The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

10 KEYS

10 Key Policies and Practices for
Explicit Instruction

—with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research—

10 Key Policies and Practices for
Explicit Instruction

—with strong evidence of effectiveness from high-quality research—

1 **Break down tasks into smaller, more manageable components to help students build knowledge.**

Scenarios

- Before starting a long-division unit, a teacher takes time to review the foundational skill of two-digit subtraction.

- A science teacher preteaches essential vocabulary before students read a short passage that contains those words.

- During an argumentative essay unit, a teacher carefully reviews how to write a body paragraph (rather than the entire essay) by modeling that a body paragraph should include a topic sentence, evidence, and explanation before instructing students to write their own.

2 · Purposefully connect new lessons to previous learning to foster comprehension and achievement.

Scenarios

- A sixth-grade social studies teacher says, "We have been learning about colonial America. What do we know so far about why some people immigrated to the Americas?" (Students respond.) "Today, you will learn how their expectations were different from reality. As you learn and read today, think about their actual experience and how it differed from their expectations."
- After practicing purchasing a snack in the classroom, students independently purchase a snack on a field trip.
- When introducing new multisyllabic words, the teacher carefully selects words that combine single syllables following vowel rules the class has already learned.

3 · Gradually increase task difficulty to support students' success in independent work.

Scenarios

- Before expecting students to work silently for 15 minutes, a teacher has students work silently for 5 minutes and then again for 10 minutes.
- Students match definitions of animal cell components to images as a warm-up activity before a lab that requires understanding of the components.
- After a few days using fraction tiles (i.e., math manipulatives), students solve fraction problems using only paper and pencil.

4 · Use modeling or think-alouds in daily practice to address important features of the content.

Scenarios

- Modeling: A teacher says, "Annotate as you read this text to help with your comprehension. I'll show you how I would annotate in the first paragraph to find the author's claim and supporting details. Please follow along and write what I write. After that, you will annotate the next paragraph independently."
- Think-aloud: When teaching adjectives for the first time, a teacher says, "Adjectives describe nouns, or things. *Desk* is a noun. I need adjectives for the desk. Remember, adjectives describe nouns. One adjective that describes this desk is *hard*. Another adjective that describes this desk is *brown*. Can you think of another one?"
- Modeling and think-aloud: When teaching about atoms, a teacher says, "I'm not sure how many protons hydrogen has. I'm going to page 324 to look at the periodic table. Also, I know that in my notes from Monday, I wrote where on the periodic table this information would be. I'll open that page of my notes now."

5 Provide daily opportunities for students to respond and provide feedback on their responses.

Scenarios

- During a math class, students solve a problem and write their answers on small dry-erase boards with markers, allowing the teacher to quickly monitor responses and provide feedback.
- A teacher in a ninth-grade science class has pairs of students discuss a question (sometimes referred to as "turn and talk"). After listening to a few pairs, the teacher realizes there is some confusion regarding the function of the mitochondria and tells the class, "Before we move on to the next topic, let's review the function of the mitochondria."
- Students turn in a response to a comprehension question before leaving class (also known as an "exit ticket"), and the teacher identifies three students who need additional support the next day. This exit ticket ensures that all students have a chance to respond.

6 Provide engaging work that allows students to take control of their learning.

Scenarios

- Students use a teacher-provided rubric and checklist to revise an essay independently or with a peer.
- Students work in teams to plan for and then engage in a class debate with prepared arguments and counterarguments. The teacher serves only as timekeeper because the teacher reviewed the structure previously and students understand the procedure.
- A teacher uses data from a previous assessment to group students of varying ability at tables to work together to solve math problems.

7   Create classrooms where students clearly understand what is expected—including what they are supposed to do, practice, and/or express.

Scenarios

- At the beginning of a unit, a teacher clearly and carefully reviews a rubric for a culminating debate. This review ensures that students know what is expected of them and that there are no surprises at the end of the unit.

- When doing partner corrective reading, students know how and when to provide feedback appropriately, to stay on task, and that only one student reads until the teacher calls for a partner switch. Students know the procedures because the teacher spent a week teaching them at the start of the year.

- Instead of asking their teacher how to spell a color, students refer to a poster the teacher displayed in the classroom with color names.

- Instead of prompting students to take out individual materials to prepare for a lesson, the teacher takes a picture of all needed objects for the day (whiteboard, marker, notebook, and pencil) for students to refer to when they enter class.

