

# Responding Contingently

Transcript for the online video from CSAI – Section 1

Welcome to this module on Taking Pedagogical Action.

In this first video of the module, we will provide an introduction to the topic and then delve further into one of its key ideas, Responding Contingently.

As we've seen, there are four interconnected elements of the formative assessment process.

Learning Goals and Success Criteria anchor the process, next comes gathering evidence of student learning, then analyzing the evidence, and finally taking whatever action is needed to close the gap between where students are and where they need to be.

This module focuses on Taking Pedagogical Action.

Pedagogical Action occurs after teachers have gathered and analyzed evidence and made a determination about the status of student learning. Based on where they think students are in their learning, teachers then take action to respond to students' immediate learning needs.

This Pedagogical Action might be taken in the moment in the form of immediate feedback to the student(s) or an immediate instructional adjustment. Or it may be that the teacher uses the information to plan and take pedagogical action in the next lesson. Teachers might also find that the evidence shows that student learning is on track to meet the Learning Goal and so they may continue with the lesson as planned.

Recall that the formative assessment process is grounded in three central questions:

- Where are students going?
- Where are students now?
- Where to next?

Taking Pedagogical Action helps answer the question, "Where to next?"

This module focuses on three big ideas. They are:

- Responding Contingently
- Considering the Direction: Looping Back, Staying Here, or Moving Forward
- Choosing the Right Pedagogical Strategy

This video will focus on the idea of Responding Contingently.

The goal of Pedagogical Action is for teachers to respond contingently to students immediate learning needs, based on ongoing evidence of student learning. Responding contingently means continually meeting students where they are to support their forward progress.

To know what contingent pedagogical action to take, teachers consider:

- What I have learned about my students' learning based on my analysis of the immediate evidence;
- What I know about each student, based on the student's prior learning experiences, culture, and dispositions;
- What I know about the progression of learning – the sequence of learning steps --that will take students from where they are to the Learning Goal, based on my content knowledge;
- What pedagogical moves in my 'tool box' of possible pedagogical action can best support each student as students progress towards the Learning Goal and Success Criteria.

Now let's look at some examples.

Consider a language teacher who has set the Learning Goal for his students to “explain how to make a traditional culinary dish, using words and phrases to create coherence in the explanation.” The teacher has just finished sitting down one-on-one with his students as they each describe the cooking processes out loud to him (a Gathering Evidence strategy). As a result of the teacher's analysis of this evidence, he determines that three of his students are at the emerging level, still struggling with including conjunctions (such as and, but, and in addition), while others are at the maturing level, ready to begin using sequence words (such as then, next, first, and finally). One or two students have a consolidated understanding and can already include conjunctions and sequence words. They are now stumbling over how to consistently express complete ideas. With this variation among his students, what Pedagogical Action does the teacher need to take? Clearly, it would not be appropriate to take the same next steps for all students. If his response is to be contingent on students' current learning status, he will need to differentiate his actions.

He decides to give small group, mini lessons. As students are working in centers to reinforce concepts or skills to which they already had been introduced, the teacher pulls together the three students who are still struggling with conjunctions for a direct skill lesson on the specific words with which they are struggling. In the next class segment, he conducts a mini-lesson with the students who are ready to move to sequence words, and in the last segment, helps the final group of students practice giving oral descriptions that contain complete ideas.

Although responding contingently may mean differentiated instruction sometimes a quick, whole group response is what is needed. For example, in a mixed grade classroom a teacher conducts a lesson aimed to increase students' skill in building on each other's ideas in collaborative

discussions. His Success Criteria are that students can use questioning and phrases to link their ideas to others in their discussions.

As the students in table groups discuss a story they have been listening to together, the teacher walks around the classroom collecting evidence through listening and taking notes on students' discussion contributions. He notices that while most students are using basic linking phrases such as "I agree" and "Yeah, that makes sense to me," very few students are asking one another questions about their ideas.

He then stops the discussions and communicates his observations to students. Students also reflect on their experience, noting that they are not adding to what others have contributed, but mostly offering new ideas. In response to teacher questions, the students give examples of questions that they can ask, such as "What did you mean by that?" and "Can you tell me more?"

After this Pedagogical Action based on in-the-moment evidence, the teacher asks students to continue in their groups with a five-minute discussion focused on both sharing and asking follow-up questions. When students conclude the new discussion, they debrief again and share their thoughts on how well they met the Success Criteria.

At other times, teachers' analysis of student evidence may lead to contingent responses through individual conferences. For example, in a class where students are working on creating descriptions of their tribe's subsistence cycle, such as planting, fishing, or hunting, the teacher first reviews her notes on students' progress and selects a few students to conference with that day.

In this lesson, she begins with one student whose personal Learning Goal and Success Criteria from their last conference was to include symbolism in writing about each stage of a subsistence cycle. The teacher asks the student to orally present her description of the corn planting cycle and then to identify the places where she had added detail about symbolism and then to elaborate on what the symbolism means. Based on the student's response, the teacher feels confident that this student has met her personal Learning Goal and is ready to move on. As a next step, the teacher says she thinks the description can benefit from additional information on what the process means to the community. With the student's agreement, the teacher writes this Learning Goal on a post-it note as the student's next Learning Goal. The student then attaches this to her class notebook for easy reference.

Now let's pause and reflect.

Think about the last unit you taught. Were there times when you responded contingently? How did you respond? What did you do and why did you do it?

Pause the video a moment to reflect on these questions.

Thank you. You have completed the first section of the Taking Pedagogical Action module.

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