

Effective Clemente Teaching Strategies

On May 13, 2003, Clemente High School teachers provided the following responses to questions about :

effective teaching to enable students to learn challenging content

strategies to maintain focus during the final weeks of school.

They are a resource for planning as well as a representation of the resourcefulness and responsiveness of Clemente teachers.

Many of the responses to both questions represent practical applications of the following principles of education that are central to effective instruction in special education as well as regular education.

Principle: Teach with clear focus

Practices: “Chunk” your content—organize units of instruction and establish weekly focus for lessons that scaffold learning to build fluency.

Principle: Organize a clear developmental progression

Practices: Organize the week to develop knowledge from a foundation through application and expansion.

Principle: Scaffold Learning

Practices: Use graphic organizers, provide models to students.

Principle: Differentiate instruction

Practices: Use a variety of instructional approaches, visual, verbal, kinesthetic, interactive.

Principle: Frequently check student learning

Practices: Ask students to illustrate important elements of the content such as key vocabulary and ideas/situations; ask students to state content in their own words and share with others; use a variety of assessments including visual, verbal, selected-response and open-ended.

What teaching strategies have you used that have enabled students to learn difficult content this school year?

- Broke content into "mini lessons" which built upon each other until students mastered more difficult concepts (actually I took lessons from the special education book).
- I try to use a multi-disciplinary approach: illustrate it, do an oral report, write about it, etc.
- Break down information into smaller, shorter segments. Visualize material with handouts and actual models.
- Students and teachers working together. Having students participate in the learning process as much as possible. Students have to feel confident in order to open up their minds.
- Demonstrating complicated spreadsheet functions before asking the students and having the students write their own instruction on how to perform a complicated operation.
- Because of the difficulty of the language of the subject that I teach, I have had to do much explaining, summarizing, and outlining so that the students can get the concepts.
- Consistency, keep doing it, and graphic organizers.
- Graphic organizers, vocabulary games (cross word puzzle, etc.,) and have the students write their own questions for test and quizzes.
- Modeling--students struggle with conceptual imagery of topographical maps, so we created 3-D models of topographical maps to reinforce the concept.
- Graphic organizers, visual aids, class notes and discussion.
- Guided listening, jigsaw, DRTA and writing rubrics.
- Repetition/practice the skill, task/discuss new information, students do an activity in groups as teachers support students and students perform their own modeling and demonstrations to help make abstract ideas concrete/visual.
- The students must learn to follow directions to complete assignments.
- Break complex concepts into small parts that seem accomplishable.
- Move at a manageable pace. Break complicated concepts into smaller chunks allowing mastery at each level before going on and constant review (everyday).
- I have used graphic organizers, games, and daily review with bell ringers, and I have stayed on topics until they are learned instead of jumping on to the next one. I have also used computer software to teach reading and small groups to provide different instruction to students who learn differently.
- Breaking it down to realistic or neighborhood terms and situations and using movies and drawing on the board.
- Review games.
- "Think Aloud" during the reading of Julius Cesar.

What teaching strategies have you used that have enabled students to learn difficult content this school year? (Continued)

- Graphic organizers, the Socratic method, group projects, RAFT, illustrations, character grids, T-charts, webs and Venn diagrams
- Pictures, computers and articles have been used to give the students examples of different content.
- Diagrams, summaries, illustrating main ideas and organizing theme units.
- Throughout the year I have used scaffolding in my classroom. In other words I have grouped students with low comprehension skills with students who have high comprehension skills and allowed them to help one another. I have also created group projects that enable students to apply various skills.
- I assigned the students a project that involved graphing quadratic equations. I used a sheet with all of the instructions, step by step, on how to graph a quadratic equation.
- Graphic organizers, illustrations, and modeling by teachers or better yet by peers.
- Using interactive exercises like mock trials that produce empathy for historical figures and situations.
- Multiple examples, visuals, writing, verbal, peer teaching, scaffolding and designing my lesson in such a way that slowly but consistently adds to prior knowledge.
- I have given them different trivia games using the students' ideas to incorporate the objectives and vocabulary of each story/play.
- They have formed groups and teach each other.
- Repetition, graphic organizers, paraphrasing difficult ideas, and breaking down a difficult text piece by piece.
- Review prerequisite knowledge, break down multiple step problems into individual pieces, and emphasize vocabulary words/definitions to enhance the learning of the topic and the steps/directions that are required.
- Keep It Simple, try to break it down into easy to understand sections and have realistic expectations.
- Presenting as many simple examples as possible, making test questions based on class notes, and asking students oral questions regarding techniques used to solve problems.
- Demonstration/simulation, repetition in a different format like reading, writing, discussion, performing and using academic games for review like Jeopardy, board games, etc.
- Graphic organizers, summarize difficult articles, and identifying difficult vocabulary.
- Use of student's previous experience. Constant review of the material previously covered.
- Modeling how I'd attack the material, group students so slower students can learn from a faster one.
- Small unit, more time to finish test, outline, and review using materials appropriate for grade level, read short stories and MFD curriculum.

