**Effective Instructional Strategies**

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   Now more than ever, teachers face the overwhelming task of meeting the needs of all learners, including diverse learner groups (ACE, 2023a). This is incredibly daunting for novice teachers. In this paper, a review of best practice strategies, feedback, and ideas from a teacher-leader interview provides information to support novice teachers in lesson planning, differentiation, materials and technology selection, and classroom management. First, teachers must get to know their students as individuals and unique learners to meet their needs, then seek creative and effective ways to support student needs. Highly effective approaches to meeting student needs include multimodal strategies, cultural awareness, and competency (ACE, 2023b). Multimodal instructional strategies can help teachers support students' learning needs by providing more sensory entry points for students to connect instruction to learning. Multimodal strategies include linguistic, visual, tactile, artistic, and kinesthetic tasks and activities that interest learners (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). Examples of multimodal instructional strategies teachers may leverage include educational games, concept mapping, learning styles, social-emotional learning (SEL), and problem-based learning (PBL).

Culturally competent teachers incorporate cultural and social-emotional awareness, communication, and diverse instructional strategies, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) features, such as numerous multimodal elements (Kennette & Wilson, 2019). Teachers use culturally responsive and relevant practices such as narrative, contextual, and flexible approaches. These dynamic techniques include group activities, role play, portfolios, and culturally representative materials and resources (Le Buffe et al., 2021). Culturally relevant strategies include non-verbal assessments, visual and kinesthetic techniques such as bodywork, and untimed tasks, tests, and protocols. Additional UDL strategies include student learning goals, assignment choices, flexible work environments, frequent feedback, and integrated technology (Kennette & Wilson, 2019).

**Lesson Planning**

The heart of education is the conjunction where teaching becomes learning. All stakeholders, whether students, teachers, administrators, or parents, want the best educational outcomes for students. Teachers create new opportunities for student learning by planning lessons that meet student needs and are based on a defined curriculum (Sia et al., 2017). Both novice and veteran teachers must meet student needs and provide instructional rigor by planning lessons that include opportunities for differentiation and collaboration with academically and culturally appropriate materials and resources (Little, 2013).

Rigorous lesson plans include learning objectives, essential questions or learning targets, appropriate materials, teacher actions, student actions, strategic, differentiated learning activities, and formative or summative assessment that indicates what students learned and how teachers need to adjust instruction. (ACE, 2023a). Teachers also strategically leverage 21st-century skills within lesson plans to challenge their students academically. These skills include critical thinking, collaboration, self-directed learning, differentiated independent practice, technology-based learning tools, and culturally informed materials and connections (Little, 2013). In addition, student needs require teachers to adjust instructional tasks and settings to remediate and extend instruction in small-group and whole-group contexts. For example, a class may have learners with individual education plans (IEPs) with specific goals and objectives, learners with English language needs, gifted learners, and a wide range of learning styles and personality styles. An effective lesson plan includes activities, tasks, and materials to address all these needs. In addition, materials should represent the cultural diversity of the students and integrate across content areas. Finally, the element that connects the components of rigorous planning is the continual process of starting and ending with formative assessment to drive instructional adjustments to respond to students' strengths and weaknesses.

Novice teachers must ensure they teach the appropriate standards, investigate and implement district and state pacing guides, standards, and standardized testing components, and indicate how and when teachers plan and implement instruction. Teacher evaluations and standards also impact lesson planning depending on specific local school or district initiatives. Some districts also collect parent and community input for the standards that teachers implement through lesson plans. These influences are important and add to an extensive list of items teachers must consider and strategize when creating lesson plans.

Teachers spend a great deal of time and energy creating effective lesson plans to meet the needs of all the students in their class. Teachers can enhance lesson planning through collegial collaboration with grade-level or department peers. In addition, a reflective mindset and openness to revisiting skills and continually adjusting instruction help teachers improve their plans and processes. Once teachers find a rhythm in weekly planning using lesson plan key components, incorporating local and district requirements, and adjusting to students' differentiated needs, the planning process gets more accessible and more efficient.

