

Planning, Instruction, and Assessment

Effective Teaching Practices

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Contents

| | |
|----------------------------------|-----|
| Acknowledgements | iii |
| About the Authors | v |
| Downloadable Reproducibles | xi |

Part I: Research and Practice on Teaching and Learning 1

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1 Introduction | 3 |
| What Is Teacher Effectiveness? | 3 |
| Why Is Teacher Quality Important? | 4 |
| What Is the Relationship Between Teacher Effectiveness and Student Learning? | 5 |
| How Is the Book Organized? | 6 |
| How Can the Book Be Used to Promote Teacher Quality? | 8 |
| Notes | 10 |
| 2 How Can Teachers Promote Student Learning Through Planning? | 11 |
| By Focusing on Essential Knowledge and Skills | 11 |
| Why Should Teachers Attend to Essential Knowledge and Skills? | 11 |
| What Does the Research Say about the Connection Between Providing Students with Essential Knowledge and Skills and Student Achievement? | 12 |
| How Does a Teacher Ensure That Planning Reflects Essential Knowledge and Skills? | 14 |
| By Focusing on the Individual Needs of <i>All</i> Students through Differentiation | 16 |
| What is Differentiation? | 16 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between Differentiation and Student Learning? | 16 |
| What Do Teachers Need to Know in Order to Differentiate? | 16 |
| Know Your Students | 17 |
| Know the Curriculum | 17 |
| Know Available Resources | 18 |
| Know How to Assess Effectively | 18 |
| Know a Range of Instructional Strategies and How to Implement Them Successfully | 18 |
| How Does a Teacher Differentiate a Lesson for the Diverse Group of Learners in the Classroom? | 18 |
| By Using Response-To-Intervention to Address Instructional Needs | 24 |
| What is Response-To-Intervention? | 24 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between Response-To-Intervention and Student Learning? | 26 |
| Why Should Teachers Engage in the RtI Problem-Solving Approach When Planning for Instruction? | 27 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| How Does a Teacher Plan for the RtI Process? | 27 |
| Step 1: Whole-Class Progress Monitoring | 28 |
| Step 2: Identify the Problem..... | 28 |
| Step 3: Develop a Plan | 29 |
| Step 4: Implement the Plan | 29 |
| Step 5: Evaluate, Evaluate, Evaluate..... | 29 |
| Step 6: Redesign or Modify the Plan | 29 |
| Collecting & Documenting Data with the Form..... | 30 |
| By Integrating Technology for Added Value to Teaching and Learning..... | 30 |
| Why Should Teachers Consider Technology Options | |
| When Planning for Instruction? | 30 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between | |
| Technology and Student Learning? | 32 |
| How Does a Teacher Plan for Technology Integration? | 32 |
| Summary..... | 35 |
| Notes..... | 36 |
| | |
| 3 How Can Teachers Use Research-Based Instructional | |
| Strategies to Improve Student Learning? | 39 |
| By Teaching for Conceptual Understanding | 40 |
| Why Should Teachers Focus on Conceptual Understanding? | 40 |
| What Does Research Say about the Connection Between | |
| Teaching Concepts and Student Achievement? | 40 |
| How Can a Teacher Use the Concept Attainment Teaching | |
| Model to Ensure that Students Make Meaningful Connections?..... | 41 |
| Approaches to the Concept Attainment Model | 42 |
| Implementing Concept Attainment..... | 43 |
| By Using Questioning as an Instructional Strategy..... | 45 |
| Why Should Teachers Use Questioning in Instruction?..... | 45 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between | |
| Questioning and Student Achievement? | 45 |
| What Should Teachers Consider When Developing and | |
| Implementing Questioning in the Classroom? | 46 |
| Debunking Some Myths About Questioning..... | 46 |
| Attending to the Cognitive Level of Questions | 48 |
| Waiting for Students to Think About Questions and Formulate a Response..... | 49 |
| How Can Teachers Evaluate Their Own Questioning Practices? | 50 |
| Collecting Data | 50 |
| Reflecting on the Data..... | 52 |
| By Developing Inquiring Minds | 52 |
| What is Inquiry-Based Instruction and Why Should Teachers Use It? | 52 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between an | |
