

Anchoring Student Learning

CONTENT OBJECTIVE:

Students practice, review, or extend what they know about a specific topic.

DIFFERENTIATION APPROACH:

Vary the products students choose by tapping into readiness, interest, or learning style.

In a truly differentiated classroom, students progress at different rates through the content and materials you offer. To anchor students' learning about the current unit or topic, you can provide additional learning activities for students who finish the class assignment early. The goal is to enhance and solidify their understanding by engaging them further with the content. Anchoring is also a helpful differentiation management strategy: as students who need more time are working on required assignments and projects, others, who are finished, may choose an anchor activity. There is no need for anyone to ask you, "What should I do now?" because in a differentiated classroom, anchor activities are always available for those who are finished early. Having students immersed in valuable activities, rather than busywork, also frees you up to work with small groups of students or individuals.

"You are never finished learning" is the mantra of a differentiated classroom. Anchor activities must be self-paced, meaningful, content-driven tasks that students can complete independently during a unit, week, grading period, or longer period of time. These activities provide meaningful tasks that remediate, offer practice, or extend students' learning.

When we began teaching, we quickly realized that we needed something for those students who finish early. We were given a list of sponge activities. Although these activities provided busywork for students who were finished early, they usually had no relevance to the current content. Anchoring, on the other hand, became a way to provide meaningful, ongoing activities that engage and motivate our students to extend their learning. It has been our experience that in a classroom where anchor activities are readily available, classroom management is less of an issue—kids know what to do and do so with purpose. We have used them or seen them being used successfully in social studies, math, science, health, reading, and physical education classes.

Whether they are tiered to meet the needs of different readiness levels or designed to appeal to multiple intelligences, anchor activities may be used as formative assessment during a unit of study or as a summative assessment with students of higher ability who are able to complete extended tasks independently. Assessment tools, including a student checklist and a scoring rubric, are included in this chapter.

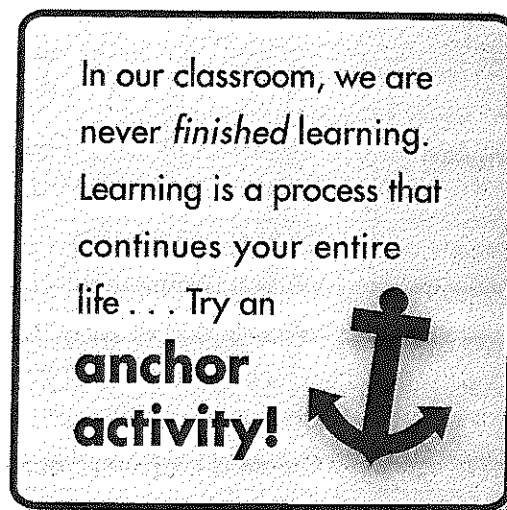
Materials

- Anchor Activity Ideas (page 12)
- Anchor Activities template (page 13)
- Anchor Activity Checklist (page 17) (optional)
- Anchor Activity Rubric (page 18) (optional)

Procedure

1. Guided by the objective you want your students to learn, use the activity template to write at least three anchor activities that can be completed during the two or three weeks of a unit of study. You may want to review the examples of anchor assignments in science, math, social studies, and reading on pages 14 and 15. For example, as you complete a unit on light and sound, one of your anchor activities might be to create a demonstration of refraction to share with the class. During a unit on the Revolutionary War, one of your anchor activities might be to make a timeline of major battles of the war. In math, an ongoing anchor activity might involve writing word problems for classmates to solve. (See the example on page 16.)
2. Introduce and explain to the class the anchor activities you've developed and model how to complete each one. Be clear about your expectations, establishing a policy for student accountability and assessment. Make sure you also set clear ground rules and procedures for this independent work. For example, you may have a rule that students must check with you before beginning anchor activities. This helps you monitor the work of students who may hurry through required work to get to a favorite anchor activity.

3. Set the anchor activities with all the necessary materials in a place in the room that is readily accessible to students.
4. Have specific times or stopping points at which students should check in with you during the course of the activity. This will help you gauge whether students are using their time wisely. We recommend a weekly check-in with students.



A sign that encourages students to stay engaged with their learning also serves as a visual reminder of what to do next and where to go for the assignment. We hang this sign by the anchor assignment sheets.

5. Before students turn in any anchor activity, have them use criteria to evaluate whether the assignment meets expectations. You might want to use the Anchor Activities Checklist (or a checklist you've created), to help students target areas to improve and revise before they hand in the assignment. If you choose not to use the checklist, give students the Anchor Activity Rubric (or a rubric you've developed) before they begin the activity. Students can use the rubric to plan for and later refine and improve their activity. Both you and your students can score the activities with the rubric.

