Early Career Framework

Core Induction Programme

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Week

10: Making new concepts accessible through targeted support

Session Elements

- analyse artefacts
- independent planning

Learning Intentions for this session

You will learn that:

5.3 Adapting teaching in a responsive way, including by providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, is likely to increase pupil success.

5.4 Adaptive teaching is less likely to be valuable if it causes the teacher to artificially create distinct tasks for different groups of pupils or to set lower expectations for particular pupils.

You will learn that:

5.5 Flexibly grouping pupils within a class to provide more tailored support can be effective, but care should be taken to monitor its impact on engagement and motivation, particularly for low-attaining pupils.

5.6 There is a common misconception that pupils have distinct and identifiable learning styles. This is not supported by evidence and attempting to tailor lessons to learning styles is unlikely to be beneficial.

Introduction

In the self-directed study sessions from Week 9 and follow-up meetings with your mentor, you looked at how to make use of formative assessment and adapt lessons, whilst maintaining high expectations for all, so that all pupils have the opportunity to meet expectations. In your script, you reframed questions to provide greater scaffolding or greater stretch.

In this self-study session you will extend your knowledge of why it is important to evaluate pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills – this could be via discussions with pupils, during whole class feedback, checking classwork or summative assessment of their work. When certain pupils need more help to improve their knowledge, understanding and skills, it is crucial that the teacher identifies what help they need and the best way to adapt their teaching to support them. It is best if this does not involve creating a separate lesson plan, tasks or set of resources. The idea that lessons need to cater for pupils' 'learning styles' has been debunked and does not improve learning.

You can apply insights from these exercises to examples from your own past experience with pupils and to future lesson plans.

Research and Practice Summary

This reading will help you understand some of the theory behind this week's topic. We will start by introducing some of the key concepts (these are in bold). You will also see some suggestions of how to put these concepts into practice. **When using these concepts in your own practice, you will need to take account of your pupils' characteristics, the context of your classroom and the nature of the material that you are teaching.**

Making new concepts accessible through targeted support – Year 12 Psychology

Conn is struggling with his Year 12 A Level Psychology class: the pupils are having difficulties communicating their prior understanding of complex concepts and so are failing to apply this knowledge to solving problems. He has tried a number of things, including personalising resources for each member of the class and teaching them according to what they have told him are their preferred learning styles. He is now overloaded with work and still not happy with the progress his pupils are making.

Why might pupils be struggling to communicate their prior knowledge? Why might Conn's hard work not be producing the outcomes he wants? How might he better target his support so that the pupils access the new concepts? Which of the strategies in this summary could he use to plan for the needs of his class?

Adaptive teaching involves the teacher being flexible and responsive about the methods they use in lessons to ensure that they can meet the needs of all their pupils and deviate from the lesson plan where necessary. Adaptive teaching requires a reflective approach, since the teacher needs to be able to acknowledge the need to change the strategy being used. Although adaptive teaching is easier with experience, it can be achieved early in a teacher's career through careful planning – by anticipating pupil misconceptions before they arise, for example. It is important that this is done in response to pupils' needs, not an artificial process which breaks the flow of the lesson.

Adaptive teaching includes providing targeted support to pupils who are struggling, but creating separate, distinct tasks for different groups is less likely to be valuable: it risks lowering expectations for some, and it can add unnecessarily to workload.

To help your pupils make progress you should:

- use formative assessment to identify those who need content further broken down
- adapt your lessons but keep your expectations high for all
- change your groups frequently
- rather than plan different tasks and lessons, intervene within lessons with individuals and small groups

Conn changed his approach. Alongside better scaffolding of information, the teacher decided to group his pupils based on current assessment data. In order to target his support, he planned a group work lesson on 'attachment', which used a variety of scaffolding prompts to remind the students of the concepts and knowledge required to show an understanding of attachment. These prompts included a short video on the 'nature v nurture' debate and some key associated words such as 'secure' and 'insecure avoidant' and 'insecure resistant'. He stopped planning towards his pupils' preferred learning styles because it wasn't helping.

Critical knowledge is the essential information and concepts pupils need to learn the next steps in an area of the curriculum. It is linked to the idea of foundational concepts. Critical knowledge might be a key concept or piece of vocabulary, for example, or a mathematical process without which the next steps can't be made.

