What Does Rigor Look Like in English or World Language Instruction?

HINT: It's not about the level of difficulty; it's about the quality of instruction.

RIGOR…

…an environment in which each student is expected to learn at high levels, each student is supported so that he or she can learn at high levels, and each student demonstrates learning at high levels.[1]

At high levels of learning, students have time for deciding and doing, where recalling facts and discrete skills are in service of processes in the target language, such as: solving problems, writing, articulating ideas, investigating topics, conceptualizing solutions, comparing sources, or debating issues.[2]

Deliver rigor using a podcast —follow these steps:

ACTIVITY:

Students are getting ready to listen to a podcast that addresses cultural issues or events. Choose from this list of highly rated podcasts: English and Spanish.

NOTE: Plan to deliver the podcast in the target language (English for ELs; target language for foreign language students).

Prior to Listening:

Build adequate background, using the target language as much as is appropriate for the group. For example, give a synopsis of the podcast in the target language, or show images pertaining to the issue or topic of the podcast.

Share high-utility and academic vocabulary in the target language to support comprehension of key terms and concepts. Prompt students to investigate and hypothesize word meanings or locate and identify cognates and false cognates.

Troubleshoot challenging linguistic content with students, such as idioms, figurative language, and obscure cultural references.

Implement 3 listening sessions students will need to maximize their comprehension:

1. Listen once to become familiar with the topic and identify the vocabulary in context.
2. Listen again in order to outline—using a graphic organizer or simple list—the topic and details presented in the podcast.
3. Listen a third time to focus on the conclusion the narrator draws.

During Listening:

Circulate around the group, supporting students as needed while they listen.

After Listening:

Support a collaborative discussion. Guide students through a collaborative discussion that focuses on the topic/issue and conclusion the podcast narrator outlined. Encourage students to use academic language to describe evidence from the podcast that supports their claims.

Describe topics for investigations. Examples appropriate to the topic might include: using 3D imagery to investigate the geography of the locale in which the podcast takes place, researching key cultural customs related to the podcast topic, or researching other articles related to the issue presented in the podcast.

Emphasize language comprehension and production in the target language (academic English for EL students; target language for world language students) as students engage in collecting and reporting on new information for their investigation.

Provide response frames for partners and groups of four to use when discussing and sharing academic ideas.

Encourage Students to Share What They Learned:

All groups develop a means of sharing the results of their investigation with the class-at-large. Examples may include: publishing blogs in the target language, creating a virtual scrapbook of images and captions related to the issue, or delivering mock newscasts, panel discussions, debates, or skits in the target language.

1. Blackburn, B. (2008). *Rigor is Not a Four-Letter Word.* Larchmont, NY: Eye On Education.
2. Saxberg, B. (2018, January 6). What the learning sciences tell us about competency education. *Getting Smart.* Retrieved from http://www.gettingsmart.com/2018/01/what-the-learning-sciences-tell-us-about-competency-education/

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