

# Features of Effective Instruction: What to Look for

This resource is a list of effective instructional features for teachers to use when planning classroom instruction. It also serves as a tool for administrators and instructional coaches to use while observing, coaching, and supporting teachers.

## Explicit Instruction With Modeling

### Explicitness

- Uses academic language related to the topic
- Ensures that all students can see the instruction from all angles of delivery
- Uses language that is clear and matches the model
- Incorporates instructional routines to create predictability and familiarity
- Ensures that directions are clear and consistent
- Incorporates all other features of effective instruction
- Ensures that the instructional focus matches the step-by-step process

### Modeling

- Models examples or concepts in multiple ways
- Uses clear language and projects so all students can hear
- Checks for understanding while modeling
- Matches the task being modeled to the verbal think-aloud
- Follows modeling with a step-by-step process
- Has students participate in the modeling process
- States the instructional focus

## Systematic Instruction With Scaffolding

### Systematic Instruction

- Regulates task difficulty by breaking the task into manageable steps
- Anticipates potential difficulties
- Designs lessons so that skills move from easier to more difficult
- Plans a sufficient amount of checking for understanding and practice opportunities after each manageable step

- Knows the state standards and the prerequisite skills needed for the standards being taught
- Uses research-based instructional routines to make instructional systems consistent

### Scaffolding

- Accesses students' prior knowledge to build connections between new and previous learning
- Plans many opportunities to practice and respond
- Reflects on the students' responses to instruction and either increases the intensity of scaffolding or decreases the scaffolding (i.e., uses a gradual release of responsibility)
- Uses higher-utility skills to support the learning of new content
- Checks for understanding after each strategically planned, manageable step

### Multiple Opportunities to Practice and Respond

#### Frequent Responses While Teaching

- Uses choral and echo responses with emphasis on responding in unison
- Uses choral responses in unison for one-word answers
- Uses instructional routines such as think-pair-share, think-write-pair-share, think-do-share, or study-tell-help-check
- Uses interactive response methods (e.g., response cards, hand signals, response slates, response technology applications)
- Uses cloze reading

#### Practice Opportunities While Teaching

- Uses collaborative groups, workstations, and/or partner work
- Incorporates admit and exit slips
- Has students participate in echo, choral, and partner reading
- Uses quick writes
- Makes connections and provides exposure across content areas or with other topics
- Teaches a skill or concept in multiple ways to increase generalization and fluency
- Distributes practice opportunities across time
- Builds in guided practice, cumulative practice, and independent practice

## **Immediate and Corrective Feedback**

- Notices the error in a response and determines the type of feedback
- Provides immediate feedback to reduce practicing mistakes
- Focuses on the correct answer versus the incorrect answer
- Uses an appropriate tone when correcting errors
- Ends every correction by having the students give the right response
- Keeps feedback simple and connected to the content
- Provides feedback that is action oriented and that is accessible for and involves the students

## **Appropriate Pacing**

- Is aware of time when delivering instruction
- Uses quick transitions between tasks within a lesson
- Anticipates potential barriers and plans accordingly
- Spends appropriate time on the lesson, component, or task
- Continually monitors responses and adjusts when needed
- Provides 3–5 seconds of wait/think time
- Avoids digressions not related to the lesson
- Prepares the “what,” “where,” and “how” of a lesson and the lesson’s next steps
- Uses instructional routines

## **Use of Multiple Grouping Formats**

- Uses various grouping formats effectively: whole group, partners, same-ability small groups, mixed-ability small groups, independent, and one on one
- Is flexible with grouping
- Anticipates potential barriers and adjusts accordingly
- Maximizes group size depending on grouping arrangement
- Uses instructional routines for movement and communication with various grouping arrangements
- Strategically places or partners students
- Considers attention span of students when using various grouping arrangements
- Considers data when creating various grouping arrangements

## Differentiated Instruction

- Knows students' present level of competency to match instructional materials and deliver accordingly
- Differentiates according to need: content, process, product, and learning environment
- Uses data to plan the “what” and “how” of instruction
- Adjusts the level of complexity based on the objective: moves from easier to more difficult skills and concepts
- Increases explicitness, scaffolding, and/or opportunities to practice and respond
- Increases the specifics of feedback and provides it closer to the learning moment
- Varies the method of delivering the product based on individual need while staying connected to the objective
- Strategically places students to benefit from the teaching opportunity
- Uses various grouping arrangements to target instruction

This resource was designed to accompany the “Creating the Instructional Program” pathway. It is recommended that training is completed prior to using this tool. [Contact your regional MTSS specialist](#) to enroll in a synchronous course, or enroll for an [asynchronous course](#).