



Poolville Elementary School
The Monarch Metropolitan

March 8, 2020: Edition IX, Smoke Detectors Are Santa's Cameras!!!!!!

A Letter From the Editor: *The Neighborhood Playground Has Closing Hours?*

Today's edition of ***The Monarch Metropolitan*** has me reflecting on the merits of unsolicited advice or assistance. The disappointing discovery I gravitated towards was if you don't speak assertively or project proper body language, people tend to assume they're more knowledgeable or experienced than you are, even if you have rank. This conclusion then led me to a few memories in which family members offered me some unsolicited expertise.



- **My brother (Sean): *It's a bird. It's a plane. It's Superman. Nope. It's BOMBS AWAY!***

When I was 4 years old, I was given a Superman cape for my birthday. As I ripped it out of its wrapping and packaging, I was told that it could make me fly. After a few days of not being able to fly, my oldest brother Sean offered some unsolicited advice. Specifically, I needed to find somewhere high up to jump off of. I started jumping off fences and trees. Then I was told I needed to jump something even taller!



- **My mother (Cathy): *Yellow submarine demise!***

Growing up, I lived close to the pre-school I attended. Since sidewalks were present from my parent's neighborhood to the school, we were not eligible for bus transportation. At age 5, I was fascinated with large vehicles. The bigger the better. Instead of explaining the bus dilemma to me, my mother said that school buses ate the little children they picked up each morning. I believed her since I always



saw kids getting picked up but never getting dropped off...my kindergarten was only half a day!



#128750787

- **My father (James):** *Adult swim time! All kids out of the pool!*

My father took us to the community swimming pool weekly. To ensure he got some undisturbed water time, he would offer two doozies. One...if you pee in the pool there is a special dye in the chlorine that turns urine blue. So get out of the pool every 20 minutes and use the restroom. Two...you can't get into the water for 30 minutes after eating. He would always bring tons of snacks, tempt us with them, and then hit us with that the second we indulged.



- **My 98-year-old grandmother (Barbara):** *An inside-out cook!*

In the nuclear age, we nuke our food. I was visiting my grandmother recently and we decided it would be a great idea to pop some popcorn and watch a movie together. As I was preparing the popcorn, she offered, "Jason. Stand back. Looking inside of the microwave while it's still running will deform any of your future babies!"

- **Even Me (Dear ol'dad):** *If you can hear the music, the truck has run out of ice cream!*

When Dawson was little, I would remind him that if the ice-cream man came down the street with his music blasting it meant that he was out of ice-cream and was just warning the children and parents not to come out and try to order. He believed it to the point that he would laugh at the other children he saw running after the ice cream truck.

So What's the Point?

What do these little white lies have to do with education? The answer is two-fold. First, it's no wonder kids question us so much in the classroom. They are improperly programmed by adult deception from



birth. Second, our students may know more than we give them credit for. Taking time to pre-assess before diving into a lesson may lead to richer, more meaningful learning for all!

In my experience, many teachers subscribe to the school of thought that assessment is a four-letter word **(T-E-S-T)**. Assessments eat class time and don't always provide quality information. Most assessments check for learning after all the teaching is done. But knowing what your students know before you create a lesson can save you time in the long run! That's where pre-assessment comes in.

Pre-assessments are a great way to tailor your instruction for your students. Plus, coupled with summative assessment methods, they are an effective way to show student growth. To assist, I have compiled 5 simple pre-assessment strategies that we all could use in our Poolville classrooms.

1. "Now I Know/I Already Knew That"

This pre-assessment is perfect for showing growth for Student Learning Objectives (SLOs). It's straightforward and easy to tally. Here's how it works.

- Choose a question with one correct answer that can inform your next lesson.
- Have students answer the question.
- Collect the responses.
- Tally the responses.
- Use the results to inform your instruction and to show growth.

2. Thumbs Up, Thumbs Down

This is the quickest way to pre-assess a class. At the end of a class period, have students gather around for a series of quick pre-assessment questions. Give them true or false questions they can answer with their thumbs and not their voices. You can also give out paper plates or note cards with yes and no on either side.

