

ON THE FRONTLINES: TEACHERS' STRUGGLES WITH CATCH-UP FRIDAYS

by:

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In education, initiatives often emerge in response to observed gaps in student learning and achievement. One such initiative is Catch-up Fridays, an initiative pioneered by the Department of Education, designed to bridge the reading gaps and help students when values, peace and health lessons are not available to cover core subjects such as English, Math, Science and Social Science. Although the framework contains noble intentions, its implementation poses many challenges for teachers seeking to provide comprehensive and effective instruction.

At its core, Catch-Up Friday represents a new approach to holistic education, recognizing that academic success is linked to the cultivation of values, peace and health awareness. By seamlessly integrating these elements into traditional classes, the program aims not only at academic skills but also at equipping students with important life skills and ethical values. But carrying out such a multifaceted effort is far from straightforward.

The main obstacle facing teachers participating in the Friday intervention is the prevalent time challenge. Because curriculum demands have already expanded classroom hours to a reasonable degree, finding additional time for supplemental activities can be difficult. It must carefully balance the need for teachers to cover core curriculum issues with the need to incorporate values, peace, and health education. This struggle to allocate time often presents a dilemma: sacrifice depth of content for holistic education or prioritize academic rigor at the expense of broader skill development.

Furthermore, the inclusion of values, peace, and health education among the main topics may create confusion about the true purpose of the program. Teachers must struggle to teach clear learning outcomes that include academic competencies and desired social, emotional, and moral development. Without a coherent framework for describing the intended impact of Catch-Up Friday, teachers may find themselves unsure how to align instructional activities with general goals. This lack of clarity can hinder the effectiveness of the program and leave teachers feeling wavering in their teaching approach.

Additionally, the success of Catch-Up Fridays depends on teachers' ability to accommodate the needs and levels of participation of diverse students. In classroom settings where students vary in academic abilities, learning styles, and socioeconomic backgrounds, it can be a challenging task to design activities that are tailored to each individual. Teachers must use differentiated instructional strategies to meet the diverse learning needs of their students. This requires a deep understanding of each student's strengths, challenges, and culture – a requirement that can disrupt resources and already limited skills.

In addition, teachers need multidisciplinary skills beyond their traditional teaching skills to engage seamlessly with key topics related to values, peace, and health education. Teachers must be skilled at diverting ethical problems into mathematical problem solving, incorporating principles of empathy and compassion into scientific research, and examining historical events through conflict resolution.

Despite these daunting challenges, Catch-Up Friday represents a laudable step in reimagining education as a holistic endeavor beyond mere academic achievement. Recognizing the connection between academic competence, ethical standards and personal well-being, the program strives to produce well-prepared individuals who are ready to navigate the challenges of the modern world. But the realization of this vision depends on the joint efforts of policymakers, educational institutions and educators to

meet the myriad challenges inherent in their roles only through commitment, collaboration and continuous change can Catch-Up Fridays be celebrated on their promise as a transformative force in the landscape of educational issues.

References:

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<https://www.philstar.com/headlines/2024/02/23/2335589/inadequate-teacher-training-catch-fridays-stalls-reading-progress>