

What's Essential?

Seven Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning

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What's Essential? Seven Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning

The Problem

Teachers and administrators are constantly asking the question, “What are the essential best practices for instruction that will ensure that my students learn?” Several groups of educators have all tried to answer this question. Although resources for a response to this question are found in the Bellingham School District Teacher Criterion, in the District Curriculum Guides, in the state documents about standards, and in the literature about best practices, they are open to individual interpretation.

New teachers wondered exactly what was meant by each of the criterion and indicators that are used for supervision and evaluation. University supervisors and cooperating teachers supporting interns struggled to consistently describe powerful teaching according to the standards. How could a district begin to describe the consistent, essential teaching behaviors that one would see in all K – 12 classrooms?

The Rationale

Several groups of teachers and administrators were asked why it would be important to describe the essential strategies for powerful teaching and learning. Groups included the Bellingham School District and Woodring College of Education Partnership Coordinating Board, groups of teachers and administrators, participants in the Joint Learning Institute, and Bellingham District mentors. Here are the reasons stated by these groups:

- Statements describe consistent expectations for all teachers and administrators.
- Clear statements support the development of consistent understandings about powerful teaching across all K – 12 Classrooms.
- Mentors, Coaches, and Administrators have a clear direction and understanding.
- Statements assist in aligning the understandings about powerful teaching when working with University Partnerships and Interns.
- A description of the essential powerful teaching statements supports the implementation of common practices and the understanding of the language and intent of district curriculum.

The Process

September, 2003 The Western Washington University and Bellingham School District Partnership Coordinating Board was charged with developing a seamless-continuum of support of professional development for pre service, induction, and career teachers. An important component would be a common understanding of what is powerful teaching and learning. Two Joint Learning Institutes would be held in January and April to describe powerful teaching and learning.

October 2003 The literature base for powerful teachers was shared at the K – 8 Grade Level Meetings in order to develop an initial understanding of what research says about “Best Practices”.

January, 2004 Sixty University and District staff made up of teachers (selected by the Bellingham Education Association) and administrators attend the first Joint Learning Institute to learn about aligned systems with common understandings, standards, and tools to support the development of pre service and first year teachers.

January – March 2004 A group of teachers and administrators participate in a district professional development study group using *Classroom Instruction That Works* by Robert Marzano as a resource.

February & March 2004 At the winter grade level meetings, teachers looked at the nine classroom practices that research says make the most impact on student learning.

April 2004 Thirty teachers and administrators (who attended the Joint Learning Institute) met together to describe what are the essential strategies for powerful teaching and learning that we would expect to see

in all K-12 classrooms across our district. The group identified seven instructional strategy concepts. They also described what the strategy would look like and sound like when a teacher is using it. A draft of the work was sent to all the participants. Volunteers from this group would be responsible for “word smithing” the draft statements and sending the revised work out to the Association and District Leadership for further input.

April 2004 At the second Joint Learning Institute, the participants used the district seven strategies to align with the university standards. The group also described indicators for each of the statements. Our indicators came from the research literature, the Professional Certificate Standards and Indicators, and INTASC Standards and Indicators.

August – April The District Leadership studies effective schools research by Jeff Fouts, reads Robert Marzano’s *Classroom Instruction That Works*, develops common definition of objectives, and reviews draft statements of the essential strategies for powerful teaching and learning.

May 2004 The District Leadership reviewed the seven statements, indicators, and looks like/sounds like descriptors. Several suggestions were provided.

May 2004 The “word smithing” group met to clarify the intent of each statement. They revised the word choice to use less jargon and use more language that would be commonly understood by all who would use these statements. The group aligned the indicators and looks like and sounds like phrases to ensure that each added clarity to the essential statement. The revised draft was sent to the district participants who helped develop the statements and to both district and association leadership.

June 2004 Plans for further input as well as strategies for sharing these statements more broadly over the 2004/2005 school year will be developed.

