

'Spring' a Change into the Classroom

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When Spring arrives a change in the classroom routine may be as important as the change in the weather. I utilize this time with my junior high students to assess progress, provide needed reinforcement, and furnish enrichment materials. The work is done by the students on an independent basis during the class period.

Students are administered a group mastery test which includes only the principle core objectives taught during the year. These are:

1. Addition and subtraction of whole numerals and decimals
2. Multiplication of whole numerals and decimals
3. Division of whole numerals and decimals
4. Addition and subtraction of fractions
5. Multiplication and division of fractions
6. Customary units of measure
7. Metric units of measure
8. Percent and decimal equivalence
9. Rate, base, and part exercises
10. Problem solving

Each objective is assigned a value of ten points which the student earns if he demonstrates a seventy-five percent mastery level. The student is assigned a series of practice exercises for each objective where mastery is not demonstrated.


The next one to three weeks of class is devoted to the completion of these assigned exercises. The amount of time I allow depends upon the grade level and ability grouping of the particular class. Their work is done during the regular class period when I am available for individual help. As the work for each objective is completed, I check their progress, give them an informal conference, and have them correct their work. When

the student successfully completes the exercises for a particular objective, he/she is awarded the full ten point value. This is an incentive for the lower ability student to earn a good score during this unit.

There are those students who do not complete all their assigned work when the unit ends. An additional week is provided for them to finish the work and earn the full credit. This work must now be done on their own time in addition to the regular daily assignments which now resume.

On the other end of the spectrum are those students who have previously mastered these basic objectives. An individualized unit with pre-algebra skills and advanced work with rationals is given to these students. They check their own work, record their progress, and participate in small group instruction when needed. The student is tested and receives extra-credit points in direct proportion to their test score. This is the only extra-credit allowed all year.

The results of the unit are useful to both the student and the teacher. The student has a clear picture of those skills he has mastered and those he has not. The grading procedure permits all students to complete the unit with a successful grade if they choose to do the work. For the teacher the individual's test may be used as additional data to assist in ability grouping for next year's math classes. By observing the group's results, adjustments to the curriculum and/or instruction may be made. Perhaps the most immediate benefit of this unit is the change it provides to the classroom routine when it may be needed the most.

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