DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Jacob Javits Grant: Project North Star Module Three

Professional Learning Module Three: Maintaining High Expectations for Student Performance and Academic Rigor

Introduction

There is a tendency to view persons impacted by poverty as victims of their circumstances and to accept if not expect widespread academic failure or at least poor performance. This is a deficit view of students' education. Rather, students must not only be held to high expectations, but provided an engaging and rigorous learning environment in order to sustain their learning through hard work and increased confidence. Why the shortcomings of experience, means, and literacy development exist for the students, the learning environment should provide accommodations to address related needs. On the other hand, educators must be steadfast in the provision of high expectations for academic performance and rigorous curriculum and instruction.

Rationale

Students of poverty are capable of high expectations which must be supported by rigorous learning. One of the necessary interventions for breaking the rural poverty cycle is to provide students a substantive education.

Regularly communicated high expectations for student performance that emanate from an engaging and rigorous learning experience will lead to student success. Educators must know how high expectations, rigorous instruction, and complex curricula enhance student achievement.

Professional Learning Goal

Educators understand why students impacted by rural poverty should neither be perceived nor taught based on a deficit perspective.

Learning Objectives

1. Educators develop meaningful and challenging learning activities to address target students' academic characteristics and needs.
2. Educators maintain high expectations for all students as evidenced in meaningful and challenging activities

Module Sessions

1. Warm-Up

2. High Expectations: Just Say No to the Deficit Model of Teaching Students Impacted by Poverty
3. What is rigor?
4. Rigorous Instruction
5. Rigorous Curricula
6. Final Reflection

Required Resources

Directions: Place participants at tables (round preferred) in preparation for small group activities

Part	Module Materials
1	Digital copy of the "Push, don't pity" quote to project for participants
2	Digital copy of enabling poverty quote to project for participants to see
3	• Viewable copy of definition of rigor • Technology access to play multiple videos with sound
4	Technology access to play videos with sound
5	• Digital copy of the Depth and Complexity Icon Chart (see Appendix A) • Perspectives Icon Worksheet (see Appendix B). • Chart paper • Technology access to play multiple videos with sound.

Part One: Warm-Up (15 Minutes)

Ask participants to reflect about the significance of the phrase, "Push, don't pity students in poverty

(McKibben, 2018)."

Source: http://www.ascd.org/publications/newsletters/education-update/jan18/vol60/num01/Push,-Don't-Pity,-Students-in-Poverty.aspx

Part Two: High Expectations: Say No to the Deficit Approach to Teaching and Learning (60 Minutes)

1. One educational leader warns teachers not to fall be lured into the false perception that students of poverty cannot perform well given their circumstances. Share the following statement with the participants.

"But you know, they just can't do it. They're poor, they don't have this at home, they don't have that at home. I'm not going to give that assignment because many of them just can't do it. They can do everything everybody else can do if you expect it and teach it."

(McKibben, 2018, page one*)."*

In small groups, participants should discuss how this attitude limits and negatively impacts student success.

2. A deficit approach to education alludes to a general perspective that defines students by their weaknesses rather than their strengths. This approach does not recognize that poor people are impacted disproportionately by the effects of nearly every major social problem that exists today. For example, they possess limited access to health care; often do not have living-wage jobs; and do not live in safe and affordable housing. All of these conditions limit students' abilities to reach their full potential (Gorski, 2008).

Source: http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/apr08/vol65/num07/The-Myth-of-the-Culture-of-Poverty.aspx

3. In place of a deficit approach to education students of poverty, focus on strengths and build on them. Although students need to develop competencies, a strength-based approach allows educators to create engaging learning experiences that build on strengths and tackle weaknesses through student strengths. This approach builds confidence and make students feel competent, which motivates students to work hard. One of the essential aspects of a strength-based approach to education is consistently setting and maintaining high expectations for academic performance.

Part Three: What is rigor? (90 minutes)

1. Gorski (2008) states that persons of poverty are unjustly perceived as lazy. One of commonly held believe is that poor people are unmotivated and have weak work ethics. However, he points out that poor people do not have weaker work ethics or lower levels of motivation than wealthier people. Unfortunately, stereotypes of laziness and disinterest in hard work prevail. Perhaps, when students find not working hard or at all to perform well in the classroom accepted, they buy into the myth themselves. The best defense is consistently holding high expectations for all students.

2. **What is rigor? What rigor is not.** Essentially, rigor is considered cognitive or intellectual challenge when applied to academic pursuits. Academic rigor does NOT mean that something is difficulty or requires hard work necessarily. Rigorous teaching and learning leads to mastery of content, dispositions, and skills that have purpose for the student. Rigorous proposes to advance students level of understanding, develop independence in learning, prepare students for specialized expertise, and provides opportunity for life and career success. **In the classroom, rigor is or is not…**

Rigor is	Rigor is NOT
• depth and complexity.	• more of the same work.
• higher-order thinking.	• working longer.
• constructing versus deconstructing knowledge.	• more homework and practice.
• asking versus telling.	• more review.
• understanding multiple perspectives.	• working on deficits exclusively.
• problem-solving versus problem recognition.	
• student-centered.	
• for learning something new.	

