Assignments Matter

“...the impact of the actual, taught curriculum on school quality, on student learning, is indescribably important.”

M. Schmoker

Why do assignments matter?

• Create cycle of learning
• Focus teaching on goals
• Make instruction intentional
• Result in evidence of learning
• Document effective teaching
making connections

- To content
- To skills
- To standards
- To academic behaviors and practices

Assignment, Activity, Assessment

- **Assignment** – a taught task with a prompt, product, rubric
- **Activity** – not scored; a strategy, event, practice
- **Assessment** – not taught; a text, quiz

Assignment Prompts

A charge to **do** something and produce a product:

- Write an essay about a character in a work of literature
- Create a timeline about an historical event
- Conduct an experiment or survey
- Write a script for a Readers' Theatre
- Design a blueprint for a garden using scientific principles
CCSS Assignment Prompt

After reading Thomas Paine’s *Common Sense*, write an essay in which you trace the author’s argument and analyze how he develops his point of view.

- RI 1-2, 9
- W2
- L1-3

Assignment Products

- ESSAYS & REPORTS
- Exhibits
- Proposals
- Blueprints
- Models
- Memos
- Radio talks
- Timelines
- Dictionaries
- Speeches
- Maps
- Media products
- Games

EVIDENCE OF LEARNING...AND TEACHING

CCSS Assignment Prompt: RL7

Create a side-by-side organizer which compares key features and events in Lewis’ fantasy novel, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, with the movie.
Assignment Rubric

- Describes success criteria
- Is a “how well” guide for students

7 Steps to Create an Assignment

1. Define standards, goals, content
2. Determine a product
3. Identify demands and qualities
4. Write a prompt
5. Write a rubric
6. Do the assignment
7. Develop an instructional plan

TEACH!

1. Define standards, goals, content

Grade 5
- SL 3 (Ask and answer questions about information from a speaker...); W4
- Animal habitats
- Ability to participate in an event
2. Determine a product

- Written list of questions for speaker
- Summary of 3 main points with examples.

3. Identify demands and qualities

- Demands? (listen, speak, participate, summarize)
- Qualities? (concise, relevant, clearly)

Sample assignment prompt

To prepare for our speaker's visit, write five questions you would like to ask her about animal habitats. After the presentation, write a few sentences that explain three important points about animal habitats and give at least one example for each point.
5. Write a success rubric

- lists five relevant questions
- correctly composes questions and sentences
- correctly identifies 3 main points
- provides at least one relevant example for each point.

6. Do the assignment yourself

- Self-checking technique
- Revise assignment if necessary

7. Write an instructional plan

1: Introduce and “deconstruct” task
2: Review how to write a question & what is a relevant question
4: Visitor - Tape presentation
5: Teach summarizing; using examples
6: Whole group outline...Write first draft
7: Teach revision strategies
8: Teach editing for spelling and punctuation
Assignments in Sequence

Techniques for varying complexity by:
- “upping” text complexity
- increasing demands or qualities
- emphasizing a single standard

build a course with assignments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quarter</th>
<th>Products</th>
<th>Assignment Content</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Essay</td>
<td>Legends, myths, and fantasy fiction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Multi-media</td>
<td>Romanticism and the Ideal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Research paper</td>
<td>Modernism and its disenchantments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Anchor Assignments

- Common assignments taught by a group of teachers in a department, grade, school, or subject.
- Adopt a Standard
Environments rich in:

- TIME to teach reading and writing
- TIME to work collaboratively
- TIME to re-teach and re-learn
- RESOURCES
- SPACES – inside/outside
- BUDGET to support environments

Using Assignments as Data

- To track effectiveness of instructional choices
- To gauge effectiveness of assignments
- To track student progress

THANK YOU

The task predicts performance.