The Participants

Thirty District Participants for Joint Learning Institute and in the development of the seven essential strategies of powerful teaching and learning: Adrienne Nelson, Leslie Adcock-McInnis, Tim Binderup, Andrea Buckley, Chris Carty, Lisa Conlon, Jeff Coulter, Steve Dolmatz, Becky Elmendorf, Ann Marie Hanel, Deborah Hanson, Edie Holcomb, Mark Kerr, Dale Kinsley, Rebecca Lacey, Rob McElroy, Nora Klewiada, Lisa Peterson, Julia Ritchie, Scott Smartt, Karen Tracy, Teresa Van Haalen, James Walsh, Becky Walstad, Susan Zoller, Shirley Potter, Fred Chung, Laurie Mueller, Sue Thomas, and Josie Estrada.

University Participants for Joint Learning Institute: Catherine Ashcraft, Chuck Atkinson, Susan Banister, Denise Binderup, David Carroll, Linda Cave, Tracy Coskie, Dana Edwards, Paul Englesberg, Sheila Fox, Michael Henniger, Victor Nolet, Tim Keiper, William Lay, Kris McDuffy, Nancy Nelson, George Nelson, Kay Price, Marsha Riddle-Buly, Ron Riggins, Stephanie Salzman, Trish Skillman, Ray Wolpow, Chris Ohana, Laurie Phelan, Jeffiner McCleery, Beth Stickely, and Kris Slentz.

Word Smithing Team: Steve Dolmatz, Leslie McInnis, Lisa Peterson, Lisa Conlon, Ann Marie Hanel, and Adrienne Nelson

Bellingham School District and Woodring College of Education Partnership Coordinating Board: Lisa Conlon, Steve Dolmatz, Leslie McInnis, Shirley Potter, Rob McElroy, Becky Elmendorf, Jeff Coulter, Stephanie Salzman, Dale Kinsley, Susan Zoller, Sheila Fox, David Carroll, Lauren McClenahan, Bill Lay, Marv Klein, and Adrienne Nelson

Facilitators of the Process: Shirley Potter, Susan Zoller and Adrienne Nelson

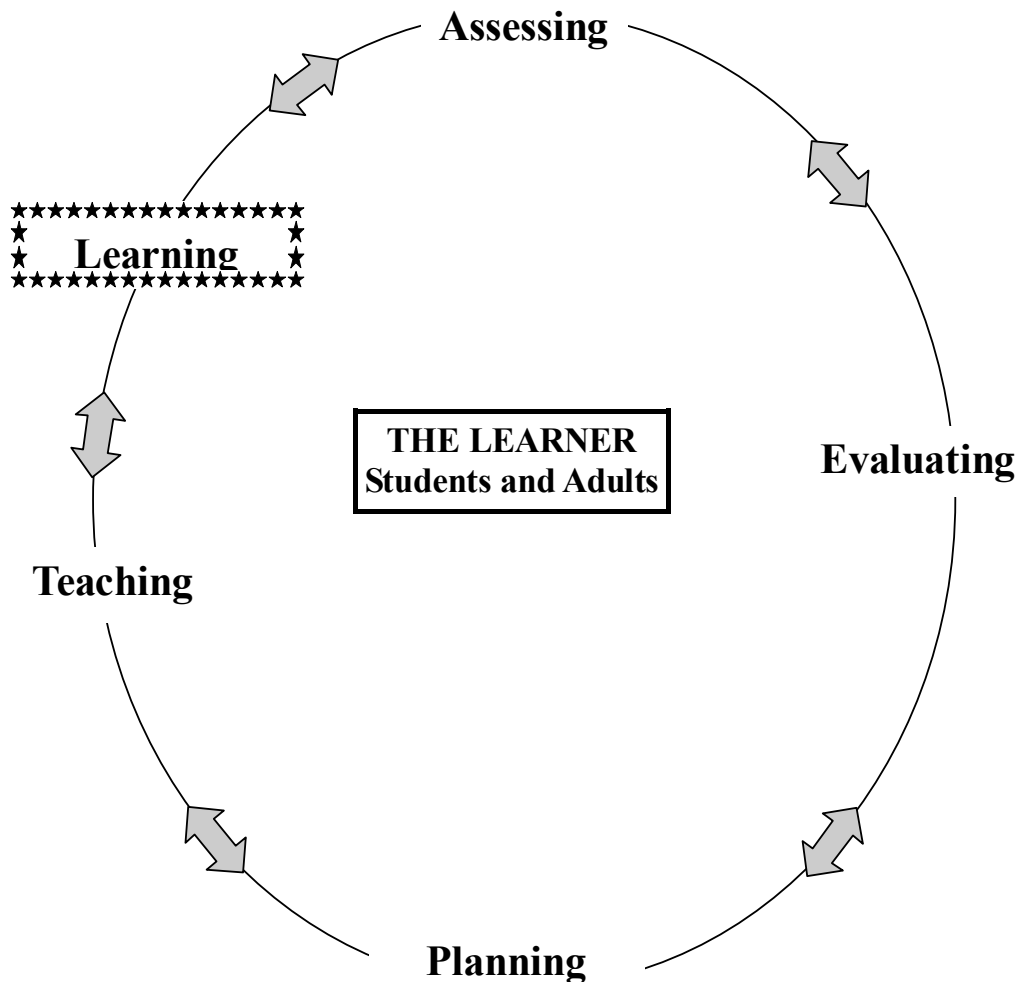
POWERFUL TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES WHAT'S ESSENTIAL?