What teaching strategies have you used that have enabled students to learn difficult content this school year? (Continued)

- Small units and review old lessons. Encourage students to motivate other students and don't ask students to perform hard task at the beginning of class.
- Small groups deal with different subjects and they become experts and teach it to others using kid language.
- I've taught important writing skills like interdisciplinary projects, group work, repetition and review and reinforced them all year.
- Peer tutoring, pair up medium and low achieving students, small group instruction and lots of repetition of the same concepts in different formats.
- For vocabulary comprehension we began limiting the number of words and expanding the number of activities using the words, (i.e. five tough words: 1. Define 2. Synonym 3. Use in a sentence 4. Use in a paragraph 5. Use in a paper 6. Use in conversation. This is instead of flying through 10-20 words a week.
- I do the SSR with my students. Those students who do not do the SSR activities do not continue with their projects until the SSR is done. Most students do finish the SSR and a summary.
- Task analysis.
- Survey, question, read, recite, review, KWL, and repetition.
- Going very slowly (step by step) at the beginning and gradually speeding up the classroom pace and amount of information. Using the same vocabulary and process many times before moving on.
- Graphic organizers, using multi-media for my presentations, videos, computer access to the Internet, audiotapes and newspapers.
- Critical thinking, having students analyze new songs for patterns, repeat new concepts and unknowns.
- I draw pictures to show them how and what is the structure of the atom. Since I have to teach learning disabilities, if they can look at the pictures they can get the material.
- Visual aids, charts, pie diagrams, CRI, teaching strategies, interacting with students and involving students in learning.
- Rubrics, Internet research, group activities, review/repetition, class discussions, questions and answer, homework and reinforcement.
- Note taking, oral questions for group work, social skills, and vocabulary skills and reading skills, everything is read out loud.
- Class discussions, vocabulary, newspaper/magazine articles, read, and write, study sheets and videos.
- Make connections to what they already know (cultural events, English).
- I've used flash cards to teach positive and negative numbers.
- Repetition, oral analysis, writing essays from two simple sentence answers to paragraphs.
- I used a lot of hands-on training and put a lot of burden on certain cadets in order to learn how to be a leader and how to organize an event. Teach them its o.k. to make mistakes as long as they showed effort.

What teaching strategies have you used that have enabled students to learn difficult content this school year? (Continued)

- Learning new words and concepts by drawing examples. Showing and working out similar examples and having students use them as guidelines.
- Small group re-instruction (outside the classroom), visual examples in math and science, and translating explanations into simple language.
- Repetition.
- Projects, posters and games (learning activities).
- Variety of methods.
- Create a 3-D model, diagram model and write an explanation of the model. Work as a group on creating the model.
- We made a booklet of the U.S. Constitution's amendments, drew pictures to connect to each one and rehearsed with each other.
- Writing sentences that finally make paragraphs.
- Using graphic organizers whenever possible, use of vocabulary, definitions and theorems as clues for identifying approach to solutions.
- Created games and demonstrated procedures.
- Learning cycle, explore, direct instruction, apply and tying concepts to hands-on activities.
- In reading workshop, the students and I act out certain things that we have read. In Environmental Science, the students and I try to relate topics to everyday life in order to get a better understanding.
- Break down concepts into small, easy to understand concepts. Use timelines, graphic organizers, chart analysis, pro and con chart, cause and effect charts, character maps, illustrations and vocabulary analysis within the context.
- Students have been learning to analyze information and make connections to content/subject.
- Simplicity.
- I've read almost all written material to the students from time to time, some of the students will volunteer to read passages (one stanza in a poem).
- Give bonus points for extra credit and have students work in groups so that they can actually give something. Teacher chooses groups and gives out specific work for each group member.
- I use many of the graphic organizers that we have been introduced to. I also use cooperative learning in order to get difficult subjects understood. Teams will make video report about their country.
- Group synthesis and summary of chapter sections in text with notes, written report, oral report presented and questioned by the class. Review, discuss and use key vocabulary in context.
- Modeling music performance techniques on the recorder and the choral classes as per Illinois/CPS Goals for Learning Alignment (standards based assessment).
- I have used graphic organizers that focus on critical thinking skills, timelines and the Chicago Reading Initiative applications (fluency, writing, reading, comprehension and word knowledge).
- They can now scaffold outlines. I am so proud of them.

