



Get the FACS

New York State Association of Family and Consumer Sciences Education
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Presidents Message:

School districts across the state continue to face major fiscal challenges while at the same time the NYS Board of Regents continues to shine light on the importance of career and technical education. Those of us who teach CTE find ourselves facing both uncertainty and more positive attention to our discipline than ever before. It is critical that we are recognized for providing students with opportunities to be both college and career ready. There is no doubt that what we have to offer our students in our classrooms is critical to their futures as adults in both their careers and their future family lives. We need to be ever vigilant and positive in communicating what we teach and why it is important to our students and our society at large. It can be exhausting, and nobody ever said it would be easy, but we have an obligation to our students to ensure they have every opportunity to gain the combination of academic, technical and employability skills that career and technical education has to offer.

There are two efforts that we can look forward to being a part of in the coming weeks:

1. I have been working with a team of other career and technical educators from the other affiliate CTE organizations to develop a concept paper to be shared with the members of the Board of Regents and eventually other stake holders. This paper will address the very things we know to be true about the important role and value of CTE to all students. Once we complete the paper and it is shared, it can be a tool for each of us to use to strengthen our message to ensure that each and every student in our schools has tangible opportunities to receive a rigorous and relevant education through CTE courses.

2. February is Career and Technical Education Month – WORK IT! I encourage you to use CTE Month as a platform to continue to promote Family & Consumer Sciences Education. You can visit the national ACTE website to get many ideas for ways to bring attention to the importance of CTE. We have a unique opportunity through our FACS discipline to focus on careers and help students develop the “soft skills” that employers are frequently lamenting that their employees lack. Start out on February 2, Groundhog Day, and help your students to see some career shadows! This can be done through guest speakers, on-line career site videos, or student-led “soft skills” demonstrations. Perhaps create a display of the current top careers in our discipline. Brainstorm ideas in your NYSAFCSE areas and share them with each other. Nobody understands the value of what we do for students more than we do. But we need to be better about communicating that to our student bodies, our colleagues, and our communities.

Thanks to each and every one of you for all of your ongoing efforts to offer your students the very best programs under challenging circumstances. Keep up the good work, and remember to always strive to make your good better, and your better best!

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Raise your Hand!

(College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Writing)

Raise your hand if your family and consumer sciences (FACS) students were engaged in a writing activity this week. I can “see” hundreds of hands rising in FACS classrooms across New York State!

FACS educators expect their students to express ideas through writing. After all, one of the FACS process skills is “communication”; CDOS standard 2 is “integrated academics;” and CDOS standard 3a includes “basic skills,” “thinking skills,” and “managing information.” Each of our NYSED FACS curricular guidance pieces recommends projects, reflections, and portfolios as assessment strategies; these strategies rely on writing. So, it is no surprise that FACS classes often double as writing classes.

The *New York State P-12 Common Core Learning Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects* include ten writing standards. The introduction to these writing standards states:

“For students, writing is a key means of asserting and defending claims, showing what they know about a subject, and conveying what they have experienced... To be college and career ready writers, students must take task, purpose, and audience into careful consideration, choosing words, information, structures, and formats deliberately.”

Just as the Common Core State Standards call for increased reading of informational text, they call for increased writing of discipline-specific arguments and informative/explanatory pieces. Students writing should anticipate the reader’s knowledge level, concerns, values and possible biases. It should be precise enough that others could replicate a process or procedure and reach the same result.

I contend that writing in the FACS classroom is on the right track. Do you recall the September

2011 eNews article where we looked at instructional examples for the four effectiveness levels for APPR? For a grade 9/10 Food and Nutrition Core class working on:

Nutrition Principles and Applications
Performance Objective 1

NPA.1.3. List and explain dietary guidelines

The suggested activity for the “effective” level was:

Teacher divides the class into four groups. Each group is assigned a different set of dietary guidelines which were developed during various time periods: the Basic 4 Food Groups, The Food Pyramid, MyPyramid, and MyPlate. Each group is given two class periods to use classroom resources and the internet to answer a set of questions based on the dietary guidelines of the time period they were assigned. Groups will present their findings to the class. Following the presentations, each student will write a response to the essential question, “How have the dietary guidelines for Americans changed over time?”

The culminating activity in this example is a discipline-specific informative writing piece. Remember, this example was developed to illustrate aspects of the new teacher evaluation system, not aspects of the writing standards. And yet, an important writing task is naturally included as a summary activity! Yes, FACS classes often double as writing classes. Good for us. We’re on the right track. ☺

So, what can we do to sharpen our classroom writing experiences? First, review the *Writing Standards for Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects*, pages 76-79 at www.p12.nysed.gov/ciai/common_core_standards/pdfs/docs/p12_common_core_learning_standards_ela.pdf

Second, take a look at the exemplar writing pieces and compare your students’ work to the exemplars (see http://www.corestandards.org/assets/Appendix_C.pdf). The argument essay on dress codes

could have easily come out of a FACS classroom!

Then, take a critical look at the writing you are asking of your students. Does it align with the standards for the grade level(s) you are teaching? Does it require them to “say something about something important in a precise, accurate, clear way” as David Coleman, an author of the CCSS, suggests it should in a related video (see Shift 5: Writing from Sources at <http://engageny.org/resource/common-core-in-ela-literacy-shift-5-writing-from-sources/>)? New York State Education Commissioner Dr. John King says (in the same video) that being able to express oneself in writing is a powerful life skill as well as a powerful academic skill. We agree, and we get it.

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Ask a Pro

Dear Pro: Last year I assigned seats in my class alphabetically and students complained that they always got stuck sitting by the same people. This fall, I let kids pick their own seats and that was a disaster too as they sat with their friends and then were tempted to talk and not pay attention to directions. Any other ideas?

I've tried many things over the years but what I found that worked the best and was easiest to do was to randomly assign students to groups and seats at the same time. As students came in, they wrote their names on a small piece of paper. I collected the names with girls in 1 box and boys in another. The first 2 names pulled (1 boy and 1 girl) sat at the first table. Next boy and girl sat at the table right behind the first. This became Group #1 and when we worked in groups, the first 2 just had to turn around to work together. Sometimes adjustments had to be made

depending on space or an uneven boy/girl ratio but generally this worked well.

I made a point of letting students know that getting along with others and working in groups are two important job skills and that they would be graded on these skills. The first activity following the formation of the groups was to create a group profile (who in the group was good at art, spelling, math, being creative, had experience cooking, etc.) This helped them get to know each other and appreciate the advantages of working with their group mates.

There are many cooperative learning materials filled with suggestions for forming groups. I'm sure you'll find something that will work for you.

Once students are situated make sure you make a seating chart. It will help you learn student names quickly and will be invaluable if you have a sub.

Ask a Pro appears monthly. If you'd like information, suggestions or advice from a seasoned FACS veteran, just email phillip3@twcny.rr.com. If you'd like an answer sooner than next month's issue, just ask. NYS AFCSE is there for YOU!

Get the FACS (eNews) is edited by Ann Coleman and sent monthly to our paid membership. If you know of a teacher who could benefit from our organization ask him or her to visit www.NYSFACSE.org for membership details.
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