**Selecting Materials for Differentiation**

One of the most challenging tasks for novice teachers is differentiating instruction for all the students in their classrooms, representing a broad continuum of readiness, interests, and cultural backgrounds. One of the best strategies for differentiation is incorporating multimodal instructional strategies. These strategies help teachers support students' learning needs by providing more sensory entry points for students to connect instruction to learning. Multimodal strategies include linguistic, visual, tactile, artistic, and kinesthetic tasks and activities that interest learners (Moreno & Mayer, 2007). For example, a teacher may use math manipulatives like tower cubes or fraction circles to support fraction or decimal concept instruction. The teacher may vary the manipulatives based on the instructional needs of students in small group settings. Other multimodal strategies include concept mapping, educational games, learning styles, think-pair-share, concrete-representational-abstract (CRA) modeling, math manipulatives, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL) elements.

Teachers differentiate instruction across four areas which include content, process, product, and environment (Gregory & Chapman, 2013). Multimodal strategies incorporate all four areas and help teachers support diverse learner groups with differentiated strategies that target specific students' instructional strengths and growth areas. For instance, many special education students need help with processing deficits that impact skill retention. These students

may need accommodation to change how they learn the material or modify what teachers expect students to learn. The student's Individual Education Plans (IEPs)s reflect necessary accommodations and modifications. Multimodal strategies can increase access to greater processing possibilities for special education students to help them meet their academic and IEP goals and objectives. Likewise, English language learners may have similar accommodations in their English Language Proficiency Plan or ELPP. Again, teachers must differentiate instruction to meet the needs of EL learners as well.

**Selecting Appropriate Technology for Lessons**

           Teachers face the sometimes-overwhelming task of selecting the appropriate technology for lessons (Shatri, 2020). While technological resources and materials provide instructional benefits, they also provide obstacles. One advantage of incorporating technology in lessons is the potential support for the unique learning needs of diverse learner groups such as ELL, SWD, and gifted learners. For example, teachers may use web-based videos, text-to-speech, translation software, multimedia apps, or educational games to support content lessons (Wen & Walter, 2022). In addition, teachers can remediate or enrich instructional strategies using online platforms like Google Classroom to increase self-directed learning opportunities. Diverse learner groups such as ELL and SWD students may utilize additional technological components, such as assistive technology, to support specific learning needs while navigating their learning process.

           Some disadvantages come with using instructional technology. Technology becomes a distraction when students misuse it (Shatri, 2020). If technology is overused, students may experience a lack of face-to-face interaction with teachers and peers in instructional settings. Students and teachers may also experience privacy issues or discipline issues caused by student misuse of technology. Another issue teachers experience with instructional technology includes technical difficulties with Wi-Fi, apps, or instructional tools that break down or work inconsistently. This often happens at the worst time, mainly when an administrator conducts an observation during a breakdown or when a teacher has scheduled a Zoom meeting and the Wi-Fi stops working.

Novice teachers or teachers new to the school may need to gain familiarity with school technology platforms and programs. Mitigation strategies include planning, setting up technology prior to using it with students, and preparing students to use appropriate technological tools in systematic steps (Shatri, 2020). Although classroom technology has potential disadvantages, the benefits of cross-curricular instructional implementation make technology integration an essential tool for learning.

**Selecting Classroom Management Strategies**

Meeting classroom management expectations and student needs is vital for student engagement but is daunting for novice teachers. There are several strategies novice teachers can use to start the school year effectively (See Figure 1). Effective classroom management allows effective classroom instruction to flourish. Now more than ever, students come to school with many cultural and life experiences that impact their classroom behaviors. Diverse student needs require teachers to differentiate instructional and management strategies to respond to student needs. Educators often identify culturally diverse students as disruptive and place them in special education settings (Cartledge et al., 2008). Educators with greater cultural competence perceive diverse learners and their behaviors more positively. Culturally responsive behavior management strategies include setting clear expectations, proactively anticipating behaviors, and praising desired behaviors (Larson et al., 2018). Furthermore, effective teachers get to know their students, talk through behavior scenarios and situations, discuss student thinking, and view misbehaviors as learning opportunities (Laure Price & Steed, 2016).

