

Effective teaching:

A primary teacher's perspective



Miss E is a primary teacher at a primary school in Far North Queensland. She has experienced, firsthand, the benefits of using effective teaching in the classroom.

With effective teaching, I'm more familiar with how to actively monitor my students to understand when I should accelerate them and when I should spend more time teaching a concept.



Before school (45 minutes) Getting prepared

I arrive by 8 am to prepare my classroom lessons and materials for the day. I also review my data to identify which students need to be caught up on testing because every student needs to be tested every ten lessons. This ensures I can teach bell-to-bell to maximise learning time for my students.

The effective teaching kit contains a Teacher Presentation Book that outlines content, what I say to instruct the students, what their model response should be, and other tips and techniques. It also includes Student Workbooks, textbooks and Teaching Guides (including scope and sequence, assessment guides, literature guides and ideas for extra work).

I also have a series of preventative classroom management techniques and incentives that ensure my class is always on task and engaged. I've learnt how to extend students and inspire a love of learning.





Assembly and transition to class (15 minutes)

Getting started

I greet my students at assembly. My class is a mix of Year 5 and Year 6 students who are reading at a Year 3 to Year 4 level. Our classroom is decorated with the best student work, classroom rules, learning goals, progress charts, a vocabulary list and career aspirations.

My students take their seats as I've taught them and pull out their textbooks. I teach the whole class together, as my students are mature enough to work as a single group of twenty-two.



Morning session (90 minutes)

Mastery and independent work

I open with a fact review of our previous lesson. We're reading about Wendy Chan's trip on Traveller Four – a passenger spaceship travelling through the solar system. I ask my students

Now we're ready to start story reading. Each student takes a turn to read two or three sentences aloud. I choose students randomly, so the rest can follow along.

to open their textbooks and start by teaching new vocabulary in Word Attack. Some of these will appear in the story afterwards; for example, telescope, lava and gases, and I add these words to our vocabulary wall for later quizzes.

I ask comprehension questions. When a student makes a mistake, I use a procedure to correct any errors.

My students are really excited to get to the space landing, so they master the new words quickly. Afterwards, I quiz them on the new vocabulary by getting them to identify missing words in some sentences I've created in a PowerPoint presentation.

We reread the story for paired practice. The students work in pairs and read half of the story to their partner while I monitor. This gives students an opportunity to practise using their expressive voice without feeling embarrassed by everyone listening. My students really enjoy the independence. In the upper levels of the program, we are reading stories about history, geography and science.



Positive reinforcement

I use a lot of positive reinforcement to keep students engaged. We work towards cumulative class goals and rewards. Every time independent work is completed accurately, students progress towards a milestone like a popcorn party. I also use small incentives to encourage students. If they get through the lesson target for the day, I show them a two-minute YouTube video related to the day's reading to provide visual examples of concepts they may not have come across before.



Afterwards, students complete independent work in their Student Workbooks. I monitor actively, which means checking what each student is up to and whether they need assistance before making any errors. I put a tick next to correct answers and a dot next to any that are incorrect. This gives the students an opportunity to reread the questions and fix up their mistakes before I mark their independent work.

The effective teaching program introduces new skills for ten per cent of the lesson only, so students are always revising and building on skills with which they're confident. This keeps them engaged in learning.

Spelling Mastery C

Next, I teach a separate program that helps students make the transition from phonemic based spelling to morphographic and whole-word approaches.

It includes a number of key structural spelling rules. We're learning to drop the final 'e' when the suffix begins with a vowel; for example, re + late + ive = relative. It's a short and easy-to-learn program in which students excel.

My classes have a mix of year levels because they are grouped by learning level rather than age, which gives every student the opportunity to succeed.



