feedback. Here is what they shared and some of the data from the assessments:

1. Most (70%) students really enjoy being able to move at their own pace and don't feel like they are waiting around for others.
2. Most (85%) students say that they feel tired and lonely in the class. They miss being able to talk to others as the expectation is "get to work" from when they enter until they leave.
3. The teachers are giving the same assessments this year as last so they are able to compare the data. The achievement results are similar to previous years.
4. The teachers report having significantly less work to do and prepare. They also report having to monitor learners more closely to ensure they aren't cheating and are "on task". Several of the teachers say that they aren't able to speak to the learner's skills (communication, collaboration, problem-solving) as they had in the past.

What modifications should the teachers make for the next nine weeks? What can be celebrated?