

KEY PRACTICES OF PERSONALIZED LEARNING
EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Welcome!

Students learn a lot from seeing and hearing teachers demonstrate thinking, processes and strategies. However, so much is automatic for us as adults that we aren't even aware of how we *make meaning* of text, solve problems or communicate ideas--we just do it! The most skillful teachers are often the ones who are *metacognitive* about their own processes and can communicate them to students--*metacognition* is at the root of explicit skill and strategy instruction.

Metacognitive practices increase students' abilities to transfer or adapt their learning to new contexts and tasks (Palincsar & Brown, 1984) by allowing them to gain a level of awareness *above the subject matter*:

Students who know about the different kinds of strategies for learning, thinking, and problem solving will be more likely to use them (Pintrich, 2002).

OUTCOMES:

- I know what explicit skill & strategy instruction look like.
- I understand key concepts and protocols of explicit skill & strategy instruction.
- I understand the importance of explicit skill & strategy instruction to a thriving PCBE environment.
- I can find and use tools and resources for explicit skill & strategy instruction in my classroom.
- I can align my new practices to research in the field.

KEY TOOLS:

- [See Tools & Resources >>](#)

CASE STUDY: WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

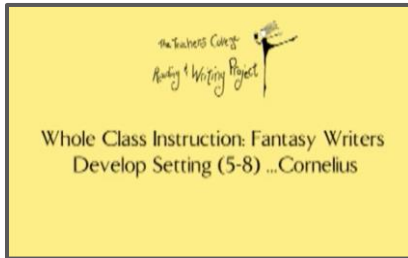
PEDAGOGY OF A PCBL SYSTEM EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION



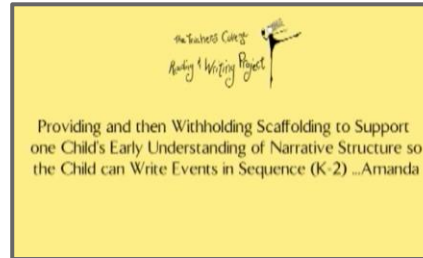
Metacognitive Modeling via a Think Aloud: Clarissa Grimes leads her class in a Think Aloud, to help them make a challenging text-to-world connection



Envisioning to Write with Detail: Larry Neal applies a metacognitive process to make instruction explicit and transferable in his 4th grade writing workshop.



Whole Class Instruction: Fantasy Writers Develop Setting: Cornelius Minor applies a metacognitive process to make instruction explicit and transferable in his 8th grade fantasy writing workshop



Providing and then Withholding Scaffolding to support one child's early understanding of narrative structure so the child can write events in sequence (K-2)

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

PEDAGOGY OF A PCBL SYSTEM EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION



Explicit skill and strategy instruction, often in the form of modeling and think-alouds, ensures that students learn how to apply skills and strategies to content and to the processes of learning themselves.

Cognitive apprenticeship and gradual release of responsibility prepare students to undertake rigorous tasks and to take ownership of their own learning.

What is our common language to describe and promote this practice?

Let's get on the same page.

Explicit: Stated clearly and in detail; leaving no room for confusion or doubt.

Skill: The ability or practice (learned or otherwise) required to perform well in a given situation

Strategy: A deliberate, conscious, **metacognitive** act applied to a learning situation

Metacognition: “the individual’s own awareness and consideration of his or her cognitive processes and strategies” (John Flavell, 1979). Experienced learners have three well-developed metacognitive assets:

- the capacity to plan, organize, and monitor their learning (self-regulation)
- awareness of their working schema
- the willingness and confidence to engage in mental exploration of their own thoughts and knowledge (Brown, et al, 1983)

Key skills of Explicit Skill & Strategy Instruction

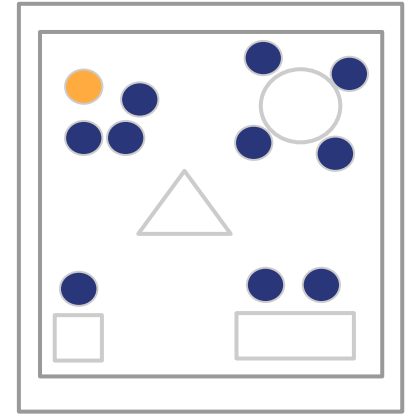
- Metacognitive modeling
- Metacognitive awareness
- Clear communication
- Gradual release
- Cognitive apprenticeship
- Ensuring understanding
- Formulating learning targets



Multimodal teaching and learning support explicit instruction

Personalization means that students get what they need, when they need it, in order to be successful. The other side of that coin, though, is that teachers strive to make sure that students are not held back by having to participate in learning experiences that don't advance their learning. This means moving away from whole class instruction when it isn't required, and moving toward multimodal teaching and learning.