It is important that the curriculum is carefully sequenced so that pupils learn **foundational concepts** first – concepts that are needed in order to understand more complex information. Examples of foundational concepts include learning the alphabet and phonetic sounds in literacy; learning to count, add and subtract in mathematics; and learning about cells and atoms in science. Over time, building up foundational understanding can help pupils develop confidence in their ability to recall relevant information while their knowledge gradually becomes more complex, and external support (or scaffolding) is gradually withdrawn.

To help your pupils master foundational concepts, you should:

- with your colleagues, identify what these are and ensure they are prioritised in your curriculum
- with your colleagues, identify the likely common misconceptions that can hamper understanding of the important concepts
- give concrete examples and metaphors as these are often useful in helping pupils understand abstract concepts (e.g. stories and narratives, sayings, rules, mnemonics, equations and models)

Conn's pupils were able to use the scaffolds and prompts to access their prior understanding and work collaboratively to produce a labelled diagram of nature versus nurture. By using current assessment data, he was able to identify knowledge gaps that were common across particular groups of pupils and group them according to their more specific needs.

Conn was able to focus more time in lesson to help specific groups develop their diagrams. He could reframe questions and give extra modelling to the groups with struggling pupils when required to maintain the level of discussion in the group and promote deeper understanding. He didn't produce a different lesson plan or resources for them or have a separate set of learning outcomes. Instead, he focused on foundational concepts. Other groups could work independently of the teacher, without additional scaffolding, to complete the finished product.

During the lesson, the teacher moved around the room and used questioning to check individual pupils' understanding. By doing this, he was able to identify where additional/less scaffolding was required and adapt his intervention accordingly.

What did Conn learn about making new concepts accessible through targeted support?

Conn saved time by not producing extra resources for the class, instead refocusing his attention in lesson to target his support where it was needed. Grouping his pupils using their current assessment data helped him to achieve this in a way that meant he did not need to have separate learning objectives or resources. He learned that teaching to preferred learning styles didn't help the pupils and only added to his workload.

Self-Study Activities

Review: 10 mins

Read the Research and Practice Summary on this week's topic. As you read, reflect on:

1. the practices that you are already doing well
2. the practices you are doing some of the time but could do more of/more consistently
3. the practices you don't use in your teaching yet

Plan: 10 mins

Analyse artefacts

Conn adapted his teaching, and avoided having to produce separate lesson resources, by distributing his attention across the groups he had formed using his Year 12 current assessment data. He was able to teach his class the new concepts they needed. Another way to achieve this outcome is by making adaptive use of a teaching resource.

Think of a lesson that you have coming up, or a topic that you will need to teach soon. Find a single rich resource that you can use to teach your whole class. It might be a textbook or a curriculum resource that already exists in a shared staff area; alternatively, it could be an online resource such as a video or animation.

Theory to Practice: 20 mins

1. Independent planning

Write a plan for a lesson that will be observed by your mentor (or you can record a 15-minute section of the lesson.) The purpose of this observation is to demonstrate specific targeted support to groups of pupils with the aim of encouraging the learning of the key concepts but without having to artificially produce separate resources or tasks. You will use the single rich resource you found above.

You should think about what you have learned about adaptive teaching, e.g.,

- how you identify pupils who need extra support
- how you identify what they need extra support with
- how you give the extra support, without creating additional resources and tasks but by adapting the single rich resource for all pupils
- how you might use more intensive pre-teaching, peer-assisted learning, small group discussions or additional homework and questions
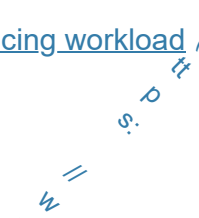
Next Steps: 5 mins

Arrange to record 15 minutes of this lesson or for your mentor or another colleague to observe 15 minutes of it. If neither is possible, make sure you write a detailed lesson plan, and then annotate it later with notes on how the strategies you tried succeeded or not.

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Mentors (https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/mentor-materials/)

ECF Leads (https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl#ecf-leads)

Training (https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/training-materials/)

Self-directed study materials (https://www.early-career-framework.education.gov.uk/ucl/ucl/2-understanding-teachers-as-role-models/)

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