        There are numerous classroom management techniques from multiple sources, books, programs, and professional development sessions available to teachers, including Positive Behaviors Supports and Interventions (PBIS) (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023). At the local school level PBIS supports teachers and students with established school-wide rules,

routines, and rewards. At a PBIS school, novice and veteran teachers should model the structure of their classroom management system to align with the school's PBIS system. In addition, an effective differentiated management technique is to assess students as unique individuals within the first week of school, learning their behavioral needs such as ADD/ADHD, reading their 540, IEP, and ELPP plans and assesses learning styles and personality traits (based on inventories and questionnaires).

Next, teachers introduce expectations, classroom management strategies, and opportunities and implement them with consistency and fidelity. Students need management strategies that connect to their unique learner profile. An authentic classroom management approach with varied reward opportunities engages all learners (Wong et al., 2018). One collaborative reward system is table groups, which earn table points. The group with the most points at the end of the week earns a reward. Each group consists of four to five students who have specific jobs within the group.  A caveat for classroom management strategies and rewards is depending on too few strategies. The disadvantage is that students can quickly get bored with a management strategy when the novelty wears off, so providing a variety of techniques is a better approach (Wong et al., 2018). In addition to novelty, students may disengage if the rewards are inequitable. Therefore, teachers provide management strategies based on intrinsic and extrinsic rewards and routines, including merit-based, whole class reward-based, small group reward-based, or empathy-based rewards. Another angle on classroom management is to include social-emotional components, including relationship-building and restorative practices (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023). For example, teachers can set up expectations to frame interactions and collaboration for students to support each other.

One of the most effective classroom management techniques is to provide a variety of strategies and consistently use them (Wong et al., 2018). When students do not experience consistent use of classroom management strategies, they will push boundaries. Students also need to believe that their teacher authentically cares about them. Another way teachers demonstrate this is by listening to their students. This is not easy to do during a lesson, so the teacher can use a mailbox system. Students need to know that what they have to say or ask is important and that teachers want to listen to them. Students write their comments, concerns, or questions on paper and place them in the mailbox. This is an excellent way for teachers to support individual emotional and instructional needs and build trust with all students, including diverse learner groups.

**Figure 1**

*Process-oriented best practice guided for novice teachers*

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Best Practice Categories** | **Best Practice Processes** | **Indications for Diverse Learner Groups (ELL, SWD. Gifted)** |
| Lesson Planning | * Plan for meeting with students in small groups with the intent to differentiate instruction (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023)
* based on student needs.
* Use a gradual release cycle to model differentiated strategies.
* Plan for instruction in multiple modalities (Visual, Auditory, Kinesthetic)
* Make sure lessons are aligned with state and district content standards.
* Include learning targets and any other required components.
* Include formative and summative assessments
 | * Use sentence stems or paragraph frames (GCPS, 2023).
* Provide notes, passages, or other advanced organizers for support.
* Utilize graphic organizers to organize their thinking.
* Increase visual study materials for key vocabulary, both digital and print and discuss connections.
* Preview and research learning as a flipped approach
* Give students peer leader opportunities to support other students.
* Offer more opportunities for students to choose their assignments and highlight expectations for self-directed learning.
* Reverse the process and give the answers and ask them to create the questions.
 |
| Selecting Appropriate materials for Differentiation | * Maximize engagement and student focus using small group learning to differentiate instruction (Gregory & Chapman, 2013; Lauren Price & Steed, 2016)
* Provide and plan for independent practice opportunities with multimodal, concrete, technology-based experiences.
* Create flexible groupings instead of continually static groups to allow for greater differentiation.
* Provide consistent routines that allow small group flexibility as needed.
* Increase opportunities to differentiate instruction through learning styles.
* Increase opportunities to differentiate instruction through personality preferences.
 | * Discuss learning style preferences with your students and help them develop growth areas (Gregory & Chapman, 2013; Lauren Price & Steed, 2016).
* Implement multimodal strategies and tasks.
* Strategically group students for collaborative learning opportunities
* Talk to your students about how they like to work with others and help them develop growth areas.
* Include social learning opportunities.
 |
| Selecting Appropriate materials for Technology Integration | * Utilize the instructional technology provided by the district and school (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023)
* Use technology as an authentic learning tool, not just a product or for entertainment (Shatri, 2020).
* Use technology sparingly and intentionally. It is easy to depend on it too much. Students still need concrete and collaborative experiences away from technology.
* Monitor students when they use technology.
 | * Utilize the instructional technology to differentiate for student needs (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023)
* Use technology to remediate, enrich, and translate instructional opportunities.
* Monitor and give diverse learner frequent feedback when using technology.
 |
| Classroom Management Strategies | * Make sure the classroom environment is organized and has good traffic flow for movement (Wong et al., 2018).
* The teacher should always be able to see and monitor all instructional rotations, centers, group work and settings.
* Utilize and reinforce classroom and school rules and protocols such as PBIS and Class Dojo.
* Get to know your student interests so you can provide high-interest and engaging tasks.
 | * Increase engagement by differentiating instruction and offer mall group instructional experiences (Gregory & Chapman, 2013).
* Engage students display on-task behaviors.
* Make sure all learner groups are engaged in tasks.
* Strategically place students based on personality, level of engagement and focus, and readiness
* Make sure all learners feel heard
 |