In the chart on the next page, *learning modalities* or “modes” refer to the different ways in which learners interact with others, and with the curriculum, during a learning experience. Defining them, and analyzing which modes are most impactful for learning, gives us a helpful construct for thinking strategically, and planning purposefully, for how we use design learning spaces.



FLEXIBLE GROUPING

Flexible student grouping enables timely, differentiated supports by using data to identify student needs and providing specific learning targets.

LEARNING MODALITY	DESCRIPTION
MINI LESSONS	Facilitated learning through direct instruction
CONFERENCES	1:1 for feedback and checking in
SMALL GROUP WORK	Students collaborate with specific aim or outcome (activity, task)
PEER-TO-PEER	Two students engage in academic discourse or complete work together
SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION	Small group of students participate in purposeful discussion
WHOLE GROUP DISCUSSION	Whole class participates in purposeful discussion
WHOLE GROUP EXPERIENCE	Whole class participates in shared experience
CIRCULATION	Teacher circulates to find opportunity to switch into a different mode

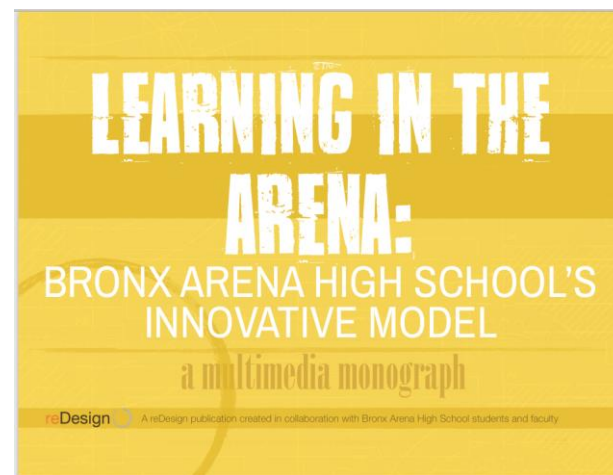
WHAT DOES FLEXIBLE GROUPING LOOK LIKE

PEDAGOGY OF A PCBL SYSTEM EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

Bronx Arena High School is a trailblazing alternative high school in New York City, serving over-age, under-credited students. They have an exemplary personalized, competency-based learning model (check out the monograph to learn more!), and are beginning to see remarkable results. Let's hear from co-founder Sam Sherwood, about their approach to flexible grouping.



Learn more about the innovative model at Bronx Arena in this monograph:



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WHAT DOES FLEXIBLE GROUPING LOOK LIKE (cont.)

PEDAGOGY OF A PCBL SYSTEM EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

FLEXIBLE GROUPING

Teachers and students new to this approach often take time to introduce these practices one at a time. The paradigm shift requires a mindset change, with new habits, norms, and practices that allow power to be shared between adults and young people who often have little experience in this realm.

Watch these two videos to see examples of flexible learning environments in action.



GROUPING STRATEGIES IN ACTION >> In a high school math class, the teacher uses learning targets to organize flexible groups. Note the classroom norms, procedures, materials, etc used to support various learning modes.