Anchor Activity Ideas

Teacher-Created Anchors

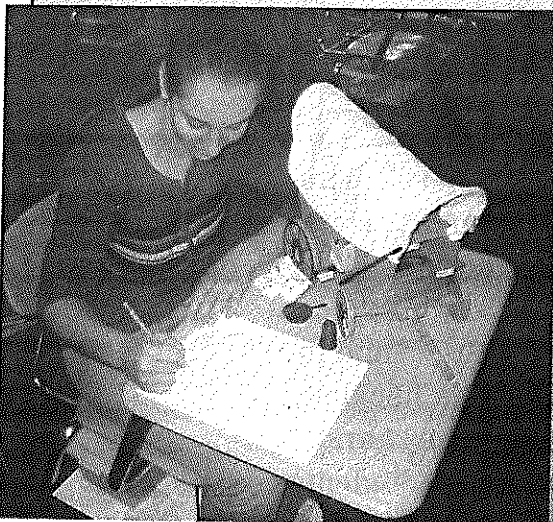
The anchors you create may include activity formats that you already assign regularly, such as crossword puzzles that you generate on the computer. These often have a self-checking component and require less explanation and guidance.

- Vocabulary concentration
- Geoboard challenges
- Content crossword puzzles
- WebQuests
- Map activities
- Jeopardy
- Magazine articles
- Word finds
- Tangram puzzles
- Logic puzzles
- Listening-center activities
- Newspaper searches

Student-Created Anchors

These prompts for student-generated activities are more open-ended and will require some modeling. However, once students are familiar with it, you can recycle the format in a new unit with ease.

- Conduct research on the topic.
- Write a review of a magazine article.
- Create a bulletin board.
- Write a one-act play.
- Write a commercial.
- Write a journal entry from a specific figure or point of view.
- Have a book talk with a partner.
- Create a crossword puzzle with key vocabulary.
- Develop a Jeopardy-style game.
- Develop interview questions.
- Create a PowerPoint™ presentation.
- Create a board game.
- Make a timeline.
- Illustrate a picture or draw a diagram.
- Make a story map.
- Write a letter to a character or historical figure.
- Make word stars.
- Write a poem or rap.
- Create math word problems.
- Write in your writer's notebook.
- Create a cartoon strip.
- Design a diorama.
- Make a video.



Wrapping up an anchor activity on Conestoga Wagons

Anchor Activities

for _____

Choose an anchor activity from the list below that will help you show what you know about _____. Keep in mind that you will need several class periods to complete the activity. Take your time and do your best.



MATERIALS:



MATERIALS:



MATERIALS:

Anchor Activities

Science: Physics of Light and Sound

Students who finish class work early may choose an anchor activity from the list below to extend their learning about light and sound. They may take independent work time over the course of several class periods to complete the activity. (Materials other than paper and pencil are listed.)

- ✔ Draw a picture to show how we see colors.
- ✔ Create a cartoon that defines light and/or sound through the dialogue of the characters.
- ✔ Use a slinky to show how sound waves travel and draw a diagram using the slinky as your model. Include labels and brief explanations to make the diagram clear.
Materials: slinky
- ✔ Create a ten-note song using four glasses of water and a spoon as your instrument. Draw the glasses, showing the water level in each and explain how you used them to create a song.
Materials: set of glasses, metal spoon, water

Math: Fractions and Percents

These anchor activities help students extend their learning about fractions and percents. (Materials other than paper and pencil are listed.)

- ✔ Create and solve three multistep word problems dealing with percentages and fractions. Record your solutions and answers on the back of the page.
- ✔ Using the grocery advertisement provided, create a shopping list of at least ten items. At the bottom of the list, total your item cost and then compute the cost with a 30 percent discount off all items at that store.
Materials: grocery advertisement
- ✔ Take one of the recipes for cookies provided and double it so that you can make cookies for more people (list the new unit measure for each ingredient). After completing this task, cut the original recipe in half (again, list the new unit measure for each ingredient).
Materials: copies of cookie recipes

Anchor Activities

Social Studies: Westward Expansion

These anchor activities help students extend their learning about westward expansion. (Each activity requires paper and pencil.)

- ✎ Write a chant to explain westward expansion. Be sure to mention several causes and their effects.
- ✎ Using a Venn diagram, compare and contrast the Mexican War and our current war in Iraq.
- ✎ Research the Donner Party experience. Write a different ending to this tragic event, showing how the party might have encountered different challenges or made different decisions.
- ✎ Research five ghost towns of the West. What happened to those towns to cause them to “disappear”? List as many causes as you can find for each.

