



A Handbook *for* Classroom Instruction *that* *Works*

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INTRODUCTION

We stand at a unique point in the history of U.S. education—a point at which the potential for truly meaningful school reform is greater than it ever has been. This is not just because we are at the beginning of a new century and a new millenium, although these are certainly noteworthy milestones. Rather, it is because we now have more than 30 years of accumulated research that provides some highly consistent answers to the question of what types of instructional strategies work best to improve student achievement. Much of that research has been synthesized and described in the book *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement* by Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock (ASCD, 2001). Briefly, based on a survey of thousands of comparisons between experimental and control groups, using a wide variety of instructional strategies in K–12 classrooms, across a variety of subject areas, we were able to identify nine categories of instructional strategies proven to improve student achievement:

1. Identifying similarities and differences
2. Summarizing and note taking
3. Reinforcing effort and providing recognition
4. Homework and practice
5. Representing knowledge
6. Learning groups
7. Setting objectives and providing feedback
8. Generating and testing hypotheses
9. Cues, questions, and advance organizers

This handbook is intended as a self-study guide to the effective use of specific strategies in each of these nine categories. Although you can use this handbook without having read *Classroom Instruction That Works*, we

recommend that you do so, particularly if you are interested in the research that underlies the recommendations in this handbook.

How to Use the Handbook

This handbook is organized into 11 sections. Sections 1 through 9 address the nine categories of instructional strategies listed. These strategies can be applied to all types of content, at all grade levels, with all types of students. Section 10 addresses instructional strategies that are most appropriate with specific types of knowledge, such as vocabulary terms, generalizations, and processes. Finally, Section 11 presents a framework for using the instructional strategies to improve your effectiveness in unit planning.

Except for Section 11, all sections follow the same format. Each section begins with a brief introduction describing the nature and purpose of the strategies discussed in the section. Generalizations that can be drawn from the research about the strategies also are presented. These discussions are brief with no detailed citations to the research literature. Again, if you are interested in a thorough discussion of the research on these strategies with full academic citations, we recommend *Classroom Instruction That Works*.

The introduction in each section is followed by one or more “modules” that specifically address the strategies within the section. Each module contains eight components:

1. Introduction

Each module begins with a brief introduction to the strategies presented in the module. It explains why the specific strategies in the module have been grouped together.

2. Reflecting on My Current Beliefs and Practices

This component asks you to reflect on how and why you currently use strategies that you will be studying in the module. The intent is to stimulate your thinking about your use of the strategies so that you will have a basis of comparison as you read about the strategies in the module.

3. Recommendations for Classroom Practice

The heart of each module is a set of recommendations for classroom practice. These recommendations may deal with specific strategies and

techniques or they may be generalizations about classroom practice. Each strategy or recommendation is discussed and exemplified.

4. Checking My Understanding

After the discussion of recommended classroom practices, a hypothetical situation or problem is presented. The intent is to give you an opportunity to apply what you have learned in the previous discussion. If you find it difficult to complete this hypothetical situation or problem, we recommend that you reread the content in “Recommendations for Classroom Practice.”

5. Assessing the Impact on Students

Each module contains rubrics that can be used to assess how the strategies affect students’ learning.

6. Planning My Classroom Activities

A series of questions is presented that, when answered, help you determine how you might use the strategies presented in the module in the context of your current practice.

7. Assessing Myself

A series of questions helps you assess how effectively you use the strategies presented in the module.

8. Module Reflection

A series of questions asks you to reflect on what you have learned about the strategies presented in the module and what you have learned about yourself as a teacher and a learner.

As we mentioned before, the handbook is as a tool for self-study. You can work through the various sections and their related modules at your own pace and identify your own sequence in terms of which sections you consider. You need not address all sections of the manual. In fact, you can derive benefit from the handbook by selecting only those sections of interest to you.

Another useful approach to using this handbook is to form study teams. The study team format is one of the best ways to build skill and confidence in the strategies presented in this handbook because it brings to bear collegial support structures that encourage analysis, discussion, problem solving, and