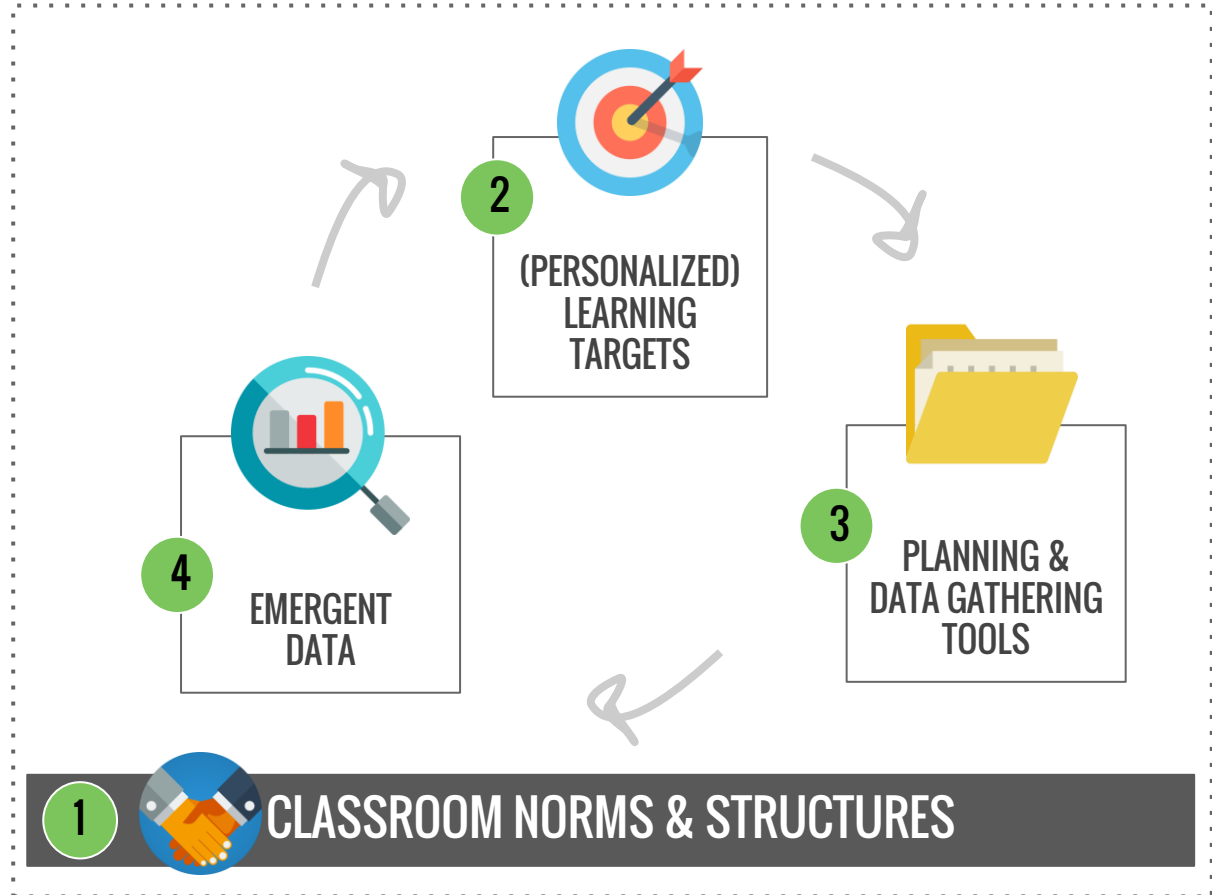


FLEXIBLE GROUPING - INDIVIDUAL CLASSROOMS >> Snapshots of flexible grouping in an elementary, a middle and a high school.

PREPARING FOR FLEXIBLE GROUPING

PEDAGOGY OF A PCBL SYSTEM EXPLICIT SKILL & STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

- 1** Establish classroom norms and structures (protocols, processes) to build an academic culture of learning, collaboration, and student ownership.
- 2** Drawing from standards and the target competency's continuum, **define student-friendly learning targets**, which are the basis of how students are grouped.
- 3** Use tools for planning and data collection on a daily basis.
- 4** Capture a range of **qualitative data** to diagnose needs in real time and design interventions to help all learners achieve the learning target. Repeat 2-4.



Having a precise learning target is essential to identifying and communicating the skills and strategies you intend to teach and that students must master. Not only do they guide instruction, they form the backbone of effective feedback.

TIPSHEET: LEARNING TARGETS

Tipsheet: Learning Targets

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"Learning happens at the level of the learning target."

What are learning targets?

Making and measuring daily progress toward unit objectives and standards is vital to ensuring that students meet them and that the traditional daily objective doesn't provide them—or their students—with enough information. Teachers craft the learning target to provide specificity and clarity about what students will learn, how students will know they have learned it, and to what standard of quality their performance of the skill or content will be held. They share the learning target with students before the lesson, and refer to it continuously throughout the lesson, empowering students to monitor their own learning. Teachers use the learning target as the foundation for their feedback and, as a result, students have a clear understanding of their next steps for improving their work.

Teachers—and students themselves—continually monitor student understanding, from sharing learning targets at the start of the lesson, to checking in throughout the lesson, to assessing at lesson's end. The shift happens when teachers accept that material taught, feedback given, and instructions provided are not necessarily understood by students. Teachers give students feedback (or, in the vocabulary of learning targets, "feed up") to clarify the aim of the lesson. They are mindful of comprehensible inputs, frontloading vocabulary, building background, activating prior knowledge, and using other techniques to scaffold new learning. They dipstick, question, and probe to make sure students are grasping new content and applying new skills. When the lesson is complete, they use a formative assessment like a quiz or an exit ticket to gather data about who met the target and who didn't, provide feedback and feedforward, and then use that data to inform their planning of the next lesson.

How do you create your learning targets?

