Pacing Tools

Pacing Tools are devices or online applications that the teacher uses to time activities and maximize instructional time. These tools help students pace and plan their work-time by knowing how much time they have left to discuss an issue or complete an assignment. Student motivation is heightened by an intrinsic desire, within most students, to beat the clock. Teachers can use Pacing Tools with students during independent practice, workstations, brainstorming activities, question and answer sessions, timed tests and quizzes, think or wait time, or during group work/discussions.

☐ Create an objective driven lesson with aligned activities.

☐ Determine the places in the lesson where urgency will be important, where students might have a hard time staying engaged/on-task, or where racing the clock might bring joy or excitement to students.

☐ Decide on the ideal length of time for students to complete those places in the lesson.

☐ Use a kitchen timer, stopwatch or online stopwatch to pace student work-time and communicate activity expectations to the students. Explain to students that they need to pace themselves in order to complete the assignment within the allotted time.

☐ Ask students to put pencils down and/or stop their work when time is up.

☐ Be consistent using the tools so students learn the procedure.

Additional Tools

Work the Clock

Work the Clock is a practice that emphasizes the importance of class time by announcing an allotted time for an activity and mixing in countdowns to remind students of work-time remaining and encourage on-task and efficient work for long or short durations for the lesson.

Songs

Songs can be used in lower grades since students may not know how to read a clock or understand time. The teacher can lower the volume so that students know when the song is about to end and they should finish their work.

For more strategies and/or resources, visit
houstonisd.org/EffectivePractices

ALERTS

With the initial use of pacing tools, students may not finish in the allotted time. This may indicate that the teacher needs to provide more time guidance or instruction.

QUICK TIPS

Try having a timekeeper or student who manages the clock so the teacher does not have to.

Put the clock in a place where everyone can see it, and so that students can self-monitor. Keep in mind individual student needs in regards to allowing extended time for assignments.