



## Teaching Threads

*Focus on Effective Instruction*

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Providing effective and efficient instruction to students is not an easy task. In an attempt to assist teachers, this article focuses on ten areas of effective instruction.

### ▫ *Focus on Strength-Based Instruction*

Focus on the strengths your students bring to each learning activity. How can those strengths help them learn new skills? Students with strong and creative verbal skills may learn weather information more easily if asked to develop and present scripts for the TV news. Students always on-the-go may benefit from actually measuring the classroom or desk in learning to calculate area. As adults we use our strengths to accomplish new tasks, teach your students to do the same.

### ▫ *Focus on Being Pro-active, not Re-active*

When planning instruction, effective teachers focus on this question:

*What can I do to make it easier for students to do what you want them to do?*

*Effective teachers plan ahead their actions that will make it easier for students to learn and behave. They attend to classroom arrangement, materials provided, instructional format, seating arrangement, required student activities, and methods used to assess student performance. Taking steps to make it easier for students, will reduce the need to react to student difficulties.*

### ▫ *Focus on Improving the Quality of Life of your Students*

Effective teachers teach skills that increase student ability to function in current and future environments. Classroom focus is on achievement. Student self-esteem is strengthened through mastery. Students are taught skills that promote independence and resiliency as relevant in their worlds.



### ▫ *Focus on Acquiring Information*

In order to provide effective instruction, teachers must be knowledgeable of the state and district curriculum, standards, goals, and benchmarks. Teachers need information related to district-wide student performance and adequate yearly progress. In planning instruction teachers must adhere to instructional scope and sequence of skills taught, and implement evidence-based strategies and interventions.

▫ *Focus on Promoting, Correcting, and Reducing*

The majority of classroom instruction is aimed at promoting student learning and behaving. Teachers who provide strong and effective instruction of academic and behavioral skills will experience higher levels of student achievement and desired student behavior. Promotion requires a relevant and engaging curriculum, adequate instructional resources, and evidence-based instructional strategies for both academic and behavioral skills.

Even the most effective teachers encounter the initial signs of student difficulty in academics and behavior. Teachers need to develop strategies aimed at quickly and effectively correcting student errors and misbehaviors. Teacher awareness of student performance, reteaching skills, student correct practice, and teacher recognition are frequently used strategies for correcting errors and misbehaviors.

For students who display more consistent and serious academic and behavioral deficits, the teacher must implement strategies aimed at reducing the limiting effects of student deficits. These strategies may consist of remedial and augmented instruction. Individual behavioral instruction and motivation programs and are provided by the classroom teacher, a support staff, or a peer tutor. All schools have teams of teachers and support staff that assist teachers in developing effective strategies for students with persistent or severe academic or behavioral deficits.



▫ *Focus on the Stages of Student Learning*

Effective instruction requires attention to the stages of student learning. Different instructional strategies are needed at the different stages of learning. When planning instruction teachers need to design instruction focused on the current stage of learning, practice activities that strengthen student skill, or instruction that moves students to a higher level.

Stages of Student Learning
<p><i>Acquisition Stage - Accuracy</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is to teach the student to perform the skill accurately</li> <li>• Range - “No knowledge of how to perform skill” to 90-100% accuracy on performance of skill</li> <li>• Instructional focus is teaching students the accurate content or the steps to arrive at the accurate response</li> </ul>
<p><i>Proficiency Stage - Fluency</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is for the student to perform the skill accurately and quickly</li> <li>• Work for independence, removal of prompts/supports</li> <li>• Instructional focus is on correct performance with increasing speed</li> <li>• High levels of correct student practice are required for proficiency</li> </ul>
<p><i>Maintenance Stage - Retention</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is high rates of accuracy and efficiency maintained over time, even after instruction has ended</li> <li>• Need to periodically use and practice skills previously taught</li> <li>• Instructional focus is on maintaining high levels of performance through over-learning, building automatic recall, using learning strategies, and self-management techniques</li> </ul>
<p><i>Generalization Stage - Expansion</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is the student can perform the skill in different situations, different times, and with different people.</li> <li>• Student demonstrates a functional use of skill</li> <li>• Student “owns the skill”</li> <li>• Instructional focus is to actively teach for generalization</li> </ul>
<p><i>Adaption Stage - Extension</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Goal is the student applies previously learned skills to new situations without instruction or direction.</li> <li>• When faced with new challenges, the student applies independent problem solving to discover that previously learned skills can be applied successfully</li> </ul>

▫ *Focus on Direct/Explicit Instruction*

Research has shown that explicit or direct instruction, teacher-led instruction with high levels of correct student responding, are the most effective for teaching students new skills. Teachers are familiar with explicit/direct instruction of academic skills, this strategy is also recommended for teaching behavioral skills.

<i>Academic Instruction</i>	<i>Behavior Instruction</i>
Show and tell the students what will be learned/accomplished	Show and tell the students what behavior skill will be learned
Provide a rationale and application of skill or information	Provide a rationale and application of behavior skill
Teach the skill steps or information	Model and teach the behavior skill steps
Guide, coach, and encourage the students to correct responding	Guide, coach, and encourage the students to correct role playing of behavior skill
Provide opportunities for correct student practice, practice, and more practice	Provide opportunities for correct student practice, practice, and more practice
Reteach and remind the students as needed	Reteach and remind the students as needed
Teach students to generalize the new skill	Teach students to generalize the new behavior skill

▫ *Focus on Classroom Time*

Educators recommend that at least 70% of the total school day should be time allocated to instruction, and 90% of allocated time should be spent on instruction. Effective teachers work toward the goal 54 minutes each hour of active learning time. Teacher effective planning can limit the time spent on nonproductive activities, breaks, and student waiting. The obvious result of increased active learning time is increase student achievement.



▫ *Focus on What Works*

Schools today are required to provide evidence of effectiveness, and teachers are required to implement evidence-based instruction in their classrooms. There are numerous Internet resources available including the US Government What Works Clearinghouse, a growing database of strategies rated by effectiveness. Instruction can only be effective if it results in high levels of student achievement, and are made more possible with evidence-based instructional strategies.

□ *Focus on Your Influence*

Teachers have always served as models for their students. Students learn from teacher behavior, attitude, quality of academic work, enthusiasm for learning, and respect toward others. Effective teachers model the behavior, attitudes, and activities they wish to promote in their students.

As always, my intent in presenting these activities is to help teachers answer this question -

*What can I do to make it easier for my students to learn and behave?*



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