The Teaching and Learning Cycle

The primary focus for any teacher must be teaching and learning that supports students to acquire and apply knowledge and skills. Teachers must attend to four essential teaching behaviors 1) assessing prior learning using a variety of assessment tools, 2) evaluating the assessment data in terms of what students can do, need to learn next, and what the teacher will do about it, 3) planning for instruction includes selecting the objective, grouping strategies, level of support, and resources, and 4) implementing instruction based on learning theory and teacher understanding.

The Teaching and Learning Cycle, as shown below, shows the four teaching behaviors as a recursive and cyclical process. Effective teachers purposely plan blocks of instruction to include these four essential teaching behaviors. The four behaviors, when in place and practiced consistently, ensure that instruction meets the learner's needs.

THE TEACHING AND LEARNING CYCLE



Seven Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning

A group of Bellingham School District teachers and administrators have identified a commonly held set of seven classroom instructional strategies for powerful teaching and learning that engage all students to achieve at higher levels. These Seven Essential Strategies for Powerful Teaching and Learning represent a shared understanding among staff and administrators.

Statement 1

Teachers continuously assess and monitor student learning.

Statement 2

Teachers give students continuous, relevant feedback based on assessment data.

Statement 3

Teachers provide a classroom environment that actively engages all students in learning.

Statement 4

Teachers differentiate by using a variety of instructional strategies based on the assessed strengths, needs, and interest of their students.

Statement 5

Teachers implement whole group, small group, and individual instruction that provides for independent application and practice.

Statement 6

Teachers utilize a continuum of support leading to responsible, independent learners.

Statement 7

Teachers identify and articulate clear learning objectives based on grade level expectations and assessment of students needs.

I. On Going Assessment

Statement: *Teachers continuously assess and monitor student learning.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher develops and uses formal and informal assessments based on best practices.
- o Teacher uses assessment data to inform instructional decision-making and provides feedback about the whole child.
- o Teacher uses a variety of assessments to monitor and adjust instruction.
- o Teacher includes students in goal setting, developing assessments and engaging in self-assessment.
- o Teacher adjusts instruction while teaching, based on ongoing assessment.
- o Teacher clearly articulates learning standards and assessment parameters ahead of time.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Recording assessments
- o Monitoring and interacting with all students
- o Adjusting instruction based on...
- o Asking students to self-assess and evaluate
- o Utilizing a variety of assessment tools
- o Assessing confidence, affect, behavior, learning, objective, prior knowledge
- o Reteaching and revisiting
- o Questioning for understanding
- o Posing open-ended questions
- o Investigating students' thinking processes
- o Communicating about assessments

Literature and Research Base:

Black, Paul & William, Dylan. "Inside the Black Box: Raising Standards Through Classroom Assessment." Online Article, Phi Delta Kappa, November 11, 1998.

Brimijoin, Kay, Marquissee, Ede, and Tomlinson, Carol Ann. "Using Data to Differentiate Instruction." In Educational Leadership. ASCD. February, 2003. pages 70-73.

Cowie, Bronwen, & Bell, Beverley. "A Model of Formative Assessment in Science Education." In Assessment in Education. Volume 6, No. 1, 1999. pages 64-79.

