STOP TEACHING START REACHING

5 ways to

STOP Teaching Today!

By Typhani Harris

5 Ways to Stop Teaching Today
By Typhani Harris

But hey!

If you would like permission just send me an email!

typhani@stopteaching.org

Hey Friends!

I'm Typhani, 18-year veteran of the wonderful world of teaching! I have taught high school English and Dance in California and am currently an Instructional Coach in New York. The one thing that teaching dance really taught me was great teachers don't actually teach. While teaching dance I managed to build a program where the students were completely self sufficient, to the point where I was almost bored, which brought me to New York.

As an instructional coach I often find myself reaching into my dance bag of tricks and pulling out strategies for content teachers to Stop Teaching. I mean, let's think about it...we already got our education, why are we doing all the work?

This has inspired me to help teachers to STOP teaching and START reaching our students in ways that are meaningful and untraditional. After all, they are high school kids with information at their fingertips, so our purpose should be to bestow information and experiences that they can't get anywhere else.

As I began my work with new teachers this year, I found that many are unprepared for the life of a high school teacher and the resources out there saturate the elementary market but are quite scarce for us. Many teachers enter the high school classroom and revert back to the way they were taught, desks in rows, teacher lecturing, and number two pencils.

So it has been my mission to reveal secrets, debunk myths, and assist teachers, both new and veteran, to STOP Teaching and START Reaching!

Welcome to the movement!
#STSR

Typh

1 Environment

A very important aspect to building a welcoming classroom where the teacher can step away from teaching is environment and the use of space. It is all too common for high school classrooms to be set up in rows facing front. The message we send is "I am the teacher, I am in control, and you are going to sit and watch me." This message often contradicts our mission of putting learning in the hands of the students and helping students take responsibility for their own education. This environment immediately turns teacher into preacher and leads to passive learning. Consider adjusting your space into a circle, square, horseshoe, debate style, or groupings. This is a non-verbal way of saying welcome to OUR classroom. Working with teachers to step out of the role of *preacher* and into the role of *facilitator*, is so difficult when we take into account how *we* were taught, the needs of standardized testing, and the expectations of departments. If we think back to how most of us were taught, especially if we have just come out of college, it is traditional for class to run much like a Sunday afternoon in church. There is a leader standing in front of a congregation, and the participants sitting in rows attentively listening to the message of the day. However, if we are building 21st century classrooms, it is time for us to step away from the podium and place the learning in the hands of the students. Changing up the space will assist in breaking the historical preacher-teacher environment. I suggest about 4-5 different classroom arrangements: theatre, groups/pairs, debate, discussion, and away.

Groups and pairs are great for everyday work. They don't have to be actually doing group work in order to be in this setting (in fact don't do group/pair work unless it has a purpose

Discussion is set in a circle, sometimes a double circle and again, doesn't have to be used only for discussions

Debate style has rows facing each other and can be used as debate, but also as an everyday setting

The *theatre* environment is the traditional high school set up, rows of desks facing front. This setting can be used when you need to impart knowledge that students can't get anywhere else (which isn't much so you shouldn't have to use it very often).

Away, literally no desks. This is great for stations, gallery walks, 4 corners, walk the line, or any activity where you need space

I know what you are thinking, "how am I going to prepare the class every day for a new environment. Work into your procedures how to adjust the environment. Teach the students the different desk configurations and then practice, over and over and over again until they can move the desks in 10 seconds flat. Yes, this will take a class period to rehearse, but just think of all the amazing things you are going to be able to do when the students can change the whole landscape of the classroom in 10 seconds.

2 Student Leaders

Building student leadership is essential to helping students take responsibility and ownership of their education. Student leadership also provides an opportunity to build trust between you and your students. Although this takes very clear procedures, once student leaders start to run the class we are free to facilitate curiosity and inquiry. Student leaders can do everything from setting up technology, hanging work, reading PowerPoint slides, writing on the board, handing out paperwork, etc. Just about anything can be handed over to the students, and the leadership opportunities give students a purpose in the classroom community, beyond what they perceive as just sitting and listening. A mentor once told me "don't do for the students, that which they can do for themselves," and if we keep that in mind, we can begin creating leadership within the classroom. If we do it right, the hardest part of our job should be the planning because the classroom should run itself.

