

AP Lang

+ Throwing Open the Doors

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Introductions

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Let's start!

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Are any of these “sandwiches”?



The Frustrations of AP Lang

01

Weak vocabulary

02

Lack of deep
learning

03

Inability to read
with depth

04

Shallow thinking

05

Formulaic
answers

06

Limited time

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54%
2nd lowest

2024 Pass Rates

Physics 1 46%
Human Geo 56%
Psych 61%
Lit 72%

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Value

- 1 Critical thinking
- 2 Critical reading
- 3 Critical preparation for college

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Choices – Who will be in your classroom?

- 1 Traditional Approach – Honors students
- 2 New Approach – Throw open the doors!
 - Give many students opportunity for challenge
 - Push students to accelerate their skills and learning
 - Colleges value the transcript of AP courses
 - Challenging coursework is the best preparation for college

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How can we open the course to more students – especially nontraditional AP students – AND position students for success?

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Today . . .

- Two stances
- Four metacognitive approaches
- Three solutions



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A. Redefine Success

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Success is not a 3+.

Instead: Success is college ready in two years.



- Ready for freshman year in college
- Stamina for long college exams
- Read arguments with depth and nuance
- Discuss and analyze texts in Socratic seminar format
- Write impromptu essays with time constraints
- Improve reading comprehension of many types of texts

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B.

Redefine Problem

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Students are not *unable* to learn.

Instead: Students have specific cognitive needs.

- Students fail to remember because of **low retrieval power**.
- Students fail to understand because they are novice readers and thinkers; they lack **prior knowledge of underlying structures** of text.
- Students fail to transfer knowledge because they lack **cognitive flexibility**.

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Three Approaches



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3 Approaches from Cognitive Science

Plan recursively.

Learn – Forget – Recall – Relearn – Apply

Insist on radical responsibility for core concepts & non-negotiables.

"Master" the basic terms/concepts. Memorization allows manipulation, analysis, synthesis. Non-negotiables builds an **intrinsic value of work**.

Teach retrieval practice for reading comprehension.

Read chunk – look away – recall – jot down – repeat

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Three Solutions from Learning Science



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Direct Instruction

Teach/explain + apply.

- How to read an AP prompt
- How to analyze audience
- How to write a thesis statement



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Productive Failure

Problem solving/analysis/writing + explanation.

Create a situation where students are forced to “fail” before you teach and explain.

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Our fundamental assumption is our fundamental flaw:
Making learning easy eases learning.

It doesn't.

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Three BIG Shifts for AP Lang

1 **Activate prior knowledge through failure BEFORE teaching.**

Former approach – anticipation guides, videos, pre-teaching

New approach – **Start with pre-test, essay writing.** Next, follow with reading/video/discussion. **Finish with explanation and teaching.**

Value: Pre-test primes mind the MOST, creating deeper processing, enhancing attention, reducing mind wandering during reading/viewing. Greatest understanding and retention.

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Three BIG Shifts for AP Lang

ADD quote?

2 **Build awareness of knowledge gap by designing *desirable difficulties*.**

Former approach – remove difficulties, making it as simple as possible.

New approach – Design activities and assignments so that **students reach an impasse.**

Give them the bumpy, challenging road knowing they will not be able to do it *at the start*.

Value: Tricks brain into deeper processing, creates an awareness of the knowledge gap.



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Three BIG Shifts for AP Lang

3 **Generate failed solutions.**

Former approach – avoid mistakes, pre-teach, give simple steps

New approach – Start with **generating as many possible – yet all flawed – solutions.** Compare and contrast incorrect with correct and have students take two steps:

1–explain their (flawed) idea to peers

2–**hack their idea** (test it to see if it works)

Teach last.

Value: Flawed ideas include valid features. Leads to deeper understanding and transfer. Can see underlying structures/patterns. Increases cognitive flexibility. More likely to transfer knowledge to new problem/text/essay.

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“The most effective method for deep learning is making initial learning hard” (Kapur 55).

The Interventions

1 Text sort

Sort texts by common traits, characteristics, but identify differences. Builds knowledge of underlying structures, cognitive flexibility.

2 Common misconceptions

Generate common misconceptions about topic, then discuss. Creates awareness of knowledge gap.

3 Prediction Friction

Before reading, predict what arguments and evidence the writer will use. Builds curiosity, activates knowledge of patterns. Puts brain in superabsorbent state.

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4 Fool on a Hill

Students argue weak or silly statements. Forces students to invent and explore reasoning and arguments.

5 Mystery Writer

Students must identify multiple possible authors of a text, with evidence from that text. Builds curiosity, activates prior knowledge, generates failed solutions yet identifies key features.

6 Definition

Practice identifying characteristics or features of an intangible idea, explaining their ideas and backing them.

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Vocabulary

Class chooses 3 words for the next two weeks.

- Overlearn those three words
- Use them constantly. Require students to use them. Play games with them.
- Bonus if they hear or see the word anywhere.

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Consider the gap



Who will be better prepared?

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Questions?

Thank you!

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Literature review

- AUTHOR. (YEAR). *Title of the publication*. Publisher
 - Mercury is the closest planet to the Sun and the smallest one in the Solar System
- AUTHOR. (YEAR). *Title of the publication*. Publisher
 - Mars is full of iron oxide dust, which gives the planet its reddish cast
- AUTHOR. (YEAR). *Title of the publication*. Publisher
 - Jupiter is a gas giant and the biggest planet in the Solar System
- AUTHOR. (YEAR). *Title of the publication*. Publisher
 - Venus has a beautiful name and is the second planet from the Sun
- AUTHOR. (YEAR). *Title of the publication*. Publisher
 - Earth is the third planet from the Sun and harbors life

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Thanks!

Do you have any questions?
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