| Inquiry-Based Approach and Student Learning?..... | 54 |
| How Does a Teacher Adapt an Activity to Enhance Inquiry-Based Learning?..... | 54 |
| Important Considerations | 54 |
| Setting Up an “Inquiry Environment” | 55 |
| Matching the Inquiry Task to the Learner’s Needs | 56 |
| Adapting an Activity for Inquiry-Based Instruction..... | 56 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| By Increasing Student Engagement Through Challenging Instruction..... | 58 |
| What Is Involved in Challenging Instruction and Why Is It Important?..... | 58 |
| High Cognitive Challenge..... | 58 |
| High Expectations | 59 |
| High Relevance..... | 59 |
| What Does the Research Say About Student Engagement and Student Learning?..... | 59 |
| How Can a Teacher Determine if Students Are Engaged? | 60 |
| Classroom Management Facet..... | 60 |
| Instructional Delivery Facet..... | 61 |
| Considerations for Using the Form | 62 |
| Case in Point..... | 62 |
| Summary..... | 62 |
| Notes..... | 63 |
| | |
| 4 How Do Teachers Develop Assessments and Use Assessment | |
| Data to Improve Student Learning? | 65 |
| By Developing Assessments That Align with Learning Objectives..... | 66 |
| Why Should Teachers Develop Assessments That Align with Learning Objectives? | 66 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between | |
| Aligned Assessments and Student Learning?..... | 66 |
| How Does a Teacher Ensure That Assessments Are Aligned | |
| with Learning Objectives?..... | 67 |
| By Creating Rubrics That Communicate Expectations to Students..... | 69 |
| Why Should Teachers Create Rubrics When Assessing Students?..... | 69 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between | |
| Using Rubrics in the Classroom and Student Learning?..... | 70 |
| How Does a Teacher Develop Rubrics That Clearly Communicate | |
| Expectations to Students?..... | 70 |
| Bare Bones Basic Rubric..... | 71 |
| Tailored to the Assignment Objectives Rubric | 71 |
| Rubric Construction 101 | 71 |
| By Providing Feedback to Students That Moves Their Learning Forward | 72 |
| Why Should Teachers Focus on Providing Feedback? | 72 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between | |
| Feedback and Student Learning?..... | 73 |
| How Can a Teacher Analyze Feedback Provided to Determine | |
| Whether Effective Feedback Is Being Given?..... | 74 |
| How to Use the Feedback Analysis Template | 74 |
| Discussion of Sample Completed Feedback Analysis | 76 |
| By Using Assessment Data to Set Student Achievement Goals ²³ | 76 |
| Why Should Teachers Use Assessment Data to Set Student Achievement Goals? | 76 |
| What Does Research Say About the Connection Between Setting Student | |
| Achievement Goals and Student Learning?..... | 78 |
| How Does a Teacher Develop Goals That Improve Student Learning? | 79 |
| Developing the Student Achievement Goal | 79 |
| Summary..... | 82 |
| Notes..... | 84 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 5 Conclusion | 87 |
| How Is Instructional Planning an Important Component of Teacher Quality? | 88 |
| How Is Instructional Delivery an Important Component of Teacher Effectiveness? | 89 |
| Frameworks for Instructional Delivery | 89 |
| The Practice of Instructing | 89 |
| How Is Student Assessment an Important Component of Teacher Quality? | 90 |
| Policy Frameworks for Assessment | 90 |
| The Practice of Assessment | 90 |
| What Is the Connection Among Planning, Instruction, and Assessment? | 91 |
| What Is the Heart of Learning? | 92 |
| Interacting with a Quality Teacher | 92 |
| Notes | 93 |
| Part II: Reproducible Resources | 95 |
| Reproducible Resources | 97 |
| Concept Attainment Lesson Planning Template | 98 |
| Feedback Analysis Template | 99 |
| Inquiry-Based Lesson-Adaptation Template | 100 |
| Mining State Standards Template | 101 |
| Questioning Practices Record | 102 |
| Rubric Template | 103 |
| Student-Achievement Goal-Setting Form | 104 |
| Student Engagement Record | 105 |
| Student Progress Monitoring Summary | 106 |
| Table of Specifications | 107 |
| Technology Integration Planning | 108 |
| Tiered Lesson Plan Template | 109 |
| Part III: Annotated Bibliography and References | 111 |
| Annotated Bibliography Related to Teaching and Learning | 113 |
| Matrix | 113 |
| References | 135 |