The Simple Stuff

Everything from writing on the board to clicking the Power Point can be jobs the students can do. You can assign specific roles "paper passer," "paper collector," "bathroom monitor," "tardy control." Or, you can simply hand over tasks as they arise. Either way, if you can answer "yes" to the question CAN A STUDENT BE DOING THIS, then a student SHOULD be doing it.

The Not-So-Simple Stuff

There are some larger responsibilities that can also be handed over to the students. I personally like to have two class leaders for each class, and these leaders are in charge of the class as a whole. In dance, my leaders would be responsible for getting the class started, leading a warm up, staying after to make sure the studio was clean, teaching information to absent students, running class if there was a substitute teacher, tutoring incoming dancers, standing in as assistant directors for the concerts. In my English classes, the leaders were responsible for similar tasks, getting class started, checking off certain work, leading discussion groups, teaching pertinent information to students who were absent, running class if there was a substitute teacher. Other than presenting a new concept, just about every detail of a class can be handed to the students.

The Necessary Stuff

We all have those FAVORITE students, you know, the ones who can't sit still, love to talk out of turn, or say something funny so everyone laughs... our class clowns. These are our natural leaders. Their behavior is telling us "give me something to do!" So don't fight it, invite it! Give these students specific responsibilities that hone in on their natural TALENTS. These students are begging for purpose, and they can either help our class run smoothly or be the obstacle in instruction. Create specific roles for these students based on their needs. For example, for a student who always comes late give them the responsibility of attendance. Their job is to get to class before anyone else and stand at the door with you to check off attendance as students enter so that you can conduct mini conversations with everyone. Obviously, you will want to double check the attendance, but this student now has a specific purpose for being in class on time. For your student who can't sit still...don't make them. This student is perfect for passing out or collecting paperwork, writing on the board, gathering materials, or checking off assignments. If they can't sit still, then keep them out of their seats with tasks that will help the class run smoothly. In our tech dependent world, many of us teach from a PowerPoint or some sort of computer presentation. Elect a "tech expert." A student who gets to class on time and helps by setting up any technical elements for the class. This way you can hand over some of these necessary tasks and concentrate on setting the tone for your classroom by greeting the students at the door.

Don't fight the students natural TALENTS, use them to your advantage. I challenge you to take a look at your classes this week and note all of the work that you do that can easily be completed by a student. Then start making a list of all the possible jobs in your classroom. Sometimes it is difficult to relinquish control, but once you have determined the areas where you are comfortable trusting a student, hold an election or appoint students as you see fit. You will find the students value the job, appreciate the sense of purpose, and even fight for their role if you or someone else tries to complete their task.

Our hardest job should be the planning, once in the classroom we should be able to step back and facilitate creativity and inspire curiosity, and student leadership is a step in that direction.

Teach from the Back

Once student leaders are running the class structure, we are free to teach from the back, after all we are teachers not preachers. By teaching from the back we are giving students a visual representation of their ownership in the classroom. Students should be at the front, writing on the board or reading to the class. Also, the back of the room gives us a nice view of everything that is happening in our classroom.

3 Inquiry

Inquiry driven lessons (sometimes referred to as problem-based or discovery-based) is a difficult concept to grasp, especially for new teachers; however, there's no reason not to start dabbling in it. Inquiry based approaches require quality questioning from both teacher and student. Here's a quick and easy way to start playing with the inquiry based approach: begin your unit with simply the title. Hang the title and have students create as many questions they can about the topic...ahhh curiosity, the foundation of learning. Be sure you are well prepared with specific questions you need them to ask and guide them when necessary. Or, maybe take a few topics and spread them throughout the room and have students place questions on sticky notes (sticky notes are your friend), then have students choose other questions to research and find the answers to. *Active Learning,* not just waiting for the teacher to tell them the information but finding it themselves. There is much more to the inquiry-based approach but this can get you started.

