*Classroom 'First Responder' Series*

# Teacher Tools to Motivate & Support the Struggling Learner

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# How To: Implement Strong Core Instruction

Teacher: Date: Class/Lesson:

The checklist below summarizes the essential elements of a supported-instruction approach. When preparing lesson plans, instructors can use this resource as a 'pre-flight' checklist to make sure that their lessons reach the widest range of diverse learners.

## 1. Increase Access to Instruction

| Instructional Element | Notes |
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| ☐ Instructional Match. Lesson content is appropriately matched to students' abilities (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008). | |
| ☐ Content Review at Lesson Start. The lesson opens with a brief review of concepts or material that have previously been presented. (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Preview of Lesson Goal(s). At the start of instruction, the goals of the current day's lesson are shared (Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Chunking of New Material. The teacher breaks new material into small, manageable increments, 'chunks', or steps (Rosenshine, 2008). | |

## 2. Provided 'Scaffolding' Support

| Instructional Element | Notes |
|---|---|
| ☐ Detailed Explanations & Instructions. Throughout the lesson, the teacher provides adequate explanations and detailed instructions for all concepts and materials being taught (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008). | |
| ☐ Think-Alouds/Talk-Alouds. When presenting cognitive strategies that cannot be observed directly, the teacher describes those strategies for students. Verbal explanations include 'talk-alouds' (e.g., the teacher describes and explains each step of a cognitive strategy) and 'think-alouds' (e.g., the teacher applies a cognitive strategy to a particular problem or task and verbalizes the steps in applying the strategy) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008, Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Work Models. The teacher makes exemplars of academic work (e.g., essays, completed math word problems) available to students for use as models (Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Active Engagement. The teacher ensures that the lesson engages the student in 'active accurate responding' (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005) often enough to capture student attention and to optimize learning. | |

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| ☐ Collaborative Assignments. Students have frequent opportunities to work collaboratively--in pairs or groups. (Baker, Gersten, & Lee, 2002; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). | |
| ☐ Checks for Understanding. The instructor regularly checks for student understanding by posing frequent questions to the group (Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Group Responding. The teacher ensures full class participation and boosts levels of student attention by having all students respond in various ways (e.g., choral responding, response cards, white boards) to instructor questions (Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ High Rate of Student Success. The teacher verifies that students are experiencing at least 80% success in the lesson content to shape their learning in the desired direction and to maintain student motivation and engagement (Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). | |
| ☐ Brisk Rate of Instruction. The lesson moves at a brisk rate--sufficient to hold student attention (Carnine,1976; Gettinger & Seibert, 2002). | |
| ☐ Fix-Up Strategies. Students are taught fix-up strategies (Rosenshine, 2008) for use during independent work (e.g., for defining unknown words in reading assignments, for solving challenging math word problems). | |

| 3. Give Timely Performance Feedback | |
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| Instructional Element | Notes |
| ☐ Regular Feedback. The teacher provides timely and regular performance feedback and corrections throughout the lesson as needed to guide student learning (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice). | |
| ☐ Step-by-Step Checklists. For multi-step cognitive strategies, the teacher creates checklists for students to use to self-monitor performance (Rosenshine, 2008). | |

| 4. Provide Opportunities for Review & Practice | |
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| Instructional Element | Notes |
| ☐ Spacing of Practice Throughout Lesson. The lesson includes practice activities spaced throughout the lesson. (e.g., through teacher demonstration; then group practice with teacher supervision and feedback; then independent, individual student practice) (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice). | |

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| ☐ Guided Practice. When teaching challenging material, the teacher provides immediate corrective feedback to each student response. When the instructor anticipates the possibility of an incorrect response, that teacher forestalls student error through use of cues, prompts, or hints. The teacher also tracks student responding and ensures sufficient success during supervised lessons before having students practice the new skills or knowledge independently (Burns, VanDerHeyden, & Boice, 2008). | |
| ☐ Support for Independent Practice. The teacher ensures that students have adequate support (e.g., clear and explicit instructions; teacher monitoring) to be successful during independent seatwork practice activities (Rosenshine, 2008). | |
| ☐ Distributed Practice. The teacher reviews previously taught content one or more times over a period of several weeks or months (Pashler et al., 2007; Rosenshine & Stevens, 1995). | |

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# How To: Define Intervention-Related Terms: Core Instruction, Intervention, Instructional Adjustment, Modification

Educators who serve as interventionists should be able to define and distinguish among the terms *core instruction*, *intervention*, *instructional adjustment*, and *modification*. (In particular, interventionists should avoid using modifications as part of an intervention plan to support a general education student in core instruction--as they can be predicted to undermine the student's academic performance.) Here are definitions for these key terms. (Tindal & Fuchs, 1999; Wright, 2007).

## Intervention-Related Terms & Definitions

Core Instruction. Those instructional strategies that are used routinely with all students in a general-education setting are considered 'core instruction'. High-quality instruction is essential and forms the foundation of classroom academic support. NOTE: While it is important to verify that a struggling student receives good core instructional practices, those routine practices do not 'count' as individual student interventions.

Intervention. An academic *intervention* is a strategy used to teach a new skill, build fluency in a skill, or encourage a child to apply an existing skill to new situations or settings. An intervention can be thought of as "a set of actions that, when taken, have demonstrated ability to change a fixed educational trajectory" (Methe & Riley-Tillman, 2008; p. 37). As an example of an academic intervention, the teacher may select question generation (Davey & McBride,1986.; Rosenshine, Meister & Chapman, 1996), a strategy in which the student is taught to locate or generate main idea sentences for each paragraph in a passage and record those 'gist' sentences for later review.

Instructional Adjustment (Accommodation). An *instructional adjustment* (also known as an 'accommodation') is intended to help the student to fully access and participate in the general-education curriculum without changing the instructional content and without reducing the student's rate of learning (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005). An instructional adjustment is intended to remove barriers to learning while still expecting that students will master the same instructional content as their typical peers. An instructional adjustment for students who are slow readers, for example, may include having them supplement their silent reading of a novel by listening to the book on tape. An instructional adjustment for unmotivated students may include breaking larger assignments into smaller 'chunks' and providing students with performance feedback and praise for each completed 'chunk' of assigned work (Skinner, Pappas & Davis, 2005).

Modification. A modification changes the expectations of what a student is expected to know or do—typically by lowering the academic standards against which the student is to be evaluated. Examples of modifications are giving a student five math computation problems for practice instead of the 20 problems assigned to the rest of the class or letting the student consult course notes during a test when peers are not permitted to do so. Instructional modifications are essential elements on the Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) or Section 504 Plans of many students with special needs. Modifications are generally not included on a general-education student's classroom intervention plan, however, because the assumption is that the student can be successful in the curriculum with appropriate interventions and instructional adjustments alone. In fact, modifying the work of struggling general education students is likely to have a negative effect that works *against* the goals of intervention. Reducing academic expectations will result in these students falling further behind rather than closing the performance gap with peers

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