

Considerations for program planning

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Instructional Approaches

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Effective instruction is key to student success. To provide effective instruction, teachers need to consider what they want students to learn, how they will know whether

students have learned it, how they will design instruction to promote the learning, and how they will respond to students who are not making progress.

When planning what students will learn, teachers identify the main concepts and skills described in the curriculum expectations, consider the contexts in which students will apply the learning, and determine students' learning goals.

Instructional approaches should be informed by evidence from current research about instructional practices that are effective in the classroom. For example, research has provided compelling evidence about the benefits of explicitly teaching strategies that can help students develop a deeper understanding of concepts. Strategies such as "compare and contrast" (e.g., through Venn diagrams and comparison matrices) and the use of analogy enable students to examine concepts in ways that help them see what the concepts *are* and what they *are not*. Although such strategies are simple to use, teaching them explicitly is important in order to ensure that all students use them effectively.

A well-planned instructional program should always be at the student's level, but it should also push the student towards their optimal level of challenge for learning, while providing support and anticipating and directly teaching skills that are required for success.


A Differentiated Approach to Teaching and Learning

A differentiated approach to teaching and learning is an important part of a framework for effective classroom practice. It involves adapting instruction and assessment to suit individual students' interests, learning preferences, and readiness in order to promote learning.

An understanding of students' strengths and needs, as well as of their backgrounds, life experiences, and possible emotional vulnerabilities, can help teachers identify and address the diverse strengths and needs of their students. Teachers continually build their awareness of students' learning strengths and needs by observing and assessing their readiness to learn, their interests, and their learning styles and preferences. As teachers develop and deepen their understanding of individual students, they can respond more effectively to each student's needs by differentiating instructional approaches – for example, by adjusting the method or pace of instruction, using different types of resources, allowing a wider choice of topics, or even adjusting the learning environment, if appropriate, to suit the way the student learns and how the student is best able to demonstrate learning. Differentiation is planned as part of the

overall learning design, but it also includes making adaptations during the teaching and learning process based on “assessment for learning”. Common classroom strategies that support differentiated instruction include cooperative learning, project-based approaches, problem-based approaches, and explicit instruction. Unless students have an Individual Education Plan with modified expectations, *what* they learn continues to be guided by the curriculum expectations and is the same for all students.

Lesson Design

Effective lesson design involves several important elements. Teachers engage students in a lesson by activating their prior learning and experiences, clarifying the purpose for learning, and making connections to contexts that will help them see the relevance and usefulness of what they are learning. Teachers select instructional strategies to effectively introduce concepts, and consider how they will scaffold instruction in ways that will best meet the needs of their students. At the same time, they consider when and how to check students’ understanding and to assess their progress towards achieving their learning goals. Teachers provide multiple opportunities for students to apply their knowledge and skills and to consolidate and reflect on their learning. A three-part lesson design (e.g., “Minds On, Action, and Consolidation”) is often used to structure these elements. Effective lesson design also incorporates culturally responsive and relevant pedagogy (CRRP), which recognizes that all students learn in ways that are connected to background, language, family structure, and social or cultural identity. CRRP is discussed more fully in the section [Equity and Inclusive Education](#) .