4 Student Generated Assessments

Once you have presented content allow students to CHOOSE THEIR OWN ADVENTURE. Have students design their own assignments/projects that would demonstrate their knowledge of the content. Include the process of designing the rubric, ask them how they want you to evaluate their assignment/project and then follow their lead. This will give them a greater sense of ownership of their learning and a democratic way for them to share their knowledge. As the teacher, you still have the last word. If you feel their project is not an adequate demonstration of knowledge help students to develop the project so it fits your expectations. Just a little advice, roll this one out slowly. The first time you offer student choice, YOU provide the different ways of demonstrating the knowledge and let them choose.

The next time, work as a whole class to develop one project (rubric and all). Then try it in groups and allow each group to create their adventure...then...finally...let them go. This might not happen until the very end of the year, but look how much progress they made!! Whew...the data Gods are gonna love you!

5 **Performance Tasks**

The performance task seeks to assess how students read and write along with how students use language and research. Students are required to read analytically and comprehend multiple texts, beyond just fictional, historical, or classical literature. With the addition of the writing component to the Common Core assessments, students are charged with producing effective writing for multiple perspectives, purposes, and audiences while employing effective listening and speaking skills, and engaging in inquiry-based research. The main components involved in the performance tasks are *stimuli, process*, and *product.*

Stimuli can come in the form of readings, video clips, audio clips, graphs, and/or charts. For the purpose of creating arts-friendly performance tasks teachers can also include musical compositions, paintings, photographs, notation or motif writings of dance, sculptures, et cetera. *Process* refers to the process by which students will complete their task. The task begins with questions to guide research, navigates through comprehension, and finally simulates an internet searches. *Product* is the final task at hand, which can come in the form of performance, essay, report, story, script, speech, et cetera.

The assessment's purpose is to integrate knowledge and skills, while measuring a student's understanding, research skills, analysis, and ability to provide relevant evidence. The task requires students to *plan, write, revise*, and *edit*, and ideally resembles a real-world situation. The general specifications of the task are to demonstrate knowledge and skills and present multiple points of view. The task must be feasible for the classroom environment and allow teacher and peer interactions as well as possible group work. The task directions are organized yet complex with the use of academic vocabulary, simulated internet access, and appropriate rubrics. Finally, the design of the task will stimulate cognition, allow students to process information, and produce an extended response. When designing the performance tasks, all parts must be aligned in a coherent manner that makes sense in a real world situation. All parts of the task must build to a *full write*, speech, or performance. During the process of building the task, keep in mind how each target will be assessed, and how the rubric and exemplars of the rubric would look.

When designing the performance task, take into consideration the following design elements.

Who ?

Who are students going to portray?
Students must be given a real-world title or role. Be sure this title or role is actually tangible. Becoming a CEO of a large corporation is a nice dream to strive for, but it is so far removed from the student's current lives, that it is hard to play that role.

What ?

What are students going to make/create?
This is the actual product or performance students are going to create. Try to pull away from traditional assessment measures like research papers and essays. Capitalize on products that monopolize contemporary life, social media, reality TV, Netflix, etc. When designing the actual product, consider obstacles that might be encountered. What medium are they using? How will they get the materials? Do they need access to technology or internet? Are there firewalls at the school that may hinder success? Is the product being presented or performed?

When ?

When does this creation take place?
The scenario is always the most creative section to design. This is where you can truly create a real-world situation that students could potentially face, right now. Consider the issues students are facing currently, and build from there. The more immediate the circumstance, the more relevant to the students.

Where ?

