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Since the implementation of No Child Left Behind and the PA Core Standards, teachers have been in search of strategies to engage students in the learning process. The frameworks of Reading Apprenticeship, Penn Literacy Network, and other strategy-driven programs were developed to assist teachers with their lessons. Turn and Talk is a common strategy used by many to encourage conversation about what is being learned. And, it is effective; however, it is not high on the level of rigor when a student is simply asked to discuss the topic. By adding directions about how to discuss and what to discuss, a higher level thinking strategy is used rather than just turning and talking. No longer should *just* turning and talking be acceptable. Students should be held accountable for more.

Think about it. If you added a step for accountability after the strategy or asked a specific question to discuss with a partner, wouldn't it enhance the learning? In fact, what comes after the strategy is what helps a student comprehend the lesson better. Some suggestions that you might want to investigate to increase the rigor are: reflection, KWL chart, analyze the outcome, summarize the conversation and add your analysis of the topic, create a question or two that would clarify or promote more discussion, or use Webb's DOK. Another suggestion would be to include your Instructional Coach in this planning. Through the work of the *Before, During, After (BDA)* model, an instructional coach can hone in on the level of rigor needed for the strategy and lesson. Planning the use of the strategy, implementing the strategy and then reflecting on the impact of the strategy will produce a winning lesson. The instructional coach will assist in this BDA process and reduce the stress of creating a lesson that continues to use strategies after strategies without meaning or rigor.

While working in one of my districts, the coach and I were asked, "How far do you continue to raise the rigor?" Great question! After a discussion between the teachers, the coach, and myself, the consensus was to increase the rigor until no one has any misconceptions of the topic or continue with the rigor until the level of frustration in applying the strategy requires more teaching on the topic. With that said, the level of rigor needs to compliment the strategy's purpose. Strategies in a lesson used for the sake of having strategies are not effective. The purpose of any strategy is to allow the student to gain a broader level of understanding. If you are going to use a strategy, why not add enough rigor so the student's comprehension of the topic is greater than it was before the strategy.

As you can see, to engage a student by using strategies is only one way of assessing the quality of the lesson. Raising the rigor of the strategy by adding more accountability to the strategy increases the chances of the learning actually taking place. Now you have learned the strategy, how do you increase the rigor? The answer to that is simple... seek out an instructional coach.

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