

How to be an “A” School: Teaching to Mastery

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Teaching to mastery is a process and, of course, it’s more difficult to implement any process these days. Still, teaching the Oklahoma Academic Standards (OAS) to mastery is worth the effort. Here’s how:

1. PLAN AHEAD! Evaluate the standards and the assessments you will use to determine if students have mastered the content. Plan your lessons (and/or use *Success with OAS* books) to ensure what you teach is aligned to the OAS.

- Spend time on the vocabulary and verbiage used in OAS objective descriptions. Do students know what “recognize,” “determine,” and “construct” mean? All are common terms on state tests even at Grade 3.
- Ensure students know how to find the BEST answer (the most plausible) from among choices given. Note that some questions are more difficult than others because of the Depth of Knowledge required.

2. SELL IT! Teach using the essential elements of a lesson, which are incorporated into in *Success with OAS* books:

- Prepare an anticipatory set (“Real World Connections”) to get students interested in the content, to activate their prior knowledge, and prepare them to learn something new.
- Model each lesson by showing students how to perform a skill while describing the rationale behind each step. This gives students visual and verbal examples of what they are expected to be able to do.
- Use the Guided Practice for discussion and provide opportunities for students to perform hands-on tasks in class and especially to write about what they are learning.
- Assign Independent Practice for homework and then review the content along with prior, related content in class discussion.
- Have students complete Continuous Practice assignments in class before or after assigning the applicable formative assessment.

3. USE THE DATA IN NEXT STEPS! If only half of the class is proficient on Independent Practice, find additional resources to re-teach the objective before assigning the formative test.

- Evaluate results of the formative quiz.
- Check the Item Response Report. If most of the students selected the same wrong answer, use the question for classroom discussion of why that was not the best answer.
- If only some students did not score proficient, plan intervention opportunities for these students and re-test them before it is time for the next benchmark assessment.

Since not all students learn in the same way or on the same day or even in the same year, **re-teaching and remediation should be the norm**. The more times you do it the better you will get at teaching to mastery every OAS objective.