Introduction

No doubt, the influence of individual, family, community, and other beyond-school factors dramatically influence student success. Nonetheless, of all the factors within the influence of schools, teacher quality is among the most, if not the most powerful variable affecting student achievement.¹

As reflected in this introductory quote, we know that teacher quality matters enormously in the total scheme of schooling and student learning. In *Planning, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective Teaching Practices* our sole focus is on bridging research to practice for the fundamental issues of (1) planning and delivering effective instruction, and (2) assessing its impact on student learning. Indeed, although our profession often may view the universe of school reform at its macro level, we contend that it isn't until we get to the personalized, micro world of a teacher helping a student learn that we can really understand—and impact—reform in any meaningful manner.

This introductory chapter broaches broader issues of teacher quality as we lay the foundation for a discussion of how instructional planning, delivery, and assessment are integral to and intertwined in our most important deliverable—student learning. In particular, we address the following questions in this brief overview of the importance of teacher quality:

- ◆ What is teacher effectiveness?
- ◆ Why is teacher quality important?
- ◆ What is the relationship between teacher effectiveness and student learning?
- ◆ How is the book organized?
- ◆ How can the book be used to promote teacher quality?

What Is Teacher Effectiveness?^a

Teacher effectiveness is a broad concept² that can be defined in many ways.³ We choose to use the terms *quality* and *effectiveness* interchangeably. The word *quality* denotes the experience of being with a special teacher, whereas *effectiveness* works well when referring to analytical evidence. One clear and undeniable way to define teacher

^a This section of the chapter is replicated in Chapter 1 of the Eye On Education companion book, *The Supportive Learning Environment: Effective Teaching Practices*.

effectiveness is to personally know an effective teacher, or to have benefited from the tutelage and teaching of an extraordinary teacher. Another way to define teacher effectiveness is to analyze (or dissect) it based on the extant research about what makes teachers effective. This section briefly explores both perspectives: *analyzing* an effective teacher and *interacting* with an effective teacher.

Although we may not be able to define teacher quality with precision, we certainly can identify key teacher qualities that form the foundation of any useful definition. Studies examining effective teacher characteristics are profuse and often seem to seek an elusive secret formula for teacher quality. Unfortunately, there is no single magic elixir for quality teaching. However, one thing we know for certain about teacher quality is that it is multidimensional and these multiple dimensions interact to form the chemistry of what makes good teachers good. Figure 1.1 identifies some key components of a quality teacher.^b

Figure 1.1. Selected Characteristics of Quality Teachers

- ◆ *Communication skills*, including the ability to listen to and value what students have to say;⁴
- ◆ *Teacher preparation* in terms of content knowledge⁵ and certification,⁶ among others;
- ◆ *Personal dispositions*, such as enthusiasm, motivation, and reflectivity;⁷
- ◆ *Personal relationships* with students built on fairness, trust, respectfulness;⁸
- ◆ *Classroom management* that provides a safe, robust, disciplined, and vibrant learning environment;⁹
- ◆ *Instructional planning, delivery, and ongoing student assessment* combined in such a way as to constantly monitor and deliver differentiated, effective instruction;¹⁰ and,
- ◆ *Clearly focused goals and high expectations* to promote student achievement.¹¹

Why Is Teacher Quality Important?