In conclusion, the nature of being a novice teacher or even a veteran teacher comes with a series of obstacles and opportunities in the areas of lesson planning, differentiation, resource selection, and classroom management. Some useful advice includes seeking support and collaborating with peers when feeling overwhelmed. In addition, use the basic and foundational resources provided at the district and local school level and start slow (D.T., personal communication, May 31, 2023). Finally, develop strong interpersonal relationships with colleagues, students, parents, and administrators, and do not be afraid to ask for support.

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**Appendix A**

Participant Invitation Email



Appendix B

Teacher Interview Transcript

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| Interview Questions and Answers |
| 1. What is your name? DXXXXX TXXX, Instructional Coach
 |
| “My name is DXXXXX TXXX, and I am currently an instructional coach in an elementary school.” |
| 1. Describe your background in terms of culture and work experiences.
 |
| “I can't really identify as Bahamian. I grew up in the Bahamas and left home to come to the states when I was 19 years old. I came to Miami Florida and stayed there until my early 30s. After working in the service industry through college, my first career was in business working as a recruiter at a temp agency. I came to Atlanta Georgia in the early 2000s. I went back to school and completed alternate certification to be a teacher. I have worked in my current school district at my current school for the past 15 years.” |
| 1. Describe your teaching experiences (years, grades, subjects, etc.).
 |
| “I have taught 2nd, 3rd, and 5th grade. For the past two years I was the school's instructional coach. I am also the gifted coordinator and the PBIS coach for the school. Next year, I will serve as an assistant principal at the same school.” |
| 1. Describe your selection process for resources, technology, and materials you use in your current coaching experience with teachers.
 |
| “Our school district has extensive resources of instructional materials and technology. Every one of our students has a school device for instruction, intervention strategies and diagnostics, formative and summative assessments, district assessments, and state assessments. Our teachers have access to a wide variety of resources that are print based, manipulative based, and technology based. Our school district provides databases at the elementary, middle, and high school level that connect state and district standards, ready-made lesson plans, differentiated activities for lesson plans, and Lesson plan modifications and accommodations for ESL students, special ed students, and gifted students. Teachers should use all these resources to plan the lesson for the week for each subject. I used the technology as needed to support that lesson.” |
| 1. How do you recommend teachers implement rigorous and appropriate curriculum experiences for students?
 |
| “The best thing teachers can do is keep their instruction data-driven. Teachers should use assessment data to group students based on their performance. Daily lessons should have multiple opportunities for differentiation with small group instruction and differentiated assignments.” |
| 1. Describe the classroom management strategies you use and recommend to other teachers.
 |
| “Our school is a PBIS school and has been for the past eight years. We have established three main rules that students should be respectful, responsible, and ready. We call that the three R's. We have a school wide reward system based on our PBIS strategies. We also incorporate SEL strategies to support our PBIS program. All of the classrooms in the school start the day with a morning meeting and an SEL lesson. Most of our teachers also use Class Dojo to communicate behavior information with parents. I recommend teachers make sure that their classroom management practices align with the school wide practices.” |
| 1. Describe the strategies or resources you use or recommend teachers use to develop student self-knowledge and knowledge of others.
 |
| “I definitely recommend the teachers use the district and school resources we have for social emotional learning, morning meetings, and restorative practices to help students with their self-awareness and social awareness. So many of our students come to school with no home training. The students do not know how to get along with each other or express themselves appropriately. Teachers can use the resources that we have for social emotional learning to help our students get better what their social behaviors.” |
