

2/11/2015

To Whom It May Concern,

 Over the last few months, I have seen Luis Contreras make many improvements in his instruction. The first area in which Mr. Contreras has demonstrated growth is in increasing his effective questioning of students with the purpose of encouraging deeper thinking. By focusing on this facet of his instruction, Mr. Contreras has been asking questions to a wider range of students and ensuring that all questions are scaffolded towards mastery of the learning objective. He also is consistently implementing strategies to enable students to correctly answer questions and extend or justify their thinking. He is employing such strategies as “Right is Right”, “Wait Time” and “No Opt Out” from the *Teach Like a Champion* resource by Doug Lemov.

 Mr. Contreras has also added more opportunities to check for students’ understanding (during the lesson. He uses different techniques in order to take snapshots of how the class is progressing towards mastery of the objective as well as how individual students are progressing. For example, Mr. Contreras’ students often complete problems on whiteboards so that he can quickly check their work, and periodically has students hold their whiteboards above their heads so that he can get a snapshot of their progress. Also, at times Mr. Contreras will ask students to give a thumbs-up, thumbs-side, or thumbs-down to indicate their understanding of the learning objective before moving on to the next section. Mr. Contreras has been spacing these Checks for Understanding (CFUs) throughout the lesson in order to yield actionable data on students’ progress and is learning to properly adjust whole-class instruction as necessary to meet each student’s learning needs. For example, when he anticipates a common misconception, Mr. Contreras will give the class an Error Analysis prompt designed to highlight the misconception. Students are directed to collaboratively identify the error in the problem and brainstorm ways to avoid making that mistake.

 Finally, in alignment with the Common Core standards, Mr. Contreras has been infusing inquiry learning into his instruction. Typically, his instruction follows a gradual release cycle: I do, we do, you do, in order to efficiently teach students the lesson content and have them practice it. However, in order to give students increased ownership of their learning, he also teaches student-based lessons, with an inquiry cycle of: you do, we do, you do. With this model, students are given carefully scaffolded questions and problems that require them to think critically in order to uncover and apply the learning goals for the lesson themselves with minimal teacher interference. Mr. Contreras has also made an effort to include more literacy based tasks in his instruction, more often asking students to justify their answer in written form.

 Mr. Contreras has truly made noticeable progress in many areas of instruction during this school year. I look forward to seeing him grow even more as the school year continues, and to become a master teacher himself in the near future.

Sincerely,

Rene Quon

Math Department Chair

Alain Leroy Locke College Prep

323-578-2226

Rene.quon@animo.org