

Indicator: All teachers provide students with curriculum-related activities for use when the student is waiting for assistance from the teacher. (4441)

Explanation: The evidence review confirms student achievement can be bolstered when teachers design and assign meaningful, lesson related activities to students to engage in while they wait for teacher assistance. These activities should provide additional opportunities for students to practice and/or demonstrate mastery of that lesson's learning goals. Teachers can maximize instructional time by avoiding unnecessary downtime through the use of pertinent wait time activities.

Questions: How will the Leadership Team determine that teachers design and assign lesson related activities which maintain student engagement in the lesson goals and learning outcomes? How do the teachers convey wait time expectations to students? What process do teachers use to build a repertoire of wait time activities? What types of wait time activities have teachers developed?

More and more, technology is used to individualize instruction, provide a well-organized presentation of material, offer feedback, and allow students to progress at their own rate. Computer-based instruction is successful when the program is carefully aligned with the same standards and objectives that the teacher is addressing within the designated unit of instruction. This requires the teacher to know the content of the computer program and to use it in concert with other modes of instruction. It also requires that the teacher check for mastery of objectives independent of the program's validation of mastery. When a computer program is successful, students are engaged, on task, and comfortable with the program and its navigation. The teacher travels about the room to assist students and monitor their work. When a student is in need of assistance from the teacher, the teacher provides curriculum-related activities to avoid "down time." In terms of classroom management, the students are taught to make orderly transitions to and from their computer stations.

Source: Sam Redding (2007), *Handbook on Restructuring and Substantial School Improvement*

Example:

Wait-Time Activities

Guidelines for Developing Wait-Time Activities

1. Wait-time activities are objectives-based.
2. Students are given a choice of a variety of activities.
3. Not all activities should be paper-and-pencil activities.
4. When possible, the wait-time activities should be targeted to the individual student.
5. The activities should be for practice and reinforcement and not for introducing new concepts.
6. Activities should be useful additions to the existing curriculum, and not busy work.

Wait-Time Activities (Variety of Grade Levels)

- Acrostic poems
- Flashcards (all subjects)
- Writing prompts
- Reading materials, silent reading with log, subject related reading
- Map-oriented projects
- Journals, illustrated journals
- Story mobiles
- Dictionary activities
- Problem of the Week (POW)
- Calculator Activities

- Picture Prompts
- Text problem solving
- Unit related vocabulary
- Write (silly) stories from five key words/spelling
- Use Process Portfolio that students can access to work on or finish projects
- Tangrams
- Book quilts
- Newspaper activities
- Test tips
- Create a word search (from vocabulary words)

Wait-Time Activities (middle/high school)

Read

- Three poems
- A chapter in a novel you have never read
- An article on current events
- A sports or financial item, noting the use of mathematical statistics
- An article about medical ethics issues raised as a result of new scientific developments

Make

- A map of your school, your block, etc.
- A bookmark, using symbolism of objects, colors, shapes, or lines
- A poster promoting a book or movie
- A collage using visual images and quotes from a poem or story you have studied
- A floor plan for the castle in “Masque of the Red Death”
- A mobile of symbols from a story, artist’s equipment, insects made from clay, etc.

Write

- A persuasive essay to convince teenagers to add classical or jazz music to their listening agenda
- Five math word problems that you could use to help tutor a 4th grader
- An account of a major event in a novel, using newspaper-reporting style
- A fictional mystery, using some obscure spot in your school as the setting

Draw

- A chart depicting types of exercises, along with calories burned for each one
- A very simplified diagram of the body organs that could be used to teach first graders
- A sequence of football helmets, showing how helmets have changed through the years
- A timeline showing influential musicians through history

Design

- A new recipe, starting with your own concept or altering a recipe you already have
- A trading card, resembling a baseball card, but recording information on a famous scientist, author, mathematician, etc.
- A marketing campaign for an unusual item – like a pencil shaped like a donut
- A campaign button for a political candidate
- A menu for a special event

List

- Your favorite sounds and/or smells (Be specific.)

- The ten people from history or from contemporary life that you would like to meet for a joint discussion
- The five most serious health issues for teenagers today
- The five most serious health issues for teenagers one hundred years ago-compare and draw conclusions

Source: ADI, *Teacher's Manual for Alliance for Achievement*

As Pappalardo (2014) asks in his article *"I'm Done": Meaningful Work for Classroom Downtime*:

Want to get those pesky little quick finishers off your tail? You veteran teachers know what I'm talking about. The kids who finish first and need to tell you they're finished. "I'm done." Those two words bring chills to my spine every time I hear them. Sometimes I just want to say...."Do you want me to stick a fork in you?" Or "Give it up, high-five!" Maybe even... "Did you flush?" Things I would love to say, but would probably get me in trouble. So, I've devised a plan to never hear those words again and to never be tempted to respond in such an honest, but unprofessional manner. "I'm done."

Pappalardo asked for possible solutions, and Thomas (2014) replied:

I taught my students when writing to say "I'm ready for the next step." Especially for those kiddos who want to be one and done. One word, one sentence, or one short paragraph. I also teach them to be reflective when doing all their work – Did I give my best effort? Have I R2D2'd my work? R2D2 = Read it twice, do it twice. Basically have I checked my work. For other times I have the "What to do List" pocket chart. When they forget about the chart and ask me what to do, I silently point to the chart. For instance, the What to Do List may have items in this order: 1. Finish draft of poem 2. Plant log measurement 3. Fix-n-Finish folder 4. DEAR. I rearrange, add and remove items on this list to keep it fresh. One side of the Fix-n-Finish folder is labeled "Must be Done" and the other is "Can be Done". All students have enrichment tasks/projects in their "Can be Done" side. Items in the must be done side need to be complete before moving on to the can be done. Must be done items are make-up work or items not finished in the time allowed. I love the sketch book idea.

There are those quick finishers that are ALWAYS caught up and never absent – for them have them pick a topic and we create some sort of mini-project they can do in all that spare time. Sometimes the project will be a continuation of a unit and sometimes it is just one of their hobbies or topics they want to know more about. When I have a quick finisher I always ask myself: Have I set the bar high enough on the content? Does the student have other areas of need? For instance, I have had several extremely talented mathematicians in the last few years. I ask them how they did the problem and they shrug – the answer just magically appeared of course. A majority of those kids have had social/communication difficulties. So as a result, instead of the what to do list, I get them to either write about their math work/process, or have them learn how to communicate better by supporting other students who need help. This is a win for everyone – the early finisher gets to share their knowledge and learn how to communicate better. The students in need get support from their peers. It only serves to strengthen the community. I also work to get the slow finishers time to support other students in a similar way so it isn't just the quick finishers who get that social/communication piece. Kids as teachers is a key element in my room for SO MANY REASONS.

Study after study agree: When waiting for assistance from the teacher, students should be occupied with curriculum-related activities provided by the teacher. In The Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement's July 15, 2009 newsletter, Six Quality Indicators of High-Achieving Schools include Effective Instruction, and Effective Instruction includes: "Activities and assignments (including homework) are engaging, relevant to the content, and reinforce or extend the objective of each lesson."

References and Resources

- Center for Comprehensive School Reform and Improvement. (2009). June 15 2009 Newsletter: Designing Effective School Improvement Strategies. Retrieved from http://www.centerforcsri.org/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=675&Itemid=5
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- Thomas, J. S. (2014). Comment Number One in G. Pappalardo (2014), "I'm Done": Meaningful Work for Classroom Downtime. Retrieved from <http://www.edutopia.org/discussion/im-done-meaningful-work-classroom-downtime>.