



IT WORKED!

Building Teacher Tools to Increase Students' ACT Skills and Confidence

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During the 2015-2016 school year, the state of Arkansas changed the standardized testing requirement for juniors, requiring all to take the ACT test in March. Due to every student testing, instead of only the students that were for sure college bound, the average scores were lower than we liked.

The Algebra 2 teachers wanted to find a way to review skills tested on the ACT and give our students more exposure to that type of questioning. The team of teachers expressed that they did not want to take away too much class time or teachers' freedom in the classroom. The product needed to be usable, flexible, and measurable. Our department head, Angela Beason, started with the ACT College and Career Readiness Standards for Mathematics. She analyzed the topics by score range and narrowed our focus to skills in the 16-19, 20-23, 24-27 range.

Angela created 3 to 5 question bell-ringer sheets to cover one skill each day for the first four days of the week and a quiz over the four skills on day 5. As a leader in the Algebra 2 team, I worked closely with her and gave input on ordering of standards to best fit the curriculum taught. All teachers had the opportunity to give input, edit, and change any skills or questions it was a group effort. At the end of the nine-week period we gave the students an interim ACT with 30 questions over the skills that we had covered.

After the interim exam, the Algebra 2 teachers took a ½ day to analyze the questions that students scored high and low. Each teacher gave input on how they used the skills and why they thought their students performed high or low in various areas. As a group, the teachers decided to continue with the one skill a day where most teachers used them as a bell-ringer. We finished the second round with a common assessment over quadratics set up with ACT type questions.

After Christmas, Algebra 2 students worked on taking a full ACT test. Some teachers did 3-4 questions a day as bell ringers while others went over the skills in a 3 day stretch. Each teacher discussed the questions, process, and answers with their students. As a team, Algebra 2 gave one last interim exam with a full ACT test.

The department head and the Algebra 2 teachers are using this data to see what changes and adjustments should be made to help our students and teachers to be successful. One change that we have talked about implementing is a pre-assessment at the beginning of the next school year in order to give each teacher a starting average of their classes. The teacher is then able to examine the growth made by themselves and made by each individual student in order to see what is working from start to finish.

By the time the ACT test was given to all juniors at the end of February, the students were exposed to more skills than what was previously taught in junior level math classes. The next day various students came to me to tell me that they had already seen most types of questions that they encountered on the test. The students were confident in their skill due to the daily exposure to ACT questioning. I can't wait to compare the data to last year's averages and also individual students' data to previous tests taken.

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