Choose three to five things you think students may know or may not know about next week's topic. Create a grid where you can keep a tally of class responses.

Encourage students to be honest! It's not for a grade, and you don't get points for knowing the answer. Although it's not a perfect method, it does have two benefits. It prepares students for what's happening during the next class and also collects easy pre-assessment data points for you to record!

3. Skills Conference

A skills conference is a bit more time-consuming than most pre-assessments but gives the most accurate data. During student work time, have students assess a skill with you one-on-one. Make sure you choose something that is quick to assess so you can get through all students in one class period. Here's what to do.



- Decide on one important skill students will need for your next lesson. Boil it down to one essential skill.
- Decide how you will quickly pose a question related to that skill to students.
- Set up your space with a timer, a roster checklist, and the materials you need for the assessment. Make sure you have an easy method to record your data. Also, make sure you provide students not being assessed with a method to ask you for help without interrupting the assessment.
- Use your data to create small group instruction or peer coaching teams.
- Use what you find during the pre-assessment to tailor your instruction during the lesson or unit.
- At the end of instruction, run the skills conference again to obtain summative assessment data.

4. Wonder Box

As an exit or entrance ticket, ask students to pose an “I wonder...” question about next week’s topic and place it in a “Wonder Box.” This can inform your instruction and how you teach your next lesson. You can even post the most common queries as part of your Essential Questions!

5. Dry-Erase Boards

When it comes to pre-assessment, dry-erase boards are the ultimate classroom accessory. They allow students to show understanding through imagery and not just words. They’re also reusable! If you don’t have money to buy a class set, try laminating white card stock. They won’t be quite as heavy duty, but they’ll do the trick!

Conclusion:

When you give a preassessment, you are identifying – ahead of the taught unit – what every student knows, understands, and is able to do (and the opposite). It helps you find the gaps, clear up any misconceptions or partial misunderstandings, and see who has already mastered the material (or needs scaffolding). This is differentiation at its best!

This helps focus instruction so you don’t teach things that students don’t need, and they learn it correctly the first time. This is more critical now with the large diversity that fills our classrooms – EL students, students with disabilities, transient students, students with gaps, disengaged students, and so on. Good teaching starts with what learners need to know. It makes learning easier and more effective in the long run.

Let’s change our practices. Out with the old, in with the NEW!

Let’s use RESEARCH to fuel Monarch LEARNING!

I hope this edition of ***The Monarch Metropolitan*** will arm you with the tools necessary to avoid power struggles and instead ***deliver high yield instruction!***



Regardless of your approach, let's learn and take advantage from the learning of others. This week, let's listen. Let's take targeted action, and let's help more Monarchs **SUCCEED!**

Good luck!

Without further ado, ***"Knowledge is about having the right answer. Intelligence is about asking the right questions! Let's be intentionally intelligent this week!"***

#If you swallow a watermelon seed, a plant will grow in your stomach.

#I tell my sons they'll have to drive a little Smart car if they don't eat their vegetables because they'll be too little for a big car.

#If you touch the Christmas Tree, you'll take its magic and Santa won't be able to find us.

#If my wife is eating something she doesn't want the kids to have, she tells them it's spicy.

A Summary of Our Learnings:

- Edition I: ***Early, Deliberate, and Purposeful Interventions That Work!***
- Edition II: ***Using Your Two Ears Before Your One MOUTH!***
- Edition III: ***The Zombies Are Coming! Prepare Your Classrooms!***
- Edition IV: ***Feed Me, Seymour! Taming Educational Hunger!***
- Edition V: ***Calling Worksheet World! Attention....This is Earth Calling Worksheet World!***
- Edition VI: ***Super STAAR Strategies That Work!***
- Edition VII: ***You Don't Have to Go to Jared's to Pop the Big Question!***
- Edition VIII: ***Instructional Coaching Straight Off the Top Turnbuckle! Bombs Away!!!!***
- Edition IX: ***Smoke Detectors Are Santa's Cameras!***