Regardless of how we choose to define quality, building-level administrators and teachers know that the work of good teachers results in improvements for students, including improved instructional opportunities and improved student learning. Although we highlighted a number of key dispositions and practices (i.e., teaching processes) in the section above, let's consider the impact (i.e., results) of a high-quality teacher:

- ◆ Fewer discipline issues,
- ◆ Better relationships with their students, and, most importantly,
- ◆ Higher student achievement results.¹²

^b For a more comprehensive review and discussion of key teacher dispositions, skills, and knowledge, see Stronge, J. H. (2007). *Qualities of effective teachers* (2nd ed.). Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Thus, any worthy definition should take into account both the *process* of teaching (e.g., quality instructional delivery skills) and the *results* of teaching (e.g., student achievement gains).

So why does teacher quality matter? Because learning matters. If we hope for our children a better quality education and a brighter tomorrow, we also must hope for—and support in every practical way—quality teachers.

What Is the Relationship Between Teacher Effectiveness and Student Learning?^c

Analyses of data from teacher value-added assessment studies¹³ offer compelling evidence regarding the influence of the classroom teacher on student learning.¹⁴ The overarching finding from value-added studies is that effective teachers are, indeed, essential for student success. In fact, it has been estimated that out of all the factors that are within the control of schools, teachers have the greatest impact on student achievement.¹⁵ Consider the following specific findings presented in Figure 1.2.

Figure 1.2. Teacher Impact on Student Achievement

| Major Findings | Study |
|---|--|
| ◆ The impact of teachers is far greater than that of overall school effects. In other words, “which teacher a student gets within a school matters more than which school the student happens to attend.” | Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004, (p. 247) |
| ◆ Beginning in third grade, children placed with highly effective teachers scored on average at the 96 th percentile on Tennessee’s mathematics state assessment, whereas children placed with ineffective teachers scored on average at the 42 nd percentile, resulting in a 52 percentile difference. | Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997 |
| ◆ Students of less-effective teachers experienced reading achievement gains of 1/3 standard deviation less than students with effective teachers. | Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004 |
| ◆ Students of less-effective teachers experienced mathematics achievement gains of almost 1/2 standard deviation less than students with effective teachers. | Nye, Konstantopoulos, & Hedges, 2004 |
| ◆ Lower-achieving students are more likely to be placed with less-effective teachers. | Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997 |

^c This section of the chapter is replicated in Chapter 1 of the Eye On Education companion book, *The Supportive Learning Environment: Effective Teaching Practices*.

| | |
|---|-------------------------------|
| ◆ If a student had a high-performing teacher for just one year, the student likely would remain ahead of peers for at least the next few years of schooling (residual effect). | Mendro, 1998 |
| ◆ Third grade students of teachers in the top quartile of effectiveness (based on hierarchical linear modeling predictions) scored approximately 30–40 scale score points higher than expected on the Virginia Standards of Learning state assessment in English, Mathematics, Science, and Social Studies. Students of teachers in the bottom quartile of effectiveness scored approximately 24–32 points below expected scores. | Stronge, Tucker, & Ward, 2003 |
| ◆ The teacher has a larger effect on student achievement than any other school-related factor, including ability levels within a class and class size. | Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997 |
| ◆ Fifth grade students scored approximately 30 percentile points higher in both reading and mathematics in one year when assigned to top-quartile teachers as compared to those students assigned to bottom-quartile teachers. | Stronge, Ward, & Grant, 2008 |

To summarize the impact of effective teachers on student learning, Wright, Horn, and Sanders surmised that “seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of teachers than by any other single factor.”¹⁶ Yes, we do need *highly qualified teachers* as required in the U.S. federal legislation *No Child Left Behind*. However, much more importantly, we need *high-quality* and, indeed, *highly effective* teachers.

