

EFFECTIVE TEACHING STRATEGIES from CISP

Several key instructional strategies are embedded in CISP's conception of effectively managed classrooms. Consistent employment of any of them holds promise of instructional benefits for students. Teachers' development of instructional skills across the broad spectrum of strategies yield significant gains. This is not an "all or nothing" proposition. As with any other set of skills, the benefits realized are proportional to the level of attainment that is achieved. With consistent practice and added refinements, greater learning and achievement benefits can be expected for students.

Equity and Access: The centerpiece of these strategies is ensuring that all students, especially the less able, have full, equal access to the core curriculum and instructional resources. Includes:

- Building a caring, mutually respectful classroom environment
- Preventing putdowns, stereotyping or prejudice
- Using and regularly rotating roles in teamwork activities to ensure that all students experience all of the task management functions
- Establishing equity norms
- Ensuring that higher-status students do not dominate discussions
- Assigning tasks that require varied skills to complete
- Learning to respect wide-ranging differences in the classroom -- knowledge, skills, demographic characteristics, sexual identity, etc.
- Developing students' willingness to speak up and take risks
- Ensuring that less able students have adequate opportunities to succeed academically and be acknowledged by the teacher and other students
- Employing a system of randomly calling on students; etc.

Setting High Expectations: Instilling in all students the conviction that they can succeed at academic tasks. Includes:

- Believing in students
- Building trusting relationships with and among students
- Being genuinely interested in students and their academic growth
- Giving special, public recognition to quality student work
- Making clear that a weak effort is not acceptable
- Being attentive to forces that distract students from school work

Delegation of Authority: Giving students – as individuals, pairs and/or small groups – greater responsibility for developing and presenting the academic substance of the course. Includes:

- Using classroom norms that support delegation of authority
- Giving students more choices about how to complete assignments
- Giving assignments that are open-ended and require the exercise of judgment
- Designing assignments that build self-reliance and problem-solving skills
- Using exercises that strengthen collaboration and communication skills
- Designing tasks that build confidence in working independently
- Presenting the products of individual and group tasks

Engaging Students: Organizing instructional work that routinely requires active student participation and makes abundantly clear the importance the teacher gives to high quality academic work. Includes:

- Tightly aligning study-focused objectives and actual teacher practice
- Minimizing teacher talk and maximizing student participation
- Maximizing students' use of accountable talk
- Making efficient and effective use of instructional time
- Keeping organizational classroom procedures to a minimum
- Ensuring that all students are participating/contributing

Accountability: Being diligently consistent in holding all students to successful completion of assignments and to observing classroom norms, timelines and schedules. Includes:

- Firmly establishing teacher's authority to manage the classroom
- Demonstrating from the very outset that solid effort is required
- Lengthening "wait time" for teacher response to ensure that passive and low-status students are not overlooked
- Weighing short- and long-term objectives in responding to students
- Not accepting "the dog ate my homework"-type responses from students
- Routinely providing specific, public and authentic feedback to student contributions that is needed to correct mistakes and enlarge understandings both for the student and entire class
- Avoiding feedback that is generalized, superficial, or inauthentic

Developing Critical Thinkers: Increasing students' ability and willingness to support arguments with evidence and closely examine information sources in order to identify underlying assumptions, point of view, bias and distortion. Includes:

- Learning to distinguish between fact and persuasion
- Analyzing the content of text material, propaganda, political cartoons, editorials, op-eds and advocacy tracts
- Analyzing historical and contemporary issues
- Expecting students to illustrate the reasoning behind positions they hold
- Requiring students to use and apply knowledge that they have acquired rather than providing factual responses, or one-word or simple "yes" or "no" responses
- Establishing that higher order thinking questions will be the norm
- Asking questions that enable students to make connections, develop relationships, and draw conclusions