DEPARTMENT NEWS

CONCEPT SCHOOLS’ TEACHER OF THE YEAR

Concept Schools’ annual Teacher of the Year program continues to draw the best and brightest teachers throughout our network. Anyone can nominate a teacher (even a colleague!)

The Concept Schools Teacher of the Year will also serve a community point person who both promotes charter community schools and innovative teaching strategies. He or she will receive a $1000 monetary award for this recognition.

http://www.conceptschools.org/teacher-of-the-year/
The deadline for nominating a teacher is Feb. 26, 2016.
The deadline for applications is April 15, 2016.
The winner will be announced on May 20, 2016.

CONNECT TO OUR RESOURCES

Have you check out the Department’s web page? There are links to some great things there as well as a central place to find things like the unit outlines and yearly scope/sequence documents.

http://elementary.conceptschools.org/

In addition to the website, you can also periodically check our Google Drive to find things that I have created or are not on the website. Here is the link to the Google Drive for K-2 Resources:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/0B6FjXc7-cwqWQ2rZGU1ZkExV3M/view?usp=sharing

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FREE?!!?

“Fact Fluency” is listed in all of our math standards from Kindergarten on up. Yet, the typical math textbooks have very little information on how to get students to master their facts. We’ve all considered pulling out those flash cards but did you know there are many other high-interest ways to get students practicing their facts?

MATH FACTS
Card Games
So many of us grew up playing War, one card beating another card. Try a new approach having each student flip over two cards. The player with the highest sum (or difference, product, or quotient.)

Here is a site that lists many, many other card games that students can play to help practice their basic math facts:

Daily Home Practice Sheet:
This site allows teachers to generate and print simple worksheets. The best part is that you can set your problem range, truly differentiating math fact practice for each student!
https://www.mathfactcafe.com/

More Ways to Practice: http://www.themeasuredmom.com/10-fun-ways-to-learn-math-facts/

ONLINE
XtraMath
This FREE online site is simple to use yet very effective. Students are asked to answer simple math facts in under 3 seconds. Teachers can set up a class, send home information letters for parents (who can help their child log in from home,) and monitor student progress through simple reports.
https://xtramath.org/#/home/index

Math Fact Shoot-Out:
This is a very simple game where students answer math problems correctly in order to earn foul shots.
http://www.abcya.com/math_facts_game.htm

APPS
Math Flash Cards*
This app has simple interface that makes it easy for kids to play. It is also adaptive so students get only the math facts that are appropriate for their level.

Math Monster
Students get to earn points by filling a row/column on a Bingo-like answer board with monsters who appear when students select the correct answer. Students can then use their points to play games.
Get EVERY Student Participating!
By Jennifer Sajovec

Do you often feel like only a few students are interacting with your lesson? Maybe the same students raise their hands to answer every question? Here are some practical strategies for increasing student engagement in your classroom!

1. **Hook “Em!**
   Nothing turns more minds off than the “Today, we are going to learn about…” phrase. Start your lesson with something that catches your students’ attention. A hook is an engaging, exciting, inspiring start to the lesson that captures your students’ imagination and interest in the topic. Imagine a lesson on changing states of matter starting with this knock knock joke:
   
   Q: How do you know a snowman crawled into bed with you?
   A: You wake up wet and there’s a carrot on your pillow!

   Hooks can be anything that peeks your students’ interest! Start your lesson with a short video clip, pair great children’s books with science or social studies topics, or show your students famous artwork such as Van Gogh’s Starry Night to start a discussion about the night sky.

2. **Give them time!**
   Classroom observations reveal that teachers typically wait less than 1 second for students to respond to a question. You often get the same students raising their hands and the same students off in another world, confident that eager student will respond and answer the question. If you increase wait time to about 5-7 seconds, you’ll slowly see more hands. And now for an even better trick, don’t let students raise their hands at all during the wait time. As soon as a few hands go up in the air, your reluctant students breathe a sigh of relief that there is someone else willing to answer the question. Phew! To encourage even more participation, allow for significant wait time with hands down. Then pull popsicle sticks (or any other random selection method) to invite a student to participate. Caution: we never want to put students “on the spot.” Allow students to “pass” if they truly don’t have the answer.

3. **What are the other students doing?**
   How many times have you called up a student to demonstrate how to write an addition sentence only to look out and see all the rest of the class rolling across the rug? Here are some suggestions for getting all of your students participating:

   - **Think/Pair/Share** Get all students interacting with one another about your lesson. Watch the great video on the reading rockets site for ideas on how to implement think-pair-share in your classroom. [http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/think-pair-share](http://www.readingrockets.org/strategies/think-pair-share)

   - **Whiteboards!** One of the most effective ways to get all your kids “answering” is to allow them to write their answers on individual whiteboards. Full disclaimer: there will be an adjustment period as students learn the procedures and expectation for using these. Also, give students a very short period of time at the beginning of each lesson where they can freely draw, get it out of their system before starting the actual work. Tip: Many home improvement stores sell something called shower board that they may even cut for you into lap-size pieces.

   - **Yes/No Spoons:** Need an easy way for all students to respond at once? Try yes/no spoons! Students simply hold up their spoon to give an answer. You can also just use thumbs up/thumbs down. A quick glance at your class would also give you instant feedback about how many students are understanding the lesson.

   - **Incorporate Movement** Allow students to “vote with their feet,” by strategically placing answers around the room and having students walk and stand. The answers is a great way to add movement. A simple approach would be to just have students stand up for true or sit down for false.

   - **Self-Reflection** Do your students even recognize how much they are participating? Check out this blog post on hosting a Hog? Log? Or Frog? meeting in your classroom: [http://applefortheteach.blogspot.com/2015/12/increasing-positive-student.html](http://applefortheteach.blogspot.com/2015/12/increasing-positive-student.html)