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The National Strategy of the Month

Among other uses, teaching education students, tutors and mentors use [the Network](#) every day to share the amazing, one of a kind strategies and activities they've created and used to best support their students. More than 1,000 strategies have been contributed to the Network to date.

Every month, we highlight one of these strategies on this page and in our [free e-newsletter](#). More than 10,000 individuals worldwide -- tutors, mentors, teachers, parents, researchers and policymakers -- read these strategies.

About February's Strategy



Deven Kaufman, the author of the February 2007 National Strategy of the Month

Meet Deven Kaufman, a sophomore at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), a tutor with [IUPUI's America Counts](#) program, and the author of the February 2007 National Strategy of the Month!

Deven has accomplished more in his 20 years than many people accomplish in their lives. How many 20 year olds do you know who have already designed multiple houses and buildings that have been built? Beyond that, this Architecture Technology student has also created a solution to a challenge that so many tutors and academic mentors face: How can one truly understand the academic issues a student needs to address when one is not an expert educator, does not spend a lot of time with the student, and does not have on-demand access to the student's teacher?

Learn how Deven is effectively addressing this issue [below](#). We believe you and the students you serve will love and benefit from it.

More About Deven

Deven grew up in Indianapolis, Indiana. When he is not tutoring, taking Architecture Technology classes or designing houses and buildings, he serves as a teaching assistant in the Engineering department and on his university's student council.

Deven's supervisor, Morgan Hughes, wrote that Deven's creative tutoring strategy "is only one of many for Deven. For a Family Parent Night at his site, George Washington Community School, Deven created a 'beanbag toss' math game similar to 'tic-tac-toe,' but involving solving math equations. Deven's creativity and willingness to go beyond his job description as a coach have led to his being recommended to serve the program as a Team Leader next year. Deven is very much a valuable asset to the IUPUI America Counts program."

Deven became involved in IUPUI's America Counts program out of his love for math. Now, out of his successes with America Counts, he's thinking of becoming a teacher!

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The Strategy

What's the Problem?

Source: Deven Kaufman, IUPUI America Reads and America Counts ([website](#))
Topics: Assessment
Engagement & Motivation
Getting to Know Your Student
Setting Goals
Grade Levels: Seventh - Twelfth
Arrangements: One-on-One; Small Group; Large Group

Materials

- The Issue Tracker form ([PDF](#) | [Microsoft Word](#))

Situation

I had a hard time trying to figure out what some learners (students) needed help with since I'm not around all day to observe them in their classes.

They couldn't always tell me what their challenges were because they would not always know how to describe exactly what it was they were having a tough time with.

America Learns Note:

While Deven designed this strategy for his math students, you can adapt and apply the strategy to almost any content area.

Step 1

I thought of making something that my learners could keep with them and add their questions to as they came across things they needed extra help understanding.

Step 2

I made a form in Microsoft Word that had three columns.

- One was for the topic of the problem (e.g., *adding and subtracting negative numbers*).
- The next was for an example of the problem (an opportunity to describe the issue more concretely with an actual math problem). An example could be

$$-5 + (-8) = ?$$

- The last column was for the learner to explain what his or her specific problem is (e.g., *"I get confused about when to add or subtract"* or *"I just don't understand it at all!"*).

See the first row in the Issue Tracker form ([PDF](#) | [Microsoft Word](#)) to see an example of how learners fill it out.

Step 3

I gave the form to each of my students and asked them to keep it next to them during class and while doing any assignments or homework. That way, they could keep track of things they needed help with and we could spend our time together working on the most important issues.

America Learns Note:

Depending on your role with your students, you may need to receive permission from a supervisor and/or from your students' teachers to give your students this type of sheet to use during class time.

Step 4

I review the form during each session, which helps me find out what the student is having problems with during class, on assignments, and with homework all in one place. The form helps me to determine what we'll focus on, making our sessions more meaningful and productive.

Citing this strategy:

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<http://americalearns.net/strategy.htm>.

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