

VOICES OF EXPERIENCE

Practical Ideas to
Start Up the Year

Grades 4-8

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Introduction

Who is this series for?

Voices of Experience is a series of six books – three for grades K-3, three for grades 4-8. Each book is full of practical ideas designed for new teachers, teachers new to a grade level, and teachers who want new ideas to reenergize their practice.

What’s in the books?

We have compiled our best ideas and organized them into two sets of three books:

- Book 1: for the start of the year when teachers are just getting to know their students
- Book 2: for during the year when teachers need to get themselves and their students “fired up”
- Book 3: for the end of the year when teachers need to wrap things up

Each book is organized into four sections around the acronym ROAR.

R = ideas for building relationships

O = ideas for classroom organization

A = ideas for classroom assessment that support student learning

R = ideas that are reliable and ready to use tomorrow

“Create a new model of teacher-teacher support so that every teacher knows every other teacher’s best ideas.”

— Eric Jensen,
Brain-Based Learning

For each idea we provide a brief discussion and easy-to-follow steps. Many also include student examples and unique adaptations. In addition, we have included current information about the brain and how students learn.

We have also included a variety of ways to use this series of books to support professional development activities in different settings; for example, educators' book clubs; team and department meetings and staff meetings; in-service and pre-service workshops; and seminars with student teachers (see appendix A).

Final Note:

The single, most important message we want to leave you with is to listen to your own voice and the voices of your students. Adapt our ideas to fit for you, your students, and your school community.

Check In:

having students mark their own homework

DISCUSSION

Learning to do anything new requires practice, practice, and more practice. When we assign homework for practice and review, we also set up homework-marking stations. Students are responsible for marking some of their own homework and for identifying questions they can answer and answers that they need to correct and work on.

STEPS

1. Explain to students what homework-marking stations are and why they are important to their learning: “I am going to ask you to mark some of your homework such as fill in the blanks or math questions that have right or wrong answers. Some of you might be thinking, ‘But it’s your job to mark our homework.’ You need to know that by marking your own work – not somebody else’s, but your own – you see right away what you are good at and what you still need to practice and review. This can help you improve.”
2. Set up a homework-marking station in the classroom. At the station, include items such as marking keys, staplers, highlighter pens, fine-point colored felts, a folder titled “hand in,” and multiple copies of the Homework Rubric (see figure 20).

3. Ask the students in each row or group to take a turn at the station and check their own work. We do this during class time when no direct teaching is taking place and other students are working independently on a task.
4. Ask students to make corrections immediately after they check their work. Have students complete the Homework Rubric, staple it to their homework, and place it in the “hand in” folder. Typically, it takes our students about three to five minutes to finish at the station.
5. Ask students to complete the “Please Notice” section as a way to remind themselves or the teacher of their strengths or of areas that need work. Teachers can use this section to record areas where individual or class support is needed.
6. Take a quick look through the “hand in” folder to see how students have done. (**Note:** Make sure homework is for practice and review, not something that students need more time in class to learn.)

Homework Rubric			
Name: _____ Date: _____			
Highlight the boxes that describe how you did. Staple this sheet to your homework and place in “hand in” folder.			
#1 I DID THE HOMEWORK	all of it	most of it	not all of it or forgot it
#2 THIS IS HOW I DID	all correct	most correct	I’m having trouble
#3 I DID CORRECTIONS	none to do	I’ve corrected them all	I started to correct but ran out of time or don’t know how
PLEASE NOTICE: Student		Teacher	

OUR ADAPTATION

Set up five or six stations, and have all students check their homework as soon as they come into the classroom.

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Figure 20. Homework rubric

<h2 style="margin: 0;">Homework Rubric</h2>			
Name: _____ Date: _____ Highlight the boxes that describe how you did. Staple this sheet to your homework and place in "hand in" folder.			
#1 I DID THE HOMEWORK	all of it	most of it	not all of it or forgot it
#2 THIS IS HOW I DID	all correct	most correct	I'm having trouble
#3 I DID CORRECTIONS	none to do	I've corrected them all	I started to correct but ran out of time or don't know how
PLEASE NOTICE: Student Teacher			

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Figure 20. (page 29)