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MINI-MANUAL

Instruction: Authentic Learning



INSTRUCTIONAL
COACHING
GROUP

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For more detailed information regarding the information contained in this mini-manual, refer to:

High Impact Instruction: A Framework for Great Teaching

Chapter 9

By Jim Knight

Also view the High Impact Instruction introduction video:



Instruction: Authentic Learning

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Authentic Learning

“I am not afraid of storms for I am learning how to sail my ship.”

LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

“It is paradoxical that many educators and parents still differentiate between a time for learning and a time for play without seeing the vital connection between them.”

LEO BUSCAGLIA

KEY CONCEPTS FOR COACHES

KEY FEATURES OF AUTHENTIC LEARNING

- 1 It must be grounded in aspects of the real world.
- 2 It must provide a sense of purpose for students to ponder and make sense of.
- 3 It must involve some type of real world task or product.
- 4 When authentic learning is implemented well, it is the essence of rigor and relevance.

Turning Ideas Into Action

STUDENTS

- 1 Ensure that students are active partners during authentic learning.
- 2 Encourage students to provide suggestions for how to improve future authentic learning projects.
- 3 Encourage students to talk about their interests, passions, concerns, and fears. Authentic learning is only powerful if students truly care about the project they are addressing.

TEACHERS

- 1 Dedicate a lot of time to talking with students to identify the issues and topics that interest them.
- 2 Continually be on the lookout for settings for authentic learning.
- 3 Contact community groups to find agencies that can provide safe and supportive mentoring for students.

INSTRUCTIONAL COACHES

- 1 Begin learning about authentic learning by partnering with one teacher on a small but high-quality project.
- 2 Be on the lookout for resources teachers can use when designing projects.
- 3 Visit websites to learn about other projects and develop a library of projects that can be shared with teachers.

PRINCIPALS

- 1 Allow teachers the freedom to experiment with innovative learning such as authentic learning.
- 2 Engage in dialogue with other administrators in your district about the merits of authentic learning.
- 3 Arrange for your teachers to visit schools where authentic learning is being implemented successfully.

What It Looks Like



Authentic learning, when done well, addresses issues of student engagement. When students are involved in well-designed, high-quality projects, learning becomes fun for students. Allowing choices within parameters (freedom within form) gives students opportunities to explore topics and skills that they are interested in and care about. The classroom environment may appear calm and relaxed or frenetically engaged in activity. Conversations and dialogue should center on the project, and academic conversations should become more of the norm. The best way to determine if authentic learning is actually impacting student learning is to survey students to find out their attitude toward learning.

AUTHENTIC LEARNING CHECKLIST

AUTHENTIC LEARNING ALWAYS INVOLVES...	CHECK
A real-world issue.	
A real-world product.	
Real-world assessment.	
Real student engagement.	

SUCCESSFUL AUTHENTIC LEARNING CHECKLIST

IN DESIGNING AUTHENTIC LEARNING...	CHECK
Identify the purpose of the project.	
Mediate relationships with mentors and experts.	
Identify and divide tasks.	
Establish criteria for success.	
Identify a real audience.	
Teach necessary skills and knowledge.	

PROJECT CRITERIA CHECKLIST

IS THE PROJECT...	CHECK
Relevant?	
Interesting?	
Meaningful?	