

**Atkinson Academy**  
**SLT Instructional Rounds**  
**January 10, 2018**

**TRIPOD 7C: Challenge** - Hold students to rigorous academic standards, encourage persistence, and monitor and support student effort. Lessons are consistently challenging and differentiated, teachers ask high-level questions of all students, and students are required to think deeply and explain their responses.

**THEORY OF ACTION:**

*IF* teachers are explicit in providing opportunities for individual students to demonstrate rigorous thinking, quality work, and persistence, *THEN* teachers are helping students learn how to challenge themselves.

*IF* Teachers know where each student's Zone of Proximal Development is in relation to learning specific tasks, *THEN* they are able to scaffold instruction and encourage students to persevere and make progress, at his/her individual level.

*IF* Teachers can scaffold instruction and model ways that students can encourage each other and persevere in difficult situations, *THEN* students have the opportunity to do it on their own and challenge themselves and each other in independent learning situations.

*IF* students have the opportunity to challenge themselves in different learning environments and are supported by teachers each day, *THEN* students learn to take risks, gain self-efficacy, and advance in their learning.

**OBSERVATION NOTES:**

**Students:**

- Students were involved mostly in small groups; very few whole group settings were observed.
- Students were observed attending to "teacher talk" - teachers were explaining their thinking, asking questions, and provided prompts.
- Some students were involved with solving problems collaboratively with a peer or in a small group setting.
- Student struggled to complete multi-step word problem and didn't use a guide or resource to assist.
- Student responded to verbal questions asked by the teacher. The questions seemed to be differentiated for the individual.
- Some students used assistive technology to be able to participate with classmates.
- Students participated in copying activities that they indicated were easy (ie: copying and stamping words from word wall).
- Small groups of students engaged in the same activity that they commented they had just done with their teacher.

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- Student responded to low-level questioning. Students answered correctly most often.
- Students were observed rotating from teacher-directed small group, independent work, and small group with peers with about 15 minutes per session.
- Students responded to teacher's prompt ("show me proof", "why do you suppose...?", "what else could we do?", "what's another way to do it? "
- Students played a math fluency game..."zap it". (Pulling popsicle sticks out with fluency facts on it).
- Students were asked if they were being challenged, and some answered "No."
- Students were cutting, pasting, copying and sorting words for word walls.
- All students had the same words on the worksheet; one classroom had individual student names on the worksheets and different words on each sheet depending on the student.
- Students were compliant in rotating to groups and showed independence in starting their work.
- Students were in various phases of completing their art projects, and the teacher rotated throughout the groups.
- Students were observed working on their own using technology with headphones, looking at books, reading to themselves, cutting and pasting, and copying words on a worksheet.

**Teachers/ Classroom:**

- Teacher checked in on small groups to offer feedback back, ask questions to check for understanding, or redirect the group that was off task.
- Guided math lesson in small group did not allow time for the students to try the work.
- Norms or expectations for small group work was evidenced in the teacher group, but was not seen in other student centers.
- Bulletin boards referenced reading challenges, star work, etc.
- Tablets or chromebooks were used by individual students to practice skills.
- One "enrichment" group worked together to solve a task, separate from what the class was doing.
- The websites provided to students could not be used, and students sat for many minutes as a result.
- Teacher directed all students during the lesson, not much individualization observed.

**RECOMMENDATIONS for the Next Level of Work with Challenge:**

- Provide training to educators and students to ensure a consistent understanding of about what CHALLENGE means, what it looks like in the classroom, and reflect on progress. (Ex. Tripod Toolkit, page 8)
- Practice scaffolding lessons and plan for increasing levels of challenge as time moves on.
- Set challenges that are at the right level for individual optimal growth.

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- Raise the level of challenge each time you ask students to practice a concept or skill.
- Engage students in thinking deeply and explaining key ideas often.
- Reduce “teacher talk”. Engage students in the talking, explaining, and questioning.
- Recognize students who go beyond expectations, especially those who might struggle with a concept or task.
- Small group and center-based activities must be specific, targeted and allow for students to go beyond the first few levels of Bloom’s.
- Provide students with guidance on how to solve word problems. (ie: Underline the question, highlight important information, etc.). Ensure students access the guides and other helpful resources as needed to ensure successful participation in the work.
- Allow tasks to be done in several different ways. Encourage students to take risks, try something new, explore, solve problems and work together.
- As a staff, choose a particular CHALLENGE strategy to try school-wide, monitor its effectiveness, identify its impact on student learning, and engage in discussion before incorporating another strategy.
- Encourage staff to brainstorm their own recommendations based off the observations listed above.
- Like KINDNESS, roll-out the topic of CHALLENGE school-wide.

**THANK YOU!**

**The Superintendent Leadership Team found Instructional Rounds at Atkinson Academy to be a great experience. Thank you for opening your classrooms. We enjoyed our visit tremendously!**