8   Move fluidly from modeling to independent practice when teaching new tasks.

Scenarios

- At the beginning of a unit, a teacher reads an entire passage as a class and reviews the big concepts and key vocabulary. The next day, they read half as a class and then partners complete the reading together. The third day, the teacher quickly reviews and then students work together to read and answer questions independently.

- During a fluency lesson, a teacher says, "I will start by reading this passage aloud. Then, we will read it aloud together. Finally, you will read it aloud on your own with a partner." This sequence is known as "I do," "We do," "You do."

- A teacher uses a chart with photos to teach proper hand washing. After modeling the steps at the classroom sink, the teacher asks questions like, "How long do I rub my hands together?" After working together as a class, the teacher assigns each student a time to independently wash their hands.

9 **Provide feedback that is clear, focused, and directly related to the learning task and that guides the student to continue and/or adjust learning practices.**

Scenarios

- After a lesson on essay organization, a teacher meets with a student in an essay conference. The teacher provides feedback on only organization and not the various grammatical errors throughout the essay. The teacher plans to review grammatical errors in another lesson.

- A teacher quickly creates a question and has students answer it on sticky notes to turn in before going to the next class. The teacher uses the information about students' needs from the sticky notes to make adjustments to the next day's lesson.

- Instead of saying, "Check number 3," a teacher says, "Check your regrouping in number 3." To another student, the teacher says, "Great work on number 4. Skip to the challenge question on the next page. Remember to check your notes for vocabulary that represents addition in word problems."

10 **Create purposeful time for students to practice all new skills and refresh learned ones.**

Scenarios

- After teaching attributes of triangles, a teacher gives students 15 minutes to play a partner matching game about triangles and their attributes. The next day, students complete a brief independent worksheet on labeling attributes before starting the new lesson.

- A nonverbal student practices using a picture card to ask for a break. To reach mastery, the teacher has the student practice with five different teachers and staff members in the school.

- Before picking up the reading from the previous day, a teacher completes a mini-lesson on themes. Students use the review to identify the theme in the previous day's passage with a partner.

References

Archer, A. L., & Hughes, C. A. (2010). *Explicit instruction: Effective and efficient teaching*. Guilford Press.

Fuchs, L. S., Geary, D. C., Compton, D. L., Fuchs, D., Schatschneider, C., Hamlett, C. L., DeSelms, J., Seethaler, P. M., Wilson, J., Craddock, C. F., Bryant, J. D., Luther, K., & Changas, P. (2013). Effects of first-grade number knowledge tutoring with contrasting forms of practice. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, *105*(1), 58–77.

Hattie, J. A. C., & Yates, G. C. R. (2014). Using feedback to promote learning. In V. Benassi, C. Overson, & C. Hakala (Eds.), *Applying science of learning in education: Infusing psychological science into the curriculum* (pp. 45–58). Society for the Teaching of Psychology.

Heward, W. L., & Wood, C. L. (2015). *Improving educational outcomes in America: Can a low-tech, generic teaching practice make a difference?* https://www.winginstitute.org/uploads/docs/2013WingSummitWH.pdf

Hollo, A., & Wehby, J. H. (2017). Teacher talk in general and special education elementary classrooms. *The Elementary School Journal*, *117*(4), 616–641.

Hughes, C. A., Morris, J. R., Therrien, W. J., & Benson, S. K. (2017). Explicit instruction: Historical and contemporary contexts. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, *32*(3), 140–148.

McLeskey, J., Barringer, M.-D., Billingsley, B., Brownell, M., Jackson, D., Kennedy, M., Lewis, T., Maheady, L., Rodriguez, J., Scheeler, M. C., Winn, J., & Ziegler, D. (2017). *High-leverage practices in special education*. Council for Exceptional Children & CEEDAR Center.

Swanson, H. L., & Deshler, D. (2003). Instructing adolescents with learning disabilities: Converting a meta-analysis to practice. *Journal of Learning Disabilities*, *36*(2), 124–135.

Vaughn, S., & Fletcher, J. (in press). Explicit instruction as the essential tool for executing the science of reading. *The Reading League Journal*.

The Meadows Center
FOR PREVENTING EDUCATIONAL RISK
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN
COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

10 KEYS

To download this and all other guides in the 10 Key series, visit
www.meadowscenter.org/10-keys

—www.meadowscenter.org—