



THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

Chapter 4: Components of Effective Instruction

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Developed under funding from The Meadows Foundation and the Texas Education Agency



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Part 2 | Effective Instruction for Struggling Readers

Chapter 4 Components of Effective Instruction

After conducting assessments, Miss Lopez should be aware of her students' needs in the following areas:

- Comprehension.
- Vocabulary.
- Fluency.
- Word recognition.

She has also designed a flexible grouping system that will allow her to work with homogenous, small groups when necessary. She feels that she has a grasp on what her students need to learn, but is overwhelmed by the challenge of giving them the help they need. She is not sure how to structure her lessons to meet her students' needs. The following chapter will discuss how to organize and plan effective instruction.

Researchers have identified key lesson components that make instruction more effective for struggling readers (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002; Swanson & Deshler, 2003). The components are listed on the following page (and explained in more detail later in this chapter):

- Statement of objective or purpose.
- Daily review.
- Explicit modeling and teaching.
- Guided practice.
- Independent practice.
- Teaching for generalization.
- Monitoring student learning.
- Periodic review (multiple opportunities for practice).

TERMS TO KNOW

Corrective feedback	Specific clarification provided by the teacher in order to give students information about their errors
Generalization	The ability to apply a rule or pattern to a new context or setting (i.e., applying a strategy learned in reading class to a social studies assignment)
Objective	The aim or goal of the lesson; what the teacher wants students to learn
Overlearning	Learning to the point of mastery, or automaticity
Positive feedback	Specific praise provided by the teacher to reinforce students' correct responses and encourage student effort
Prior knowledge	Background knowledge or knowledge that students already have from previous experience; a key component of Schema Theory, or the belief that new knowledge must be integrated with previous knowledge in order to achieve comprehension
Scaffolding	Adjusting or extending instruction so that students are able to be successful with challenging tasks. This support is temporary and is removed when no longer needed.

Bos & Vaughn, 2006; Denton & Hocker, 2006; Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002; Harris & Hodges, 1995; The Encarta World English Dictionary

STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVE OR PURPOSE

The **objective** of the lesson must be clear to the teacher before it can be clear to the students. Be aware of what you want your students to learn and teach with that goal in mind.

Provide students with a step-by-step presentation of information. Present only a few ideas at once and connect new material to **prior knowledge**. During this stage of the lesson, an effective teacher will provide a supportive framework illustrating how the new information being presented is related to information that students already know. Using this framework, students are able to access knowledge currently in their minds and then connect this prior knowledge to the new subject matter being introduced (Swanson & Deshler, 2003).

DAILY REVIEW

A daily review is more than just checking to see whether homework assignments are complete. A review of material covered the day before gives Miss Lopez the opportunity to see whether her students have mastered the material, and it gives students an opportunity to **overlearn**—to learn to the point of mastery, or automaticity. Overlearning leads to long-term retention and provides connections for future learning (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002). In the daily review:

1. Review quickly the material taught in the previous lesson.
2. Review previous learning with specific consideration for whether students have retained key concepts.
3. Present information visually and explicitly. In other words, present information clearly enough that your students have no doubt about what it is you want them to recall. One method of presenting information in this way is to clearly post essential steps of previously taught strategies or concepts around the classroom. If students do not display adequate knowledge of the material already covered, adjust instruction or reteach material as needed.

EXPLICIT MODELING AND TEACHING

Model the strategy or demonstrate the skill by thinking aloud. This type of modeling allows the thinking process to become observable and gives students a clear picture of what the strategy being taught looks like. It is important that teachers not assume that a student understands the execution of a skill or the thinking process involved in applying a strategy. Therefore, careful modeling is essential. If you are teaching a simple skill, you may need only to demonstrate the skill or model the procedure.

Repeated questioning throughout the presentation of new information gives the teacher an opportunity to assess the students' levels of understanding and correct any misconceptions before moving on (Swanson & Deshler, 2003).

Finally, after teaching a skill or strategy, carefully monitor student understanding and adjust instruction accordingly. If students are not fully grasping a concept, it is important to adjust instruction to meet their needs.