What teaching strategies have you used that have enabled students to learn difficult content this school year? (Continued)

- Self help testing. Quiz students on subject content on a weekly basis. Grade evaluation of quiz done by fellow student. Quiz is designed to self evaluate each student with each student competing against themselves.
- I use group work, graphic organizers and short writing assignments to prepare students for culminating individual projects and essays. This keeps kids engaged on a daily basis and allows them to develop thinking socially and graphically without diminishing individual accountability for learning skill mastery.
- SIP exercises, summary, infer and predict. Repetition using different activities, i.e. vocabulary study and grammar taught daily using different exercises. Group work with critical thinking and cognitive exercises (it promotes cooperation and synthesis of various ideas). Journal entries in which they free write. This promotes a platform for students to discuss anything. Most choose to write on personal issues and I reply.

What strategies/activities will you use to maintain focus during the final weeks of school?

- Students create dramatic roles from short stories and perform skits (ownership of creativity = focus).
- Use a lot of real world problems to have students see how Algebra is used in day-to-day life, i.e. compare cell phone plans (system of equations).
- Academic “Las Vegas week” (focused on core learning--all games are reading related, i.e. Vocabulary Roulette Wheel) and a field trip to the zoo in mid June.
- Work through some daily problems with teacher, the assignments are due and graded at the end of the class period.
- Using high-interest handouts, reviewing the various topics taught and learned during the school year. These handouts can be presented as word games, puzzles, etc.
- Break up the week a bit but keep focus with the curriculum. Focus on the overall exam, A+ required of all students.
- Individual/group projects, do the Market Basket for final, and reward good behavior.
- Keep the last few weeks of school interesting using games and interesting assignments.
- Charts--students will record daily weather conditions with hopes of obtaining enough data to create a climate pattern for a typical Chicago spring.
- Labs, group activities, strategies to keep motivation (incentives), and remind them of their grade and the need to pass (update their grades often to show slipping or improvement).
- Strategies that maintain motivation, role-playing and save the last word for me.
- Global warming summit using PowerPoint presentations.
- Make all of the activities brief, more for the price of one.
- It helps to keep them active. I think a play is nice for Language Arts because they can analyze and perform.
- Plan a project (assessment) for the last couple of weeks incorporating concepts from the last ten weeks and use peer tutoring.
- Use more projects and hands-on activities to maintain focus.
- Alert about failing in driver's education so no one dares to miss my class.
- Use interesting subject matter and do some sort of project in the final week.
- Group projects, the Socratic method, Internet research and RAFT.
- I saved interesting topics for last.
- Group projects that enable the students to create original works and also practice speaking the language and topics that are relevant to what's going on now or is about to be going on.
- To maintain focus I am going to create group activities/projects that have to be presented to peers.
- Plan for a project that will incorporate trigonometry.
- We work following the five-week plan until the end. After the seniors leave, we plan to work on grammar usage some more.

What strategies/activities will you use to maintain focus during the final weeks of school? (Continued)

- Film, projects and excerpts/film comparison/contrast. Many of the works we are working with now are used with films. For example, we are watching Gulliver's Travels with Ted Danson while reading excerpts from the actual "Swift Satire". We will be doing "The Importance of Being Earnest", "The Ancient Mariner" using a multi-media presentation, "Pygmalion" reading, viewing and comparison to "My Fair Lady".
- Sending out my own failure notices while there is still time to do something about their grade. Keep instruction interesting enough to compete with what's going on outside.
- They will be working in teams creating a collage based on the play Macbeth. They will also do an oral presentation of each collage.
- Activities involving the chapters covered. I have a folding polygon exercise for five basic polygons that the students will use to discern total angle and individual angle measures. "Vocabulary Bee" with rewards works well. This is a game with definitions for the Geometry words. They also like "Folder Flip."
- Very clear objectives, activities, steps and expectations. Assume every learner has ADHD. Evaluate/pass out grades more often so that they know if they are slipping.
- Short/direct lessons and concrete examples, more individual class work/activities/exercises and make all of the knowledge that they have to accomplish challenging.
- Review of basic math concepts, review of materials from previous quarters and interconnect materials taught in different quarters.
- Academic games, repetition and current issues tied to content of World Studies keeps students engaged.
- ESL activities based on jobs, computers and Chicago sites to visit.
- The use of updated materials that relate to the subject like magazines, newspapers, journals, etc.
- Remind them they need this half credit, assign more hands-on activities, writing poetry, creative writing, etc.
- Discussions (controversial issues) and student planned projects.
- Continue to read short stories for comprehension, MDFD the subject, more time for students to finish the work, complete learning logs, work on mini-test and use visual material.
- Small group projects.
- Films connected to the curriculum, repetition of focus and allowing them to choose topics within the curriculum they are interested in.
- Attractive and interesting class activities, keep students fully awake, review old lessons often, class activities, be very specific and give students room to modify and express.