| 1. Describe the strategies or resources you use or recommend teachers use to support students’ appreciation of cultural diversity, similarities, and respect for other cultures.
 |
| “As a Title I school we include special events and monthly celebrations of different cultures. I recommend teachers participate in the monthly celebrations and support them with instructional activities. Teachers should also invest in getting to know the students by communicating and asking questions about their lives, relationships, and experiences. Teachers can also incorporate diversity in lessons through read alouds, flexibility in assignments and end products. Class building activities that allow students to build relationships and get to know each other and their backgrounds are also good. I also recommend teachers use books and videos for learning about other cultures by incorporating them into their lessons. |
| 1. Describe the strategies or resources you use or recommend teachers use to develop students’ empathy and cooperative behavior.
 |
| “I would recommend teachers incorporate cooperative learning and collaboration in their classrooms through daily assignments. Ask the students lots of questions and expect them to answer and discuss the answers with you. But first you have to teach them how to have a discussion. Teachers should actively listen to the students and model that strategy for students. Be sure to withhold judgment so students will be comfortable sharing. Also, I recommend using lots of class building activities that allow students to build relationships with each other.” |
| 1. Describe the strategies or resources you use or recommend teachers use to increase students’ conflict resolution abilities? How would your strategies include dialogue?
 |
| “This is one area where our students really struggle. They just don't come to school having any idea how to get along with each other when they can't agree. Many of our students don't really talk to their parents because they spend more time with older siblings and younger siblings on their own. I recommend using videos on conflict resolution and books or social stories to help students resolve conflicts. In addition, morning meetings really help. Teachers can also use one-on-one discussions with students along with restorative practices to find out what's really behind the conflict. Most of the time students act out it's not really about what you think it's about. There's something else behind the scenes. I also recommend teachers stop and do class discussions when needed for just in time solutions.” |
| 1. How would you support novice teachers in their selection of resources, technology, and materials?
 |
| “I serve as the new teacher coordinator and run our school’s mentor/mentee program. I highly recommend new teachers work directly with their mentor teachers to navigate all of the district and school resources for technology and materials. We have so many materials that new teachers can easily become overwhelmed. I recommend new teachers start small and tackle resources one week at a time to align with their lesson plans. It's very important for new teachers to work closely with their mentors and their grade levels take a collaborate on the lesson planning and material selection process. This should help new teachers to not become overwhelmed and make sure that they are using materials that are aligned with the standards we're supposed to teach.” |
| 1. How would you support novice teachers regarding classroom management strategies for a rigorous and appropriate curriculum for all learners?
 |
| “I would tell new teachers to start getting to know their students as individuals and looking at classroom management through a broader lens. Classroom management is not going to work it's one-size-fits-all. Teachers have to remember that not all learners are the same. Always use data to see where your students are so that you can meet their unique needs with curriculum. When students are engaged in learning they're less likely to become off task and misbehave. Be sure to take into consideration students cultural backgrounds and a structural needs especially if they have IEP, EIP, or ELLP plans.” |

Appendix C

Interview Thank You Note