In summary, when presenting new information, be sure to:

- Be mindful of what you want your students to learn.
- Connect new material to students' prior knowledge.
- Model and/or demonstrate the new strategy or skill.
- Question the students' understanding of the new material.
- Monitor the students' understanding and adapt instruction as needed.

HELPFUL
HABIT

During the modeling phase of instruction, try to assure that English language learners and others with limited oral vocabularies are observing the teacher—not trying to listen, write, copy, and watch at the same time. Because of their limited English skills, they benefit from having their full attention on the teacher.

GUIDED PRACTICE

Guided practice gives students the opportunity to demonstrate what they have learned with guidance from the teacher. It is important that Miss Lopez provides guidance while students work on their assignments—not wait until they are finished to check for accuracy. This is the time to give students helpful hints and clarify any misconceptions they might have (UTCRLA, 2003d). Providing this type of guidance while students are working will ensure that students are practicing a skill or learning a concept correctly. Without guidance, some students will practice a skill incorrectly and, consequently, become confused. When students practice their mistakes, those mistakes become bad habits.

An effective teacher provides **scaffolding**, or support, to students in the initial stages of learning a new strategy or skill. Scaffolding allows students to apply a new strategy or skill in a safe environment by providing specific support directly where assistance is needed.

For example, if a student is having difficulty with the concept of asking questions during reading in order to monitor his or her own comprehension, a teacher may scaffold by starting a question for the student (or students) and then having the student finish the question. For example, while reading text about the Civil War, the teacher may start a question like the following:

Teacher:

Where did Abraham Lincoln ...

Student or students:

... give his speech?

Through supported application of skills and strategies, a student will be able to reach the goal of mastery. Scaffolding will be discussed further in the following chapter, *Delivering Effective Instruction*.

Guided practice should directly reflect the objective of instruction. During this time, Miss Lopez's job is to ensure that students have a clear understanding of the strategy or skill that has just been presented. Students who have problems remembering new material often benefit from practicing in a variety of formats and contexts. Teachers should ensure that students are given ample time to understand new concepts before moving on to independent practice. Overall, students may need multiple opportunities to practice with guidance from the teacher.

This phase in the lesson is an excellent time to involve students in actively responding to questions. Student responses should guide the teacher in making decisions about how best to scaffold or support student learning. In addition to providing extra practice opportunities, questioning can help teachers assess student progress and knowledge of concepts.

Teachers can ask for the following kinds of responses:

- **Choral response:** All of the students answer together.
- **Partner response:** Students respond to a partner. Assign each student in a pair a number. “Ones tell twos why the character ...”
- **Silent response:** Students raise thumbs up or down to indicate whether they agree or disagree, or engage in some other silent response.
- **Individual selection:** Pose a question to the whole class and then strategically select an individual student to answer the question. Remember to say the student’s name after the question so that all students think they might be called on and will rehearse an answer in anticipation of being selected.

It is critical for students to practice correct responses. When a student gives a correct response, restate the correct response and have the class repeat the correct response as well. This will give the students an opportunity to practice correct reading and responding. For example:

Point to a word on the board.

Teacher:

What is this word, Justin?

Student:

Island. (individual selection)

Teacher:

That’s right, *island*. Everyone, what is this word?

Class:

Island. (choral response)

Or:

Teacher:

What does it mean that he was *elated*, Sara?

Student:

It means he was very happy and excited.

Teacher:

That’s right, *elated* means very happy and excited. Everyone, what does *elated* mean?

Class:

Very happy and excited.

During guided practice, it is essential to offer **positive** and **corrective feedback**, as appropriate. When students read a word incorrectly or give an incorrect response, they are essentially practicing and reinforcing that incorrect response (Denton & Hocker, 2006). Positive and corrective feedback will be discussed further in the next chapter. One example of providing corrective feedback is given on the following page.

Error-correction example (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004):

Student (reading orally):

She longed to see the is-land ...

Teacher:

That word is *island*. Say the word.

Student:

Island.

Teacher:

Good. Please reread the sentence.

Student:

She longed to see the island her grandmother told stories about ...