How Is the Book Organized?

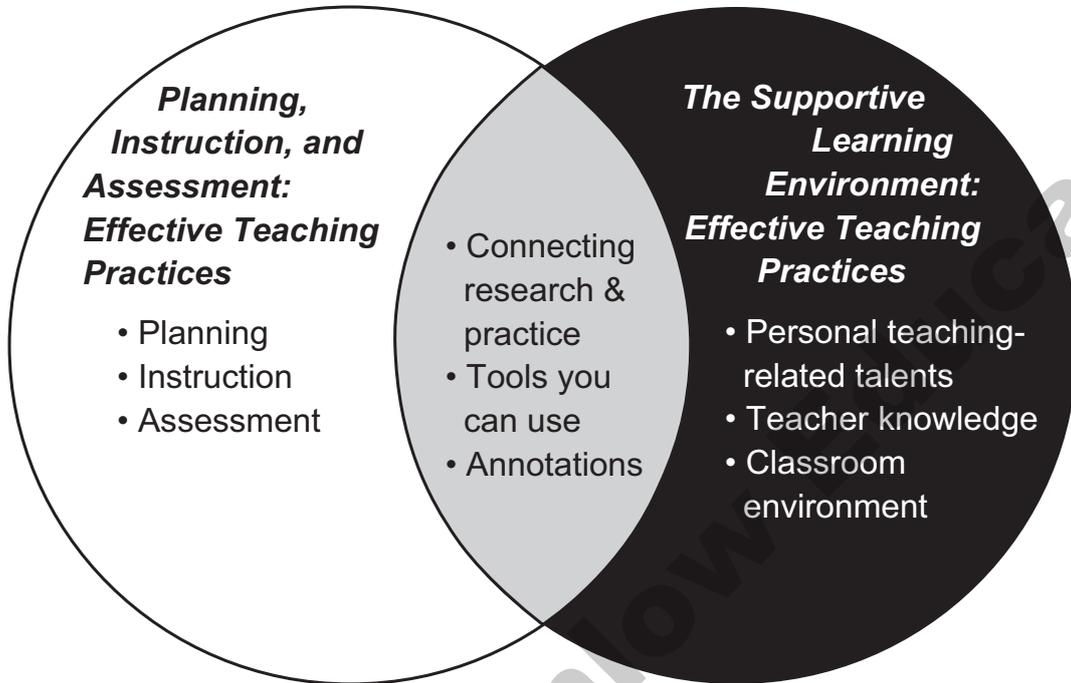
The premises of *Planning, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective Teaching Practices* are depicted in the following questions:

- ◆ How can teachers promote student learning through planning? (*Chapter 2*)
- ◆ How can teachers use research-based instructional strategies to improve student learning? (*Chapter 3*)
- ◆ How do teachers develop assessments and use assessment data to improve student learning? (*Chapter 4*)
- ◆ How can planning, instruction, and assessment be integrated into a meaningful whole in successful teachers’ classrooms? (*Chapter 5*)

The Venn diagram (Figure 1.3) below depicts how *Planning, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective Teaching Practices* and its companion book, *The Supportive Learning Environment: Effective Teaching Practices* (Eye On Education, 2010), address the extant research related to teacher quality.

6 ◆ Planning, Instruction, and Assessment: Effective Teaching Practices

Figure 1.3. The Relationship Between the Companion Teacher Quality Books



The books focus on research-based practices of teacher quality. Three parts comprise each book:

- ◆ *Part I* focuses on selected key elements that support teaching and learning, namely, instructional planning, instructional delivery, and student assessment (Chapters 1–5).
- ◆ *Part II* offers reproducible resources for use by teachers and those working with teachers.
- ◆ *Part III* includes an annotated bibliography of key publications that are related to the concepts and practice of planning, instruction, and assessment.

Figure 1.4 summarizes the relationship between the two books as they address essential elements for teacher quality.