Reading: Plot Development

These anchor activities help students extend their learning about how a plot unfolds. (Materials other than paper and pencil are listed.)

- ✎ For each plot point in the story you’re reading, pick a noun that represents something, someone, or an idea that’s important to the action. On a paper folded into six sections illustrate each noun in order of the plot points (one illustration per section).
Materials: sheet of construction paper
- ✎ Complete a story map of your current independent reading book.
Materials: Story Map template
- ✎ Write a short letter to a character from your current book warning him or her about key upcoming events he or she may have to face. Include your advice on how to manage the situation.
- ✎ If your book does not have chapter titles, write them to reflect key parts of the plot. If it has chapter titles, write new ones, closely focused on the action.

Anchor Activity: Math

(Fractions and Percents assignment, page 14)

ASSIGNMENT NOTES:

These problems come from Jessica, an advanced math student who has a solid understanding of the relationship between percentages and fractions. She opted for this anchor assignment when she'd finished her required work and checked in with me. After Jessica turned in the word problems, I typed them up and used them as an anchor activity for other students to solve (see answer page by Brady below). Jessica was responsible for checking their solutions. This process encouraged others to complete the same anchor activity with little or no additional work on my part—they knew they'd have a chance to do the questioning and the checking.

Anchor Word Problems

Problem 1: Jessica wants to buy a jacket that is on sale at 25% off. The original price was \$41.50. She has \$33.00 with her. Does she have enough money for the jacket? If she does and she buys the jacket, how much money will she have left?

Problem 2: John wants to buy a pair of sneakers that are on sale for 20% off and a new pair of jeans at 25% off. The original prices are \$69.99 for the sneakers and \$26.88 for the jeans. What would John's total bill be if he bought both on sale? If John had \$100.00, would he have enough money to buy two pair of jeans?

Problem 3: Sue got 27 out of 30 questions right on her first math test, 34 out of 40 right on her second math test, and 23 out of 25 right on her last test. What is her current math average in percentage? What percentage would she have to have on her next test to get an A?

Answer to Problem 1

Brady #18
Jessica's Math Problems

$$\begin{array}{r} 41.50 \\ - 10.375 \\ \hline 31.125 \end{array} \quad \text{yes}$$

1. 25% of 40 = 10.375
2. 41.50 - 10.375 = \$31.13

left
b. \$1.87

$$\begin{array}{r} 33.00 \\ - 31.13 \\ \hline 1.87 \end{array}$$

First I found 25% off of \$41.50 was \$31.13. So she had enough money. Then to find out how much was left I subtracted \$31.13 away from \$33.00 and got \$1.87.

ANCHOR ACTIVITY CHECKLIST

Name _____ Date _____

✎ Anchor activity _____

Accuracy

- I've checked the information presented in my activity carefully. It is correct.
- I need to check the following parts: _____

Completion

- I completed the entire activity.
- These are steps I still need to complete: _____

Focus

- I stuck to the activity described in the directions. _____

- I did some parts differently. (Explain.) _____

Mechanics

- For any written parts of the activity, I checked punctuation, spelling, and grammar.
- For any mathematical parts of the activity, I've double checked my calculations and shown my work.
- I still need to check the following mechanics: _____

Neatness

- The overall quality of this anchor activity is the best work I can do.
- I could still improve the following: _____

Changes made:

-
-
-
-

Date turned in: _____

Anchor Activity Rubric

Date

Assignment Traits		←				
Accuracy Is the information presented in the activity correct? Are there gaps in the information?	5	4	3	2	1	
	Comments:					
Completion Is the activity complete? Were there steps that proved challenging?	5	4	3	2	1	
	Comments:					
Focus Did the student stick to the activity described in the directions? Did he or she fully develop the chosen activity in a detailed or creative way?	5	4	3	2	1	
	Comments:					
Mechanics Did the writing and/or computation contain few errors? Did the student check punctuation, spelling, and grammar?	5	4	3	2	1	
	Comments:					
Neatness Is the overall quality of this anchor activity the student's best work?	5	4	3	2	1	
	Comments:					
Grade (based on levels attained for each criterion)						
Scoring key 25-24 = A+ 19 = B+ 14 = C+ 10 = D 23-21 = A 18-16 = B 13-12 = C 9 = D- 20 = A- 15 = B- 11 = C-			Assessment guide 5 = Advanced 4 = Proficient 3 = Basic 2 = Below Basic 1 = Novice			

Name