

The Teacher's Summer Excellence Checklist.

When summer is in full swing, that means one thing for teachers; they are 6-8 weeks away from the start of another school year. Kids will soon begin shopping for items on their school supply lists, and parents will anxiously await the announcement of their child's teachers while they get their children ready for the start of school.



1. Resources

- Obviously, every teacher needs the tools of the trade, but great teachers surpass possession of tools by also possessing the skillful use of those tools to help every kid learn. The more technical the resource, the more necessary it is to learn how to be proficient at using that tool in a way that will empower kids to own their learning.

2. Routines & Procedures

- Every good teacher develops routines and procedures for their classroom, but great teachers have a plan to intentionally transfer the responsibility and leadership for those routines and procedures over to the kids. If the goal is learning for all, students need to own the routines and procedures that are designed to help them learn. For each routine, great teachers have a plan to empower students to take ownership of it.

3. Relationships

- Relationships are important, but alone they don't get the job done. (See The 'Right' Relationships Matter). Relationships for learning, however, require teachers to develop the optimal relationship with each child in order to accelerate each child's learning. To prepare for these relationships with new students, great teachers research their students. They learn their strengths, areas for growth and strategies that are proven to help each student learn, but they go the extra mile by making a plan to build a meaningful relationship with each child in an effort to inspire him to learn.

4. Relevance

- Nothing is more boring to a student than sitting in a class that has no relevance. To engage kids, excellent teachers plan their instruction with one purpose: connect kids to the learning target during every minute of the day. Sure, great activities help develop relevance, but how great teachers structure their instructional time to keep kids engaged through those activities is what maintains and even accelerates engagement and relevance. Great teachers are developing or refining their plans with the specific purpose of optimizing engagement.

5. Rigor

- Rigor is about 3 things: planning for it, delivering it, and responding to it. Great teachers realize that rigor can't occur unless they, themselves, have the content knowledge and expertise first. From content expertise, teachers of excellence focus their efforts on transferring that expertise to students through the intentional use of assessments, instructional strategies and questioning techniques that take kids from what they know to what they need to know, and they do that at high levels of complexity. Excellent teachers are busy locating and curating all kinds of strategies that will lead every student to rigorous learning.

6. Intervention

- Great teachers know that even the best lesson will leave some students behind; therefore, they don't wait for failure. They plan for it. They anticipate possible mistakes or misunderstandings that students will have and have automatic responses when those mistakes reveal themselves. The best intervention is prevention, and great teachers do a whole lot of preventing in their instruction. These teachers are making plans to identify students with a history of failure and creating prevention strategies that will help these students overcome failure beginning with the first day of instruction.

7. Extension

- While some kids need extra attention, other kids need extra extension. When kids learn a concept in a great teacher's class, they don't get more of the same. They are provided choices to apply their learning through personalized activities that matter to the student. Great teachers offer students a menu of extension activities that are on display for students on the first day of school, and this menu serves as great motivator to remind kids to work hard at learning.

8. Collaboration

- Great teachers grow, and they grow by learning with and from their peers inside and outside of the school. Whether it is a collaborative team, their campus leaders or their PLN, great teachers are connected to a wide variety of educators and collaborate with them frequently because they believe their own continuous improvement is essential to help all students learn. Great teachers are gathering ideas and thoughts all summer long so that when schools starts, they can help their peers grow and their students learn.

9. Tech Integration

- Technology is a tool that supports learning, and great teachers integrate technology with one specific purpose, support the learning goals of the lesson. It is also important to note that they don't jump onto every tech bandwagon that rolls into town. They ensure that technology will enhance student learning by seamlessly integrating technology into their lessons. To enhance student learning, excellent teachers brush up on their tech tools and ensure that they work out the kinks with each tool, so that kids will have a smooth start using these tools in the first week of school.

10. Parent Communication

- Parents are a valuable resource to support student learning, and great teachers tap into that resource by initiating, building, and maintaining parent communication through both face to face and digital interactions with parents. By keeping the lines of communication open through weekly communication with parents, they build support systems that reinforce student learning. Great teachers will have their communication plan ready to disseminate to students and parents on the first day of school as well as a system to keep the communication system effectively running all year long.

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