What strategies/activities will you use to maintain focus during the final weeks of school? (Continued)

- Give interesting short projects (hands-on of student selected interest).
- KWL, focusing more on bringing prior knowledge into the lesson and setting goals each day until the school year ends.
- Post a count down calendar until the spring concert on May 20, preparing for graduation on June 18th and giving a quiz every week (only five students are chosen and no one knows ahead of time).
- A lot of hands-on activities, contests. I will make a special effort to use internship techniques, teach projects and personalize history for my students.
- Playing older songs as a group to enforce ensemble skills and review material for Friday.
- Play Academic Lottery on a weekly basis to improve Spanish with students leading projects.
- Smaller units, smaller group activities and cumulative crossword puzzles.
- I usually have the students make a project that they'll like to finish and take home.
- Visualization will still be a part of the instruction as well as reading will be the focus. Keep reminding them they are going to be seniors pretty soon.
- We have parades coming up and an opportunity to gain extra credit to make up their short falls during the third marking period. Continue with our cadet challenge during this week and next week.
- Revision, reading, writing, discussions, learning logs, movies and preparation for final exams.
- Lots of performance and hands on activities, cool drinks, fan, lesson lecturing activities.
- Motivational tasks and hands-on activities.
- Let class choose gym activity in the last weeks of physical education and spend weeks 37-40 in the swimming pool.
- Practical activities: focus on all of the units like speaking and writing and have students use everything that we have looked at during this school year.
- More hands-on activities, such as constructing or drawing geometric shapes and figures and finding area and volume of an actual object.
- More hands-on activities and more active activities.
- Responsibility, kids know that they have to keep studying; final grades and do activities that are different from the ones done through the year.
- More hands-on activities, group work and team building activities.
- Unit planned that will have students use knowledge to create final project. Repeat main ideas and main vocabulary.
- Ability to see grades for this semester and the ability to find out and make up missing grades.
- Writing/drawing announcements, ads, cards and reports.
- Continue last unit with a lot of structure and tight, well articulated expectations. Repetition.

What strategies/activities will you use to maintain focus during the final weeks of school? (Continued)

- Informing students of structure and content of final test and reviewing/revising difficult concepts in preparation for final test.
- Try to vary the items we prepare to meet with the students' interests.
- More game orientated activities.
- High interest activities such as labs and review games.
- My students work well with routine so I will try to make them stay focused by emphasizing the clear structure of my lessons.
- Break down concepts into small, easy to understand concepts, timelines, graphic organizers, chart analysis, pro and con chart, cause and effect charts, and character maps, illustrations and vocabulary analysis within the context.
- Let the students pick topics/countries they want to study.
- Make sure that students know the final exam is very important and that these weeks can contribute X% of their grade.
- I usually don't have any problems with the majority of students focusing during the later part of the year. However, I save the mysteries and horror stories until the final quarter.
- Make students realize that these weeks are as important as the other ones. Give extra bonus points for students to help their grade and make things lighter and a little more fun.
- Action learning lessons that involve lots of hands-on experiments and group learning with writing assignments scattered throughout the units.
- Emphasis on second semester grade as opposed to fourth quarter grade, i.e. each test and homework lesson is very important to final second semester average. Stress passing and failing for credit or no credit and stress attendance on a daily basis.
- Use group work, graphic organizers and short writing assignments to prepare students for culminating individual projects and essays. This keeps kids engaged on a daily basis and allows them to develop thinking socially and graphically without diminishing individual accountability for learning skill mastery.
- I choose to teach creative writing the final weeks of school. It allows them to pull together different areas we have studied in an indirect form. At the same time there is more freedom when focusing on creativity.
- Ongoing chapter section reports and vocabulary reports.
- Timeline of requirements and facts to remember, we will be working in teams most of the time and we will work together to accomplish task related to class content.