The Early Release

Component 4: Strategies

It is important to teach and provide practice with a variety of learning strategies that facilitate the learning process. Remember that all students, including ELLs, benefit from questions and tasks that involve higher levels of thinking. SIOP Component 4 Strategies includes the following features: Learning Strategies, Scaffolding Techniques, and High-Order Questions & Tasks.

Learning Strategies can be classified as Cognitive Learning Strategies, Metacognitive Learning Strategies, or Language Learning Strategies. Cognitive Learning Strategies help learners mentally and/or physically manipulate material. Examples include: previewing a story before reading or using mnemonics. The rational of Metacognitive Learning Strategies is to get the learner to purposely monitor his/her thinking. Examples include making mental images or summarizing & synthesizing. The goal of Language Learning Strategies is to increase learners' progress in speaking and comprehending the new language. Examples include breaking a word into component parts or substituting a known word when unable to pronounce an unfamiliar word.

Scaffolding is defined as the gradual release of responsibility. When a teacher scaffolds instruction he/she provides substantial amounts of support and assistance in the earliest stages of teaching a new concept and then gradually decreases the amount of support as the learners acquire experience through multiple practice opportunities. Samples of scaffolding practices include: mental module to make thinking transparent to students, provide guided practice and independent practice, or one-to-one teaching. There are three types of scaffolding: verbal, procedural, and instructional.

Effective SIOP teachers promote the component of strategy by asking questions and providing tasks that promote critical thinking. Blooms taxonomy is a hierarchy of questioning used by teachers for the past 50 years. The 6 levels include: Remember, Understand, Apply, Analyze, Evaluate, and Create. Webb developed a similar but more complex system, Depth of Knowledge. There are four levels: Recall, Skill/Concept, Strategic Thinking, and Extended Thinking. It is important to carefully plan higher-order questions and tasks prior to lesson delivery because it is just too difficult to think of them on the spot when you are teaching. Research has found that of the approximate 80,000 questions an average teacher asks annually, only 20% of them are higher-order.

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Source: Making Content Comprehensible for English Learning The SIOP Model (4th edition)

Teaching Ideas for Strategies

Digital Storytelling

A digital story combines old and new literacies as students speak, write, and create multimedia text consisting of still images and a narrated soundtrack. Digital stories provide an exciting, hands-on, and innovative way to create stories and/or presentations. These require students to engage with cognitive, metacognitive, and language learning strategies.

Graphic Organizers

A common strategy to increase ELL understanding is to provide scaffolding in the form of a visual representation of language. Graphic organizers are diagrams of key concepts. Students use them to organize the information they are learning. Examples include: Venn diagrams, timelines, flow charts, maps, and so forth.

Reciprocal Teaching

Reciprocal teaching incorporates four metacognitive strategies: predicting, questioning, clarifying, and summarizing. After the students have learned each of these strategies they can work together as a small group or a whole class while pausing and identifying each of the strategies as they read together. This will increase the comprehension of the text as they more readily engage in Reciprocal Teaching.

Take a few minutes and write several higher-order thinking questions or tasks for your next lesson :)

Question-Answer Relationship (QAR)

The question-answer relationship strategy helps students understand the different types of questions. By learning that question are "Right There" in the test, that some require to "Think and Search" and that some can only be answered "On My Own", students recognize that they must first consider the question before developing an answer. Four types of questions are examined in the QAR:

- Right There Questions: Literal questions whose answers can be found in the text. Often the words used in the question are the same words found in the text.
- Think and Search Questions: Answers are gathered from several parts of the text and put together to make meaning.
- Author and You: These questions are based on information provided in the text but the student is required to relate it to his/her own experience. Although the answer does not lie directly in the text, the student must have read it in order to answer the question.
- On My Own: These questions do not require the student to have read the passage but he/she must use background or prior knowledge to answer the question, etc.