

## Principle Instructional Strategy Families and Teaching Styles

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EDU 6526

March 11, 2009

Approved Standards L (principles of effective practice), O (effective instructional strategies), and P (instructional strategies for reading, writing, critical thinking, and problem-solving): This work attests to my proficiency in understanding a variety of teaching models and how each can be used in a diverse classroom. Because each student learns differently it is necessary to understand various models in order to adapt my teaching strategies and style in order to foster student academic achievement and well-being.

By studying the principle instructional strategy families, it has become apparent that there is no one “right” way to teach a group of students. To be effective in today’s diverse classrooms, incorporating different strategies and theories into my teaching is a necessity. These strategies each have something unique to offer and by understanding how they work, it is possible to use them to foster student well-being and academic achievement.

The four principle instructional strategy families include information processing, social, personal, and behavioral. Within each family are a number of methods that address different student needs. This paper will focus on several aspects under the information-processing, behavioral, and personal families including non-directive, direct instruction, mastery learning, and advance organizers.

These strategies influence my teaching style in a number of ways, including the content and subject matter covered interaction with students, and methods for presenting lessons. Specifically, my definitions of student well-being and academic achievement have been challenged and redefined. If we were to ask most people about the purpose of education, it may be safe to assume that academic achievement would be at the top of the list. In fact, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction seeks to prepare “Washington students to live, learn, and work as productive citizens” with the four state learning goals:

Read with comprehension, write effectively, and communicate successfully...

Know and apply the core concepts and principles of mathematics; social, physical, and life sciences; civics and history...

Think analytically, logically, and creatively...

Understand the importance of work and finance and how performance, effort, and decisions directly affect future career and educational opportunities (Preparing Washington Students, 2009.)

With these goals in mind, a teacher certainly bears the responsibility of fostering academic achievement and, more importantly, has the responsibility of making this achievement accessible to all.

Student well-being is something towards which education should strive because academic achievement relies on a student's health. A student's self-esteem, belief in oneself, and ability to interact positively with others are skills useful in the classroom, as well as life beyond school and are vitally important to achievement. This "social education" is addressed by a number of strategies within the social, behavioral, and personal models. Each focus on the idea that "the personal, social, and academic goals of education are compatible with one another" (Joyce, 2009, p. 32). This means a student that is achieving high academically will be encouraged in others aspects of life, and the converse is also true in that students with a positive self-concept will be likely to achieve more.

Carl Rogers examined how positive human relations allow people to learn and grow more effectively (p. 326). His ideas of "nondirective teaching" seek to facilitate a positive learning environment by encouraging students to explore and create the best possible atmosphere in which they can learn. Moreover, Rogers's application of psychology to education led him to believe that positive interpersonal relationships enable people to grow and that "instruction should be based on concepts of human relations in contrast to concepts of subject matter" (p. 326). This point of view would argue that the academic achievement of students is tied to their emotional well-being in that students who have positive relations with their peers and teachers will be more likely to take responsibility for their education. The nondirective model places more power into the hands of the students by giving them the opportunity to create activities and a

curriculum for the classroom. The teacher plays a vital role as a facilitator but guides students through the process of deciding how they want to learn.

The impact of student involvement in nondirective learning can be easily seen in an article by Carl Rogers where he describes a situation in which a teacher gave her third grade students the opportunity to design their own reading program. Throughout the design process, the teacher was open and responsive to their suggestions to produce a program largely dictated by the students. Not only was this program designed by the students, but the teacher gave the students opportunities to interact with the teacher one-on-one for any number of reasons, be it with academic concerns or personal stories. The results of the student developed program were incredibly impressive; at the end of the year “not one of these...children had made less than eleven months’ progress in reading; some had made as much as three years’ growth” (Rogers). Rogers concludes this article by reiterating that when students feel listened to and respected, their achievement is enhanced. With nondirective teaching, as a personal model of teaching, students learn more about themselves and come to understand their own personal value. After establishing a trusting environment and giving students an active role in the planning of their education, students are able to discover knowledge and, consequentially, develop an excitement for further learning.

Fostering student self-esteem and academic achievement is certainly possible through non-directive teaching but this theory is not the only means by which we can do so. Mastery learning is the idea that all students are capable of learning as long as they are given time and the appropriate resources. In this behavioral approach, the students’ needs are addressed by a more individualized learning process. Like Rogers, John Carroll and Benjamin Bloom believed that

student self-esteem and well-being are important contributors to achievement and that mastery learning will build positive student-teacher relations through encouragement and assistance.

