

Chapter 5

Components of Effective Instruction

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

- Comprehension
- Vocabulary
- Fluency
- Word recognition

By this point, Ms. Lopez has 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. This chapter discusses 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, explained in more detail later in this chapter, are as follows:

- 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

automaticity

Automatic processing; implementing a skill, strategy, or process with little or no conscious attention to it

| | |
|-----------------------------|---|
| corrective feedback | Specific clarification provided by the teacher to give students information about their errors |
| distributed practice | Providing many opportunities to practice a skill or apply a strategy distributed across time; distributed practice sessions are typically shorter than massed practice sessions, in which students practice a skill in a single extended lesson |
| generalization | The application of a rule or behavior to a new context or setting (e.g., applying a comprehension strategy learned in reading class to a social studies assignment) |
| objective | The aim or goal of the lesson; what the teacher wants the 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 |
| scaffolding | Adjusting or extending instruction so that students are able to be successful with challenging tasks; this support is temporary and removed when no longer needed |
| think-aloud modeling | A type of modeling in which the teacher verbalizes what he or she is thinking in order to make the thought process apparent to students |

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 gain access to prior knowledge and then connect it 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 the teacher the opportunity to see whether her students have mastered the material and provides students with an opportunity to **overlearn**—to learn to the point of mastery, or automaticity. When students overlearn a skill or strategy they are able to apply it with little or no conscious attention. For example, fluent readers develop automaticity in word recognition; they can recognize words without conscious attention to the task, freeing up their mental resources to focus on the meaning of the text. Overlearning leads to long-term retention and provides connections for future learning (Mastropieri & Scruggs, 2002). During the daily review, do the following:

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 post information such as definitions of key concepts or essential steps of previously taught strategies 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 clearly. Show students what you want them to do. Strategies can be modeled through a **think-aloud** process. During think-aloud modeling, the teacher actually carries out each step of the strategy while talking about his or her own thought processes. 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. The sample lesson plans in this book provide many examples of think-aloud modeling. It is important that teachers not simply assume that students understand the execution of a skill or the thinking process involved in applying a strategy. Therefore, careful modeling is essential. In addition to this modeling, 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. This usually involves modeling the process again and providing explicit feedback as students practice it.

In summary, when presenting new information, be sure to do the following:

- 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.

During the modeling phase of instruction, try to ensure that ELLs and others with limited oral vocabularies are directly 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 the teacher 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. Providing this type of guidance while students are working ensures 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 themselves questions during reading 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 as follows:

Teacher: Where did Abraham Lincoln...?

Student: ...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 Chapter 6.

Guided practice should directly reflect the objective of instruction. During this time, the teacher'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 have students respond in several different formats:

- **Choral response:** All of the students answer together.
- **Partner response:** Each student responds to a partner. Assign each student in a pair a number. Then say, for example, "Ones tell twos why the character..."
- **Silent response:** Students point thumbs up or down to indicate agreement or disagreement or engage in some other type of 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* asking the question so that all students think they might be called on and 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. Consider the following examples:

Point to a word on the board.

Teacher: What is this word... (short pause) Justin? (This is an example of individual selection.)

Student: *Island.*

Teacher: That's right—*island*. Everyone, what is this word?

Class: *Island*. (This is an example of choral response and practicing correct responses.)

Or:

Teacher: What does it mean that he was *elated*... (short pause) 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. Positive and corrective feedback will be discussed further in the next chapter. One example of providing corrective feedback is provided below

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

Once 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.

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 vocabulary 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. For example, a multiple-choice worksheet asking students to choose the category to which a word belongs 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. Many students will not be able to accomplish a task such as categorization independently unless they have had sufficient explicit instruction, modeling, and guided practice.

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.

TEACHING FOR GENERALIZATION

Generalization occurs when students apply strategies and skills they have learned in the reading class whenever they read in other contexts or settings. Struggling readers usually do not generalize automatically.

To promote generalization, teachers can plan instruction so that students have ample practice applying their new skills and strategies with a variety of texts, including texts that are similar to those that students read in English language arts, math, social studies, and science classes. Teachers can also tell students explicitly that they should apply skills and strategies to a wide range of circumstances and can lead discussions in which students verbalize ways that they can generalize strategies they have learned. For example, a teacher may ask questions such as, “Can you think of a time you might use this strategy outside of this class?” Examples of teaching for generalization are provided in the lesson plans included in this sourcebook.

If content-area teachers are aware of the vocabulary and comprehension strategies students learn in the reading class, then they can show how these strategies apply in different disciplines and remind students to use the strategies throughout the school day. See Chapter 1 for a description of coordinated strategy instruction across content areas to support continuity and generalization.

MONITORING 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 establish that a student needs to work on fluency or word recognition, then a teacher may monitor student growth through repeated assessments of ORF 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. The data will help you know when you need to reteach concepts and when you need to adapt instruction. Four ways to adapt instruction are defined in Figure 5.1 (photocopiable version in the Appendix). For further discussion of progress monitoring and adapting instruction, please refer to Chapters 3 and 4.

PERIODIC REVIEW AND/OR MULTIPLE OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE

A teacher who wants students to have long-term retention of the material they have learned must plan and provide for daily, weekly, and monthly review of strategies and skills. Swanson and Deshler (2003) took a “big-picture” look at what research says about instructional practice. They found that students need to practice newly learned material thoroughly but that **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) suggested that teachers keep a cumulative list of strategies and skills covered and then space the review of this material

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 lesson 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 Materials | Supplemental aids that are used to teach and reinforce skills and concepts | Narrative or expository text Manipulatives Charts Flashcards Recorded text |

Figure 5.1. Guide to Adapting Instruction. (Adapted with permission from The University of Texas Center for Reading and Language Arts. [2003b]. *Special education reading project [SERP] secondary institute—Effective instruction for secondary struggling readers: Research-based practices*. Austin, TX: Author.)

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 (see Figure 5.2).



Figure 5.2. Steps to long-term retention.