Where does this creation take place?
Design the situation so it is realistic for students. Make it authentic by using your community, names of students, teachers, and leaders. Include situations that are common in adolescence, or that are playing out on your campus today.

Why ?

Why are students making it?
The purpose can be determined by the task at hand. Consider employing Bloom's Taxonomy verbs when designing this section. The purpose might be to persuade, argue, or justify.

How ?

How is it being evaluated?
How are you going to grade the task? Keep in mind, if you are evaluating a section be sure you gave proper instruction on that section. For example, if you did not teach students how to edit video, you cannot evaluate them on their editing quality. This is why it is so important to create these tasks first and work backward when planning your curriculum, ensuring that you provide clear lessons on the skills and techniques you will eventually evaluate students on.

For Whom ?

For whom are they creating?
Knowing the audience is especially important when designing tasks that resemble the Common Core. Remember, some Common Core assessments change the audience halfway through. Be very clear on who the audience is so that students can effectively code-switch their diction to be appropriate for each scenario.

A Note on *Real World*
The words *Real World, Real Life,* and *Relevant* are certainly becoming a foundation for education, which is a good thing. However, the most "real" or "relevant" things to you might not be as "real" or "relevant" to your students. So, keep scenarios close to home and realistic to the actual, current, day to day life of your students' worlds. This believability is crucial to the transferability of knowledge. Now that we are asking students to transfer what they know by applying content knowledge to a specific situation, those scenarios must resemble what is *real* to them.
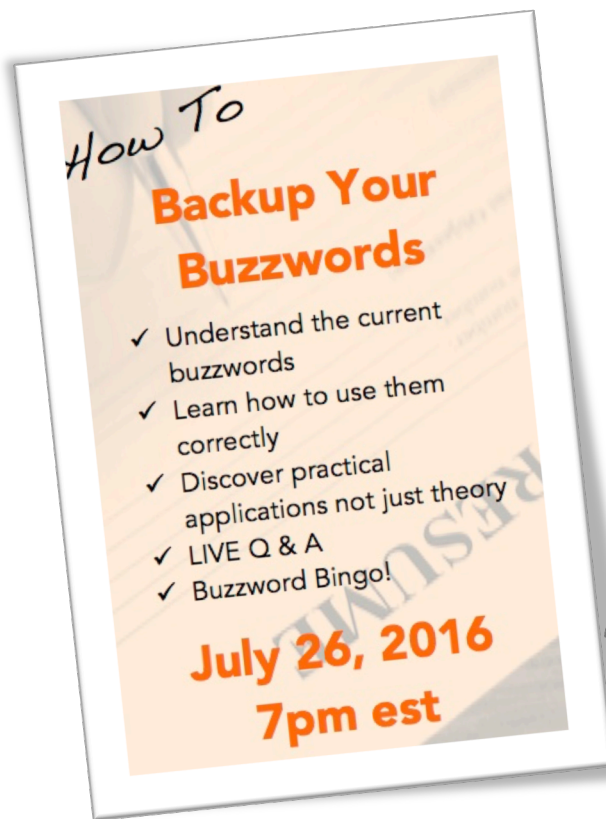
For more information on creating Performance Tasks, check out *Putting the Performance in Performance Task* on [Amazon](#) now!

What's Coming up?

Although our movement is in the beginning stages, we are trying to pickup speed with some upcoming events!

How To Backup Your Buzzwords

✓ Understand the current buzzwords
✓ Learn how to use them correctly
✓ Discover practical applications not just theory
✓ LIVE Q & A
✓ Buzzword Bingo!

July 26, 2016 7pm est

SECRETS & LIES

What they Didn't Teach in Teacher Prep!

FREE Webinar August 2 @ 7pm est

Welcome to High School ...Again...

• Set up your Syllabus
• Design your space
• Prepare the first day
• Plan the first week
Plus:
LIVE Q & A
to get the jitters out!

FREE Webinar August 9 @ 7pm

You can register for our FREE webinars at

www.stopteaching.org/webinar