[Guiding Questions for Developing Learning Targets](#)

Connect the learning target to the standard with precise language. As you work with the teacher, emphasize that learning targets need to be closely tied to a standard and, most importantly, written with specificity. A well-crafted learning target is the key to providing students with high-quality feedback. It is also an opportunity for the teacher to provide modeling and immersion in standard English.

LEARNING TARGET FEEDBACK CHECKLIST

LEARNING TARGET FEEDBACK CHECKLIST	
Does the learning target...	
☐	Answers the four key questions of a learning target clearly and in student-friendly language:
☐	What will I be able to do at the end of this lesson?
☐	What do I have to learn to be able to do it?
☐	How will I be asked to show that I can do it?
☐	How well will I be expected to do it?
☐	Directly connects to one competency
☐	Is essential to completing a project-advancing deliverable or project phase
COMMENTS/SUGGESTIONS	

DIY: CRAFTING LEARNING TARGETS



EQUITY CHECK

Explicit skill and strategy instruction is one of the ways we can make transparent what is often hidden in the classroom. They shed light on the essentials for making meaning and completing complex tasks. Rather than assuming students have a specific tool for learning, explicit skill and strategy instruction ensure that students secure the skill, understand its importance, and can use it across multiple contexts.

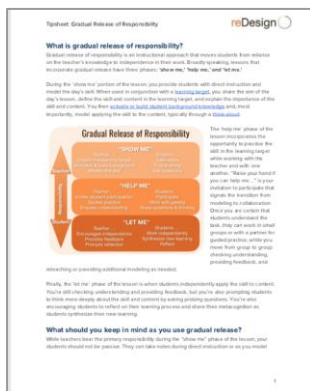
Zaretta Hammond, in **Culturally Responsive Teaching & the Brain** (2015), writes:

“The ultimate goal of culturally responsive instruction is to help students build inside their heads a 'cognitive power plant' that allows them to more complex and challenging work by building on their cultural ways of learning through the explicit focus on cognitive routines. These routines are the engines of information processing.”

Teacher Tools



**TIPSHEET:
Understanding
Metacognition**



**TIPSHEET:
Gradual Release
of Responsibility**



**TIPSHEET:
Learning Targets**

- [Think-Aloud Planning Template](#)
- [Think-Aloud Feedback Protocol](#)
- [Learning Targets Guiding Questions](#)
- [Academic Conference Stems](#)
- [Cognitive Apprenticeship: Making Thinking Visible](#)
- [Principles for Designing Cognitive Apprenticeship Environments](#)

Sample activities to use:

- [Coding the Text](#)
- [Mind Mapping](#)
- [More related learning activities](#)

Key Readings

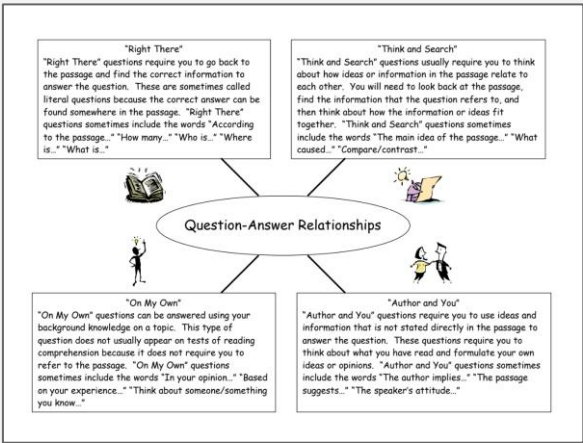


ARTICLE (edutopia):
*Metacognition: The
Gift That Keeps
Giving*



ARTICLE (ASCD):
*Knowing Your
Learning Target*

Student Tools



Question-Answer Relationships

EXPLICIT SKILL AND STRATEGY INSTRUCTION

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- Papert, S. (1980). *Mindstorms*. Children, Computers and Powerful Ideas. New York: Basic books.
- Manuel Fernández, Rupert Wegerif, Neil Mercer and Sylvia Rojas-Drummond. "Re-conceptualizing "Scaffolding" and the Zone of Proximal Development in the Context of Symmetrical Collaborative Learning" *The Journal of Classroom Interaction*. Vol. 36/37, No. 2/1: Fall 2001/Spring 2002, pp. 40-54.
- Hmelo-Silver, C.E., Duncan, R.G., & Chinn, C.A. (2007). Scaffolding and Achievement in Problem-Based and Inquiry Learning : A Response to Kirschner , Sweller , and Clark (2006).
- Quintana, C., Reiser, B. J., Davis, E. A, et al. (2004) A Scaffolding Design Framework for Software to Support Science Inquiry, *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, 13:3, 337-386, DOI: 10.1207/s15327809jls1303_4.

THANK YOU!



You, go, you.



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