

How Student Instruction Works at Hassayampa and Vulture Peak

At this stage most Wickenburg residents understand that we have fundamentally changed the way we are teaching kids at Hassayampa and Vulture Peak. This process began in earnest three years ago and as a result student achievement is increasing – in some cases dramatically. As a result, I often get questions such as “how does this new system work”, or “why do students take weekly quizzes”? I want to dedicate this week’s article to shedding some light on the new system and why I believe it is vitally important for our children’s future.

Let me begin by explaining how the system works. On Monday students are introduced to a new skill or concept and receive ongoing instruction throughout the week. At the end of the week, typically on Friday, teachers give students a 5 question quiz which we refer to as a District Formative Assessment (DFA). If the student misses 1 or less questions on the DFA they engage in enrichment activities regarding the skill or concept. If the student misses 2 or more questions this indicates the skill or concept was not mastered and must be retaught. The goal of this instructional cycle is to quickly determine which students require additional assistance. In times past schools would teach for a longer period of time and students who didn’t understand would fall behind. We can now quickly identify when learning challenges are occurring and make corrections.

Now let’s move on to why this new system is so important for our student’s future. In the past (my parents’ generation) an individual may not have graduated from high school, but was able to find a “good job” locally which they worked at for their entire career. Not much changed and new career fields came about slowly. If we fast forward to today, this picture has changed dramatically. It is rare that an individual stays in one job, with one company, for their entire career. In fact, with technological innovation, there will be jobs 10 years from now that don’t even exist today. Amazing...

So, if today’s students are likely to encounter a job market where they will work in careers which don’t exist today, how do we prepare them for their future? The broadly accepted answer is to give them a strong foundation in basic academic skills. If they can read and write proficiently, do some level of higher math, understand science and history, they will have the tools to succeed. It is our goal to properly prepare each Wickenburg student for this unknown future and thus we must ensure mastery of these basic skills. We believe the instructional cycle that I described above will make this possible and early results look favorable.