A combination of ideas from Carroll and Bloom, this approach takes time to ensure that each student is achieving at their own pace. The essential aspects of this approach include setting major objectives that represent the purpose of the subject, dividing these topics into smaller, more manageable units, identifying learning materials, administering diagnostic tests to measure progress, and adjusting or supplementing the material as needed (Joyce, p. 358). In addition to catering to student needs, this method can help build student self-esteem through positive interaction with the teacher. The individualized approach of this strategy allows educators to focus on each student's needs, thus fostering academic achievement in a manner where no student will be left behind. As quoted by Bruce Joyce in *Models of Teaching*, Berj Harootunian said, "If we can allow them time to learn one thing at a time, and then another, and another, until they get their feet under them, we can break the cycle of failure" (p. 357). Creating an effective mastery learning plan does take more time than some other models of teaching because it requires individual attention. However, in this strategy, the teacher is available to monitor the progress of each child to pay attention to academic achievement as well as provide the support for emotional well-being.

Another behavioral approach influenced by Benjamin Bloom's ideas is the direct instruction method. This model is, by no means, a complete strategy that should be used all the time, but it is a helpful way to build the strong foundation for further academic achievement. This method proceeds by the presentation and subsequent practice of knowledge and skills under the supervision of a teacher. The direct instruction model consists of 5 parts, including

presentation of lesson purpose and content as well as review of past related lessons, demonstration of new concepts and skills, checking for understanding, guided practice, and independent practice (p. 373). Effective practice and guidance must give attention to each individual student as not all will learn the lesson as quickly and may need extra assistance with the practice. Additionally, there are some students that may require more work in order to keep them interested. The execution of this strategy must be carefully examined as the possibility of constant criticism could damage the student's self-esteem. However, if done properly, direct instruction can maximize student learning time and encourage students to develop independence in seeking educational goals (p. 358). As seen with other models, the individualized attention given to students will help them achieve more academically as they learn to think for themselves, and it may also address issues of students' well-being by giving them the tools to succeed.

Benjamin Bloom's Taxonomy of Thinking Skills helps to identify the process by which teachers can progress through behavioral models of teaching. The lowest level is defined as knowledge in recalling specific information, facts, and experiences. The next is comprehension, which requires understanding and expression of ideas; application of these ideas reflects as using these concepts in a specific way. Analysis is the fourth level and it requires students to break down concepts. The fifth level is synthesis, which means combining elements to form a coherent whole, and the last is evaluation, or making judgments about value (p. 358). By understanding, applying, and encouraging these levels of thinking in the classroom, students will not only raise academic achievement through a deeper understanding of concepts, but they will also have a better grasp of what is expected of them in the future—helping them with their self-esteem.

The behavioral models discussed thus far stem from a rather traditional approach to learning where the teacher is largely in charge of the classroom. They have focused on the importance of “knowledge revealed” and an emphasis on lecture. Another model which stresses academic achievement from a rather traditional approach is David Ausubel’s advance organizers, in the information-processing family. As an advocate of presentations and lectures, Ausubel suggests ways in which “knowledge received” can be a very effective tool. He argues that building a foundation through repetition will help students retain information. This is done by using existing knowledge, because “to be maximally effective they must be formulated in terms of language and concepts already familiar to the learner...” (Ausubel, 1978). In this model, the teacher is responsible for imparting knowledge to students, as opposed to other methods which encourage students to discover and create conclusions. While some may argue that this makes the subject less meaningful to students, Ausubel would say that “whether or not material is meaningful depends more on the preparation of the learner and on the organization of the material than it does on the method of presentation” (Joyce, p. 250).

In other words, student achievement is based on a strong foundation. Advance organizers present a body of information in a variety of ways, be it through examples or contextual descriptions. They encourage students to consider previous experience they may have in the area or encourage them to think about how they view the issue. After this, the actual material of the lesson is presented, and finally the topic is clarified to students through critical thinking and active participation or responses. This method is effective on several levels, as the others have also shown. Not only do advance organizers raise academic achievement by creating a strong

basis for further instruction and retention of information, but it helps students to draw key ideas from lectures and presentations that they encounter later on.

These few families have only begun to skim the surface of how various approaches can shape a teaching strategy. However, it is important to understand the impact that these several approaches will make in shaping how students will learn. Keeping academic achievement and student well-being at the forefront of any teaching strategy will help ensure that the educator is effective in reaching students in a meaningful way.

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