**Instructional Strategies**




**We know that students learn best when they are truly engaged in what they are learning, when they have the opportunity to explore, debate, discuss, examine, defend, and experiment with the concepts and skills they are ready to learn.**

<http://www.fortheteachers.org/instructional_strategies/>

**Remember: No one instructional method will work for all students, for all teachers, or in all subject areas.** Think of these ideas as places to start in figuring out what works most effectively for you and your students.

**Students learn best when instruction is:**

**Appropriately Challenging**

* Kids (and adults!) learn best when they start at their current level of understanding and are challenged – with support (teacher, peers, materials, etc.) – just beyond what they are comfortable doing on their own. (See [**Zone of Proximal Development**](http://www.fortheteachers.org/zone_of_proximal_development.htm))
* The student’s background knowledge and current skill level are more important than their age/grade level in determining what they are ready to learn. Just because a student is in 5th grade doesn’t mean he should be working on “5th grade” skills.
* Use a variety of data (assessment scores, classroom performance, etc.) to identify what each student is ready to work on and plan instruction accordingly, [**modifying content or activities**](http://www.fortheteachers.org/instructional_strategies.htm#Modify_Content) as needed. Use [**daily informal formative assessment strategies to monitor student progress**](http://www.fortheteachers.org/instructional_strategies.htm#Monitor_Progress) and verify that students are demonstrating a gain in understanding of the skills and concepts.

**Based on Real-World Problems and Situations**

* Students need to understand how the skills and concepts they are learning fit into their lives. When will they need to use decimals? How does democracy affect them? How will they benefit from being able to better understand what they read? Connect the skills and concepts to things that already know. Make them relevant.

**Purposeful**

* You (and your students) should be able to explain the purpose of each activity or assignments. Why is it worth spending time on? What are they expected to learn?

**Meaningful and Interesting**

* We shouldn’t be waiting until spring before we begin the “fun” activities. We know that these activities are the ones that students love, that they remember.
* Use engaging activities all year:
	+ Use science experiments to practice math skills
	+ Use [interesting current events](http://www.fortheteachers.org/reading_skills.htm#ReadingStep2) or social studies projects to work on reading and language
	+ Use art projects to practice math concepts such as ratio, proportion and patterns
	+ [**Get kids moving!**](http://www.fortheteachers.org/instructional_strategies.htm#Get_Moving)
		- Working on measurement? Go outside and measure how far kids can jump, how fast they can run. Measure shadows, the diameter of a light post, the distance around the building.
		- Talking about point of view? Have students stand on their chairs.
		- Reading out loud? Have students stand up and walk around the classroom in a circle as they read along.
		- Practice vocabulary or math facts as students walk, one per sidewalk square or stair step.
* **Kids will learn the basic skills better when they have the chance to practice them in a meaningful, interesting context…** And these types of activities make teaching more fun and fulfilling, and make school a more pleasant place to be.