II. Continuous Feedback

Statement: *Teachers give students continuous, relevant feedback based on assessment data.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher gives feedback that is timely, corrective, relevant, and specific to a criterion.
- o Teacher gives honest, equitable feedback that is appropriate for each student.
- o Teacher provides students with feedback that is relevant and supports development of a lifelong learner.
- o Teacher ensures that students receive feedback from a variety of sources: teacher, peers and self.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Conferencing with students
- o Using rubrics to describe levels of understanding or competence
- o Using grading to give accurate feedback to students about a specific criterion
- o Allowing for risk taking
- o Asking students to self assess and to engage in peer assessment
- o Keeping records of student performances

Literature and Research Base:

Tunstall, Pat & Gipps, Caroline. "Teacher Feedback to Young Children in Formative Assessment: a Typology. In British Educational Research Journal, 22(4). 1996. pages 389-404.

Hattie, J.A. (1992). Measuring the Effects of Schooling. *Australian Journal of Education*, 36(1), 5-13.

Marzano, Robert J., Pickering, Debra J., and Pollock, Jane E. "Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback." In *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. ASCD. 2001. pages 92-102.

Wiggins, G. (1993). *Assessing Student Performances: Exploring the Purpose and Limits of Testing*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

III. Active Engagement

Statement: *Teachers provide a classroom environment that actively engages all students in learning.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher provides a safe and comfortable environment in which risk taking is both modeled and encouraged.
- o Teacher provides authentic and meaningful content and activities that connect to the students' prior learning.
- o Teacher provides opportunities for learners to self-select appropriate learning strategies.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Personalizing learning
- o Encouraging students to inquire independently
- o Modeling the process for students that they will be using
- o Incorporating opportunities for students to practicing knowledge and skills in real ways
- o Allowing for risk taking
- o Giving relevant responses to students
- o Holding high expectations for all learners
- o Using strategies that promote cooperation among peers and students taking responsibility for their learning
- o Designing classroom with resources that appropriately immerse students in learning
- o Stating the value or purpose for learning
- o Utilizing a variety of resources to activate learning

Literature and Research Base:

Cambourne, Brian. "Toward An Educationally Relevant Theory of Literacy Learning: Twenty Years of Inquiry." In Reading Teacher. Volume 49. number 3, November 1995. pages 182-190.

"The Teaching-Learning-Language Connection: How Learning in the Real World and Learning in the Content Areas are Related." A draft report by Cambourne, Brian. 2003.

"How People Learn: Bridging Research and Practice." Copyright 2000 by National Academy of Sciences. Donovan, Suzanne M., Bransford, John D., and Pellegrion, James W., Editors. Committee on Learning Research and Educational Practice, Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education and National Research Council.

IV. Differentiation of Instruction

Statement: *Teachers differentiate by using a variety of instructional strategies based on the assessed strengths, needs, and interest of their students.*

Indicators:

- Teacher matches instruction and materials to the assessed needs, interests and ability of the students.
- Teacher effectively provides for individual students who have particular learning differences and needs (ex: ELL, IEP, HCL).
- Teacher provides relevant, respectful instruction that leads to authentic tasks that are applicable to the real world.
- Teacher assesses student's needs, interest and abilities in multiple ways.
- Teacher modifies content, process, and products.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- Providing accommodations and modifications
- Using several resources at various levels
- Utilizing a variety of teaching processes during the lesson
- Incorporating a variety of resources and projects
- Implementing projects that are authentic and meaningful
- Meeting student needs
- Working with different groups at various times
- Dialoging among students and teachers
- Providing opportunities for student decision making and choices

Literature and Research Base:

Gardner, H. (1991). *The Unschooled Mind. How Children Think and How Schools Should Teach.* New York: Basic Books.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann, and Kalbfleisch, M. Layne. "Teach Me, Teach my Brain: A Call for Differentiated Classrooms." In Educational Leadership. ASCD. Volume 56 Number 3, November 1998.

Tomlinson, Carol Ann. "Differentiating Instruction for Advance Learners in the Mixed-Ability Middle School Classroom." In ERIC Digests E536. 1995. ERIC Clearinghouse on Disabilities and Gifted Education Reston VA.