3. Share the following definition of rigor when applied to the classroom.

Rigor is creating an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, and each is supported so he or she can learn at high level, and each student demonstrates learning at high level (Barbara R. Blackburn, PhD, 2008).

4. Play video of Dr. Barbara Blackburn on raising rigor in the classroom as she discusses how this definition of rigor should be put to practice in education.

   Video Source: https://youtu.be/ldSuqzWSFjk

5. Play a video that demonstrates rigor translated into practice in a model classroom.

   Video Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MY492T_CUdQ

6. When considering teaching for rigor with students impacted by rural poverty, it is important to provide support for success. High expectations, rigorous curriculum and instruction, and support must exist together.

Part Four: Rigorous Instruction (90 Minutes)

1. Scaffolding. Students impacted by poverty can engage in rigorous learning, however, they often require scaffolding to support their progress. Scaffolding refers to instructional techniques that enhance students' understanding at complex levels and increases students' independence in learning over time by breaking content down into chunks. Show two videos about scaffolding in the classroom.

Video Source: https://youtu.be/Se6a9Q_37t4

Video Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5hWDbSx_kdo

Share examples of types of scaffolding includes:

   a. Advanced Organizers (graphic organizers that summarize information to be learned at the start of a lesson)
   b. Incorporate Visual Aids (presenting students with a graphic that demonstrate relationships of ideas, summarize ideas, or review what has already been taught.
   c. Think-Pair-Share (pair students with peers to share their thoughts)
   d. Think Aloud (sharing thoughts out loud when prompted)
   e. Know-What-Learn Chart(K-W-L) a chart that summarizes what is being learned in three columns: know, want to learn and learned.

In small groups, have participants brainstorm ways that any of the scaffolding strategies can be implemented in their classrooms to support students when studying complex ideas and concepts.

2. Graphic Organizers. A graphic organizer is a visual demonstration of how one or more things related to one another. Different types of graphic organizers are associated with various levels of thinking required for completion. Therefore, different organizers can raise the level of thinking in which students engage. Show videos that introduce graphic organizers and provide examples.

   Video Source: https://youtu.be/vp0DXZ2aAVk

   Video Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNFk9AQhKAA

In small groups, have participants brainstorm ways that any of the graphic organizer strategies can be implemented in their classrooms to support students when studying complex ideas and concepts.

Part Five: Rigorous Curriculum (90 Minutes)

1. Show participants a video that introduces the concept of adding depth and complexity to the curriculum in order to increase rigor in teaching and learning.

   Video Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L1gVT_Qk9Es&feature=youtu.be

2. Present Dr. Sandra Kaplan's Depth and Complexity Icon Chart (see Appendix A). The Depth and Complexity Icons symbols that remind students of techniques for deepening their learning. These strategies encourage students to think critically or deeper than superficial understandings, and to help them to expand their understanding of content. Explain the purpose of each icon and related strategy.

3. Play a video of Read-A-Loud of a children's book that tells the historic story of Ruby Bridges. In small groups by grade level and/or discipline, have participants use the Perspectives Icon worksheet (see Appendix B) to illustrate how Ruby's Teacher and Ruby understood the significance of what happened during her first year in a desegregated school. Groups can share how completing this worksheet created greater depth or complexity in understanding the content of the book.

   Video Source: https://youtu.be/U8D4ldGY41s

4. In small groups, have educators discuss ways that they icons can be integrated into their teaching. Each group should post their best idea on chart paper to share with the large group.

Part Six: Final Reflection (15 Minutes)

All educators should apply the **No Opt Out Principle** consistently. Ask participants to turn to their elbow-partner and discuss what the **No Opt Out Principle** means when applied to the education of students impacted by rural poverty. After participants reflect on the concept, share that **NoOptingOutPrinciple** suggests that students should not and will not quit before they succeed at a learning task. For example, when first asking a student a question that she cannot answer, persist with questioning until the student answers correctly.

Professional Learning Extensions

1. Conduct a needs assessment with all educators to determine which strategies for increasing rigor require more training.
2. Provide classroom demonstrations of educators implementing rigorous instructional strategies, in addition to implementing depth and complexity icons.

References

Blackburn, B. (2008). *Rigor is not a four-letter word*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Gorski, P. (2008). *The myth of the culture of poverty. Educational Leadership* 65(7), pages 32-36.

McKibben, S. (2018). *Push, don't pity students of poverty*. Educational Leadership 60(1), pages 1-8.

Appendices

Appendix A: Dr. Sandra Kaplan, Facilitating the Understanding of DEPTH and COMPLEXITY

Facilitating the Understanding of DEPTH and COMPLEXITY

Note to the teacher: This chart identifies key questions, thinking skills, and dimensions of DEPTH and COMPLEXITY. Key questions can be used in the context of lesson plans to probe understanding and to prompt students during discussions.

The thinking skills can be used to initiate the type of cognitive operation or thinking that could best prompt each of the elements of DEPTH and COMPLEXITY. The resources listed are the most logical references in which to locate the type of information required by each of the elements of DEPTH and COMPLEXITY.

Appendix B: Perspectives Icon Worksheet

Topic Title	Name