DOCTRIVA LEARNING
Keep Teaching and Learning Alive

Core Teaching Framework
Navigating Instructional Flow

The teacher navigates toward learning goals.

Navigating Instructional Flow addresses how teachers plan instruction, ground lessons in clear learning goals, and adjust responsively as teaching unfolds. The teacher guides the class through curriculum, monitoring student progress, and dealing with obstacles. This practice emphasizes both planning ahead and responding to current conditions. It is tightly woven with assessment.

Part 1: Planning for the Flow

First Principle: Use a brief plan to outline the year.

The year-plan is a map to help the teacher see the big picture of the overall flow. It only includes the major topics, chapters, or units, overarching learning goals and a rough time-frame. Every year has a shape determined by holidays, special events, and planned disruptions to the schedule. Even before considering the needs of specific classes and students, how the flow happens can change quite a bit from year to year. This can have implications for planning, instruction, and assessment.

Second Principle: Use a more detailed plan for the present and near future.

This plan includes more specific detail about specific learning goals, instructional methods, activities, and assessments. Variations can occur. Sometimes students need an extra day or two on a particular topic or goal. Sometimes an unexpected disruption

(assembly, power outage, copier down, etc.) occurs. Sometimes a unique opportunity or idea comes from a student that is worth taking time for. It is a teachable moment and should be honored. This plan helps the teacher make the best decisions for the current circumstances. It allows teaching to be responsive to the day-to-day realities and flow of the classroom.

Third Principle: Revisit plans on a regular basis.

Review plans on a regular basis to help make intentional changes while understanding the impacts on assessments and the flow of the year.

Fourth Principle: Use school, district or system adopted programs and curricular materials as the first source for lessons, activities and assessments.

These materials have typically been developed by experienced educators, vetted for alignment with standards, and selected for good reasons. Combined with any curricular guides or maps, they can provide a strong foundation for the flow. Starting with adopted materials also saves time and energy. Teachers can focus their creative energy on adaptation, differentiation, and responding to specific student needs while they navigate the flow.

Fifth Principle: Not all lessons, activities, and assessments from these programs may work well with students and classes all the time.

In some cases, making some modifications to existing materials may be adequate. In other cases, alternative or supplemental materials may be required. Over time, teachers should build up a toolkit of additional lessons and activities that meet the needs of different classes, students, or time frames. These additions provide alternate pathways for meeting learning goals and help with the realities and the constraints on time in a given school year. There are many sources for additional materials including colleagues, conference or workshop attendance, lesson plan databases, and online stores. Teachers can also develop their own materials to meet the unique needs of their communities.

Part 2: Instruction in the Flow

Sixth Principle: When selecting and planning for a lesson, activity, or assessment, start with the essential learning goals then consider the range of learners.

Every lesson, activity, or assessment is grounded in one or more essential learning goals. Visualizing how that goal will be met in a particular class helps the teacher prepare scaffolds and extensions. It also helps the teacher consider time frames and management variables in the flow of the classroom. The process of visualizing involves looking at the lesson or activity directions while trying to anticipate how the students might respond. It can help to consider examples of both the strongest and weakest students. Visualizing considers problems the students might have, questions they might ask, and possible challenges in distributing and collecting work or materials. It also considers what knowledge or skills might be assumed but need review or scaffolding. Finally, it can help predict the need for any changes to standard procedures and routines. This allows the teacher to prepare specific instructions for those changes. These visualizations are not always completely sufficient, but they can help. Teachers can improve their visualization skills through practice.

Seventh Principle: As the lesson, activity or assessment unfolds, monitor student understanding, energy and participation and adjust as needed.

Teachers are continuously monitoring student engagement and success with learning goals through observations and assessments of all kinds. Student facial expressions and body language can often give a good preliminary indication of how students are responding to a lesson or activity. A lack of student questions can mean students think they understand or have no idea what is going on. Resolving this can be as simple as probing further or informally assessing as the lesson or activity proceeds.

Teachers can often gain more information about student understanding by moving through the room as students work. Teacher presence can help students refocus on their work thus supporting management. Students who wouldn't ask a question in the full-class setting might be willing to ask it when working in a small group or independently.

Seeing the work students are doing as they do it is an important kind of informal assessment. It can help the teacher clear up any confusions or misconceptions right as they happen.

Calibrating noise and activity-level in a classroom can be challenging. Noise can be an indication of both student involvement with the work or distraction from the work. The need for different energy-levels as measured by noise and movement can be different for different purposes. Expectations for noise and movement of a class creating skits in response to a reading assignment are going to be different than for a class using heat sources or dissecting tools in the science lab. It is also worth noting from a management perspective that even positive, high energy-levels can increase the risk of disruptions occurring. This is a part of the calibration process.

It is sometimes necessary to make adjustments of the flow in the moment. It is also sometimes necessary to end a lesson or activity that isn't working and reset, revise or replace it. This can include recognizing that the class is not currently able to follow the plan but will be at another time. It can be helpful for teachers to have a low or no prep go-to activity for when the regular lesson fails or in case it ends early. Student progress toward learning goals should be the primary guide for all real-time instructional decisions.

For more information about Core Teaching go to doctrivalearning.com.