V. Flexible Grouping

Statement 5: *Teachers implement whole group, small group and individual instruction that provides for independent application and practice.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher groups and regroups students appropriately to meet the diverse needs of all learners.
- o Teacher instructs students in the classroom procedures for group or independent learning.
- o Teacher models roles and responsibilities of participants in a learning community.
- o Teacher engages every student intellectually regardless of grouping structure.
- o Teacher organizes the physical environment that is conducive to a variety of grouping structures.
- o Teacher facilitates and monitors individual and group learning.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Forming groups for specific or immediate needs
- o Forming groups that would work on extensive project or assignment
- o Forming long term groups to promote a sense of community
- o Ensuring positive interdependence
- o Teaching interpersonal and small group skills (listening, trusting, leadership, decision making, conflict resolution)

Literature & Research Base:

Johnson, D.W., & Johnson, R.T. (1999). *Learning Together and Alone: Cooperative, Competitive, and Individualistic Learning*. Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Marzano, Robert J., Pickering, Debra J., and Pollock, Jane E. "Grouping" In *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. ASCD. 2001. pages 92-102.

Slavin, R (1987). Ability Grouping and Achievement in the Elementary School: A Best Evidence Synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 57, 293-336.

Slavin, R. (1993). Ability Grouping in the Middle Grades: Achievement Effects and Alternatives. *Elementary School Journal*, 93, 535-552

VI. Levels of Support

Statement: *Teachers utilize a continuum of support leading to responsible, independent learners.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher uses multiple teaching/learning strategies to engage students in active learning opportunities in the development of critical thinking and in problem solving.
- o Teacher helps students identify and use learning resources
- o Teacher monitors and adjusts strategies in response to learner feedback.
- o Teacher support is on a continuum from direct modeling/instruction to more indirect/facilitative support.
- o Teacher models thinking and guides student learning
- o Teacher provides a relevant, meaningful context for applying learning.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Demonstrating and thinking aloud
- o Forming groups based on how much support is needed (guided and shared)
- o Moving around room and interacting with groups and individual students and reteaching as necessary
- o Supporting students in learning at the right level of difficulty
- o Asking questions to promote higher level thinking and further exploration of topic
- o Acknowledging multiple approaches to solutions
- o Responding to students questions
- o Guiding students to make inferences and connections

Literature and Research Base:

Berk, L., and Winsler, A. 1995. *Scaffolding Children's Learning: Vygotsky and Early Childhood Education*. Washington DC: NAEYC.

Hillocks, G. 1999. *Ways of Thinking/Ways of Teaching*. New York: Teachers College Press.

Taylor, B. T., Harris, L.A., Pearson, P.D., and Garcia, G.E. 1995. *Reading Difficulties, Instruction, and Assessment* (2nd ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill.

Wilhelm, Jeffrey D., Baker, Tanya N., and Dube, Julie. "Introducing Lev Vygotsky and George Hillocks" In Strategic Reading: What Is Effective Teaching and Learning. Heinemann. 2001. pages 9-25.

VII. Making Objectives Clear

Statement: *Teachers identify and articulate clear learning objectives based on grade level expectations and assessment of students needs.*

Indicators:

- o Teacher states what is to be learned to the class.
- o Teacher designs objectives that accommodate the individual and constructivist nature of the learning process.
- o Teacher develops objectives that describe the performance, conditions, and quality of response.

Looks like/Sounds like:

- o Writing the objective on the board
- o Referencing state EALRs, GLEs, district curriculum
- o Personalizing objectives through written goals (I can, I am learning to, checklist, etc.)
- o Connecting objectives to outside life
- o Stating “We will learn...”
- o Having students articulate why they are learning the objective (application)
- o Basing objectives on assessment data

Literature & Research Base:

Clarke, Shirley. “Sharing Learning Intentions. In *Unlocking Formative Assessment: Practical Strategies for Enhancing Pupils’ Learning in the Primary Classroom*. Hodder & Stoughton. 2001. pages 19-23.

Kahle, A.L., & Kelly, M.L. (1994). Children’s Homework Problems: A Comparison of Goal Setting and Parent Training. *Behavior Therapy*, 25(2), 275-290.

Marzano, Robert J., Pickering, Debra J., and Pollock, Jane E. “Setting Objectives and Providing Feedback.” In *Classroom Instruction That Works: Research-Based Strategies for Increasing Student Achievement*. ASCD. 2001. pages 92-102.

Walberg, H.J. (1999). Productive Teaching. In H.C Waxman & H.J. Walberg (Eds.) *New Directions for Teaching Practice and Research*, 75-104. Berkely, CA: McCutchen Publishing Corporation.