

Exit Slips: Effective Bell-Ringer Activities

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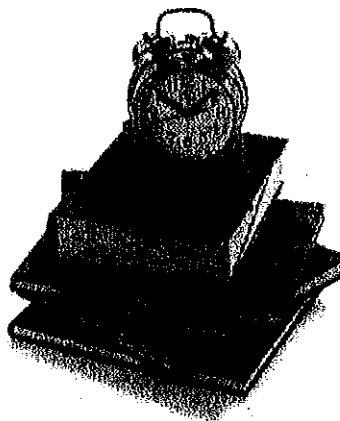
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One teaching objective frequently used by administrators and educational evaluators is the old adage "Teach bell-to-bell." Sometimes, however, this wise advice is easier given than done.

Teachers find themselves with five or even ten vacant minutes at the end of class, and they ask themselves, "What now?" While some may opt to allow students additional "study time" or "early homework time," such a plan usually goes awry, and students begin chattering, antagonizing one another, and generally become disruptive in the absence of an actual purpose.

A better answer to the "dead time" issue comes in the form of **Exit Slips**: simple index cards or short sentence strips that allow students the opportunity to demonstrate mastery over the day's subject matter.



When those final few minutes of class arrive, three options are available:

1. Review
2. Prediction
3. Critical thinking

Each option comprises a worthy role that exit slips can play in even the most diverse classrooms.

Review

The first of these options, review, is perhaps the most basic. It seems only natural to most professional educators that daily class should end with a brief overview of facts covered in the minutes prior to the end of the period.

One of my personal favorite ways to do this is with a **five-fact (or five-finger) review** – "List five things we learned in class today on your exit slip." Such an inquiry can be re-worded or reworked for more advanced learners – "Recall five things discussed in class, and rank them in importance from most relevant to least relevant."

Prediction

Another possible purpose for exit slips is to allow students to use their prediction skills.

A common question used to stimulate students' predicting is, "**Considering what we discussed in class today, what might we do tomorrow?**" This style of prompt works for nearly any subject area, as nearly every class uses continuing curriculum. A good rule to give students regarding exit slip responses has to do with the subject of length. Ordinarily, three to five well-written sentences should suffice, unless the question involves deeper thinking (see next paragraph).

Critical Thinking

A final purpose for exit slips involves critical thinking. The possibilities for this type of exit slip prompt are endless: "**How might you have taught today's lesson if you were the teacher?**" is one of my all-time favorites.

Such a question forces students to recall and reflect upon the day's class content, while simultaneously, students provide the teacher with a metacognitive analysis. What strategy would have worked best for this student? The answer is usually found in his or her exit slip response. Whether the student is a visual, auditory, musical, naturalistic, or tactile-kinesthetic learner, their reply will reveal how they would have learned best. By using these responses, the teacher can better plan and prepare for future lessons that are effective, relevant, and retainable.

WRITING ACROSS THE Curriculum

Entry slips and exit slips are written responses from students to questions you pose either at the beginning (entry) or the end (exit) of class. They usually take no more than five minutes and you can tell very quickly from these responses whether students are with you and are understanding the material. If understanding the relationship of X to Y is crucial to the next step you are discussing, you may want to check students' understanding by having them formulate the relationship in their own words. These slips take only a few minutes to read and to keep you in touch with your students.

Sample questions:

1. What is the cause/effect relationship between A and B?
2. What confuses you about the material you read for (entry) / we covered (exit) today?
3. What are three most important things you learned this class period?

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