INDEPENDENT PRACTICE

When students are consistently responding to questions and applying a skill or strategy correctly during guided practice, then they are ready to apply their new knowledge independently. Independent practice reinforces concepts taught and allows students to learn information on their own. Independent practice should parallel the goals of the lesson and be directly relevant to guided practice (Carnine, Silbert, Kame'enui, & Tarver, 2004). The goal of independent practice is for students to develop automaticity, or mastery of a strategy or skill. Once the strategy or skill becomes a habit, it will be easier for students to generalize their new knowledge. When students begin to generalize, they realize that this new strategy is not just for reading class, but also for any class and any reading. Teachers can tell students explicitly so that they are able to apply skills and strategies to a wide range of circumstances. For example, a teacher may ask questions such as, "Can you think of a time you might use this strategy outside of this class?"

When planning for independent practice, a teacher may reflect, "Am I giving the students an opportunity to apply the strategy or skill that was taught without support?" If, through direct instruction and guided practice, students were taught how to categorize words, they should have several opportunities to practice categorizing words independently. Sometimes teachers make the mistake of asking students to practice a related skill during independent practice instead of the exact strategy or skill that was taught. A multiple-choice worksheet asking students to choose the category that a word belongs to is related to categorization. However, this activity is not as effective as giving students a list of words and asking them to categorize them appropriately. Students will probably not be able to accomplish a task such as categorization independently unless they have had sufficient explicit instruction, modeling, and guided practice.

GENERALIZATION

Generalization occurs when students can apply their new strategies and skills in other contexts or settings outside the reading classroom. Struggling readers usually do not generalize automatically. Teachers should plan instruction so that students have ample practice applying their new skills and strategies in a variety of settings. Teachers can also lead discussions to make students aware of how they can use their new skills and strategies in other classes. If teachers are aware of the instructional expectations in other classes, they can remind their students to use the strategies they learn in reading class in their other classes.

MONITOR STUDENT LEARNING

Monitoring student learning refers to the process of gathering information regularly through student assessments. The information gathered should be directly connected to a student’s instructional focus. For example, if diagnostic assessments established that a student needed to work on word recognition, a teacher may monitor student growth through repeated assessments of ORF with a retell or word list reading.

Once you establish a routine of regular progress monitoring, you can use the data collected as a guide to planning instruction. This data will help you know when you need to reteach concepts and when you need to adapt instruction.

Four main ways to adjust instruction are defined in the following table.

FIGURE 16. GUIDE TO ADAPTING INSTRUCTION.

Adaptation Category	Definition	Examples
Instructional Content	Skills and concepts that are the focus of teaching and learning	Determining main ideas Reading words with closed syllable patterns Summarization
Instructional Activity	The actual lessons used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Semantic mapping Main idea strategy Teaching the multisyllable word reading strategy
Delivery of Instruction	The procedures and routines used to teach instructional activities	Grouping—whole class, small group, or partners Modeling and thinking aloud Connecting to background knowledge Multiple opportunities for practice
Instructional Material	Supplemental aids that are used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts	Narrative or expository text Manipulatives Charts Flashcards Recorded text

Adapted with permission from University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. (2003). Special education reading project secondary institute — Effective instruction for secondary struggling readers: Research-based practices. Austin, TX: Author.

For further discussion of progress monitoring and adapting instruction, please refer to the previous chapter on assessment.

PERIODIC REVIEW/MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

If Miss Lopez wants her students to have long-term retention of material learned, she must plan and provide for daily, weekly, and monthly review of strategies and skills.

Swanson and Deshler (2003) give a “big picture” look at what current research says about instructional practice. They found that students need to practice newly learned material thoroughly, but distributed practice is better for retention. Distributed practice means that concepts learned in one unit of study are carried over for review and connection to new information in another unit of study. Connections between related materials should be pointed out explicitly to students. In their book *Effective Teaching Strategies That Accommodate Diverse Learners*, Kame’enui and Carnine (1998) suggest that teachers space reviews over time. Therefore, they posit, it is essential for teachers to keep a cumulative list of strategies and skills covered and then space the review of this material over time through a variety of activities. Effective teachers understand that it is their job to find out what their students know, to teach them what they do not know, to guide them and support them as they learn, and to provide several opportunities for students to apply their newly learned skills or strategies.

Extensive Distributed Practice → **Generalization** → **Long-term Retention**