



## Equity Shorts: Life Raft Performance Tasks

***"We want grading to be truthful, dignifying our students by telling them exactly where they are academically and what they need to be successful.." (Grading For Equity, p. 65).***

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**WHAT:** For students who are behind or non engaged for a period of time, it is important to create an assignment that allows them to measure their proficiency in priority standards in a single, stand-alone assignment. This assignment should teach and scaffold as it assesses.



**WHY:** The performance tasks serve as a "life raft" for students who are floundering in a sea of missing work. They are often overwhelmed and under motivated because the hill to mastery seems fraught with too many assignments to ever complete. This induces a panic that can cause students to avoid work and freeze up in their progress, thus resulting in a measurement of behavior instead of learning. By creating a stand-alone assignment that measures proficiency to standards, we allow students an entry point that feels manageable while simultaneously getting an accurate depiction of their skills and understanding.

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### HOW:

1. Identify the priority standards for the semester. We want to measure standards and learning targets, not completion or behavior.
2. Create 1 assignment that captures enough priority standards to constitute a P or C (or beyond) in your class.
  - This performance task may be different from your original assignment. This is good. Students didn't engage in our first attempt; they need something different
  - This assignment should be deliverable in paper and electronic format. Some students may engage in a paper copy when they haven't engaged in a virtual platform, which is a quick access point. It might seem more manageable to complete on paper than the electronic scrolling
  - Your task may need a checklist for processing support to foster executive functioning growth and mimic the instructional supports we naturally provide in the classroom
  - Your performance tasks may include examples, videos, and graphic organizers for kids to access independently, when needed, to get unstuck on their own
  - Create a rubric that is kid friendly so students can understand the criteria for proficiency and grade themselves
  - Cut out anything that is extra. Students using life raft assignments need a path that seems doable (often alone and in one sitting. They may not be able to ask for help). This often isn't a pathway to mastery -- it's a pathway to meets and nearly meets (C and B level work). Students who complete the life raft should then be given options to extend their learning and master standards -- as a means to reenter class and improve grades
3. Replace grades quickly to create a snowball of success for students who are craving affirmation in their skill development. "No-count" missing work that used these standards and replace those failed grades with the passing score from the skills demonstrated through the performance task. This will look different depending on how your gradebook is organized.

### RESOURCES:

[Life Raft Contract Template](#)

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### Tips:

- Create one assignment for multiple teachers (department, shared classes, etc.) to cut down on the workload
- Consider the google classroom view. Go to your assignments and either remove students from assignments they have shown mastery on through the life raft OR simply delete old assignments that aren't graded or don't need to be completed for all students.