

Deep Dive on Rigor

Why thinking about rigor is fundamental to school transformation

And how to look for it at any school

What is Rigor?



The problem

Many students are not learning enough in high school to be ready for college or a career.

How do we know this?

- 25% of college freshmen at 4-year colleges enroll in remedial classes.
- 75% of students required to take remediation classes fail to graduate – ever.
- Since the pandemic, national math scores – largest drop since tests began in 1990.

What's behind the numbers?

- They don't know how to read deeply.
- They cannot apply, analyze or problem solve from what they're learning.

So why aren't students on track?

How schools frame the problem

Since the pandemic, students have an even rougher road. NAEP test results show that reading scores are down 3 points since 2019 in both 4th and 8th grades. Math scores dropped, too, and it's the biggest drop since the tests began in 1990.

Many schools are trying to fix this as post-pandemic issue but the truth is that it's predates pandemic learning loss.

There are many non-academic barriers to learning – mental health, screentime, lack of soft skills – but there's an academic problem, too.

It involves HOW we're teaching subjects in high school: Many educators frame the problem as a lack of rigor.

Rigor is not:

- **MORE:** Piling on the work.
- **HARDER:** Asking kids to do work beyond their grade level (or maturity/developmental level).
- **SPEEDIER:** Teaching material faster than usual.

Rigor is:

- **GOING DEEP:** Thinking deeply about a subject or idea.
- **CONNECTING:** Making connections between what you're learning and what you know.
- **ADAPTING:** Applying this information to new situations.



Author Dr. Robyn R. Jackson

Meet Evelyn Lara

She teaches IB English at IDEA Frontier College Prep, a public charter school in Brownsville, Texas.



Rigor – even for students with academic challenges

As a teacher of advanced English, Evelyn Lara has certain challenges with her students:

- Most speak Spanish as their first language.
- Many come from families that did not attend college or even graduate high school.

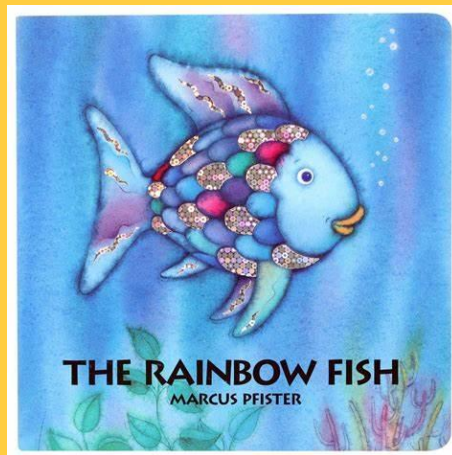
But

- 98% of the kids go to college.
- Lara is among the teachers with the best outcomes.

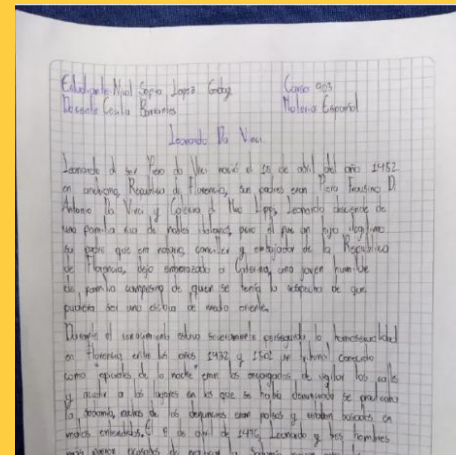
This is rigor



She met students where they are and built on what they know. Reading Spanish was a leverageable skill not a deficit.



She didn't dumb down the ideas. She made difficult ideas accessible, through scaffolding with children's books.



She gave multiple tools and strategies for showing what they know: writing, film, presentations, projects..

Discussion

Any responses to what you heard?

How much do you know about the rigor available to students in your community schools?

How might you find out?