

Taking Pedagogical Action

After teachers have interpreted the evidence and made a determination about the status of student learning, they need to take some action in response to students' immediate learning needs. This action might be taken in the moment in the form of feedback to the student(s) or an instructional adjustment. Or it may be that the teacher uses the information to plan the next lesson. Teachers might also decide that student learning is on track to meet the Learning Goal and so they may continue with the lesson as planned.

Not only do teachers make pedagogical choices on-the-fly in the course of a lesson, they also plan them ahead of time as strategies to support student learning. Instructional adjustments could include: modeling, prompting, questioning, giving feedback, telling, explaining, and directing. These pedagogical actions are elaborated below.

Modeling

Nearly everything a teacher does during the course of a lesson can be seen as modeling, but deliberate, purposeful modeling is a powerful instructional strategy. For example, teachers can make intended student learning "visible" by verbalizing their reasoning out loud, explicitly narrating their thinking during a problem-solving process, or demonstrating a specific skill.

Prompting

Prompting is an instructional strategy the teachers use to help students access and apply prior learning as a bridge to new learning. In order to prompt effectively, a teacher needs a detailed knowledge of the student's current level of understanding. Prompting may take the form of a reminder, a strong hint, a clue, or a question, and should always be followed by adequate wait time.

Questioning

Asking questions is an ideal way to generate thoughtful discussions and explorations of issues that are important to developing students' understanding. In addition, attending to the answers that students give and probing these answers with follow-up questions yields important information that teachers can use to evaluate current levels of understanding and identify appropriate instructional responses for next steps.

Giving Feedback

The primary use of feedback is not to indicate whether students are right or wrong but to enable them to reflect on their use of strategies and on their learning. An important message for teachers to convey when giving feedback is that the source of student success is their own learning strategies. Providing feedback that gives hints, cues, or suggestions rather than total solutions will assist students to build a repertoire of learning strategies.

Effective feedback should:

- Be related to Learning Goals and Success Criteria;
- Be specific and clear;
- Provide suggestions, hints, or cues rather than correct answers;
- Engage students cognitively in the task.

Telling

Telling means supplying what students need in the moment (an unknown word or the steps to complete a task, for example) to enable them to maintain momentum in the learning process. A teacher makes a professional judgment to use this instructional strategy so that student learning is not shortcircuited but rather so that temporary obstacles are removed on the way to deeper learning.

Explaining

Explanations are verbally explicit, tailored to individual student needs, and intended to help students develop their own understandings. Teachers may use explanations to introduce an unfamiliar concept, clear up misconceptions, explain a process (how to give peer feedback, for example), or clarify the steps of a specific learning strategy (such as note-taking).

Directing

Directing is simply giving a specific instruction to let the learner know what he or she is supposed to do. For example, “find the sentence in the text that suggests...” “write the letter for the sound ...” or “turn to your partner and share ...”

High quality instructional tasks, well aligned with Learning Goals and designed to stimulate students' thinking, can reveal substantive insights into how student thinking is developing. It is not enough to check if students can recall basic knowledge and procedures but rather tasks should help teachers determine if students can apply their knowledge, reason, develop arguments and counter arguments, and so on.