Middle session (90 minutes) Connecting Maths Concepts B

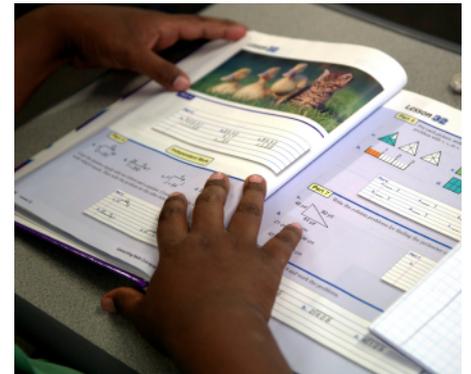
I now have a few different students in my class as some students have different learning levels in maths than in reading. They've just passed cumulative test one and I am excited that they have mastered the first half of the program.

We practise column subtraction and mixed counting using digital displays on a smart board. Then I start geometry by introducing squares. A lot of my students already recognise a square, but none of them can tell

me why, so I teach them that all sides of a square are the same compared to rectangles.

Afterwards, we move on to subtraction facts, coins, word problems in columns, counting dollars and addition facts. It sounds like a lot to cover in an hour, but the skills are broken down, so we finish right on time to start independent work. Independent work helps students demonstrate all the skills they've practiced as a group.

The program is designed to introduce new skills for only ten per cent of the lesson, so students are always revising and building on skills they're confident with, which keeps them engaged in learning.



Afternoon session (60 minutes) Expressive writing

Since my students are ahead, our School Improvement Coach recommended I use expressive writing to improve their paragraphing and editing skills.

Each lesson has two basic parts: a skill part that includes three to five exercises designed to teach specific sub-skills and editing skills and a passage writing exercise in which students apply them. Different lessons ask students to check for different things, so students get practice with a range of editing skills.

After editing, we complete a close passage with 'was' or 'were' to make sense of plurals. Next is a precursor to paragraph writing: two pictures depicting the same scene at different points in time.

I ask my students to deduct answers using these two pictures by getting them to think about what would've happened before the first picture, what happened between the frames, and what might happen after. This also helps students develop

comprehension and inferencing skills.

The last task is their favorite – writing. The writing prompt is similar to the two frames exercise, but this time, there are three and the middle frame is blank. My students love these. They write a paragraph to report on what happened in the blank frame and ensure each sentence begins with a capital letter and ends with a full stop.



Afternoon session (Continued) Support and coaching

I spend one hour every week doing my professional learning. I usually get two lessons complete in that time. This helps me stay on track to complete a module each term.

I also have one coaching session a week with our School Improvement Coach. In the last session, my coach helped me work through when and



how to use remediation skills when I feel students aren't firm on the content.

It was clear in my class data that I was not getting the students in my maths class to the mastery level needed. This session really helped me understand how to pinpoint this problem in the data. My coach set me the task of completing a practice module on that topic, so I could build my knowledge.

I find it very helpful to get feedback on my teaching practice. It is helping me be a better teacher and I always want to learn and develop.

The week before, following our school weekly data review, I got feedback from my coach that most

students were missing important details in their writing. She came to my class to observe what the students were doing. She found they were only writing about the parts they thought were important, not details like the fly disappearing out the window.

She modelled to my students how to look for every detail in the story to make sure their paragraphs reported the picture correctly. She asked me to draw students' paragraphs back to them on the board and look for what was missing. This was extremely helpful to me, and I felt confident I could easily incorporate this best practice into my teaching.



Science session (60 minutes)

Science is an important part of our curriculum. In our weekly class, I use the prepared lessons that form part of the Oz-e-science program. The students find the lessons a lot of fun. They are engaging and broken down into chunks, so that complex information is easy to understand.

At the moment we are learning about mutualism. The materials that come with this program make it easy for me to see how this topic sits within the Australian Curriculum, so I know I am covering all of the content descriptions and achievement standards.



Afternoon session (60 minutes)

I read about each lesson the day before I deliver it, so I am familiar with the content and am clear on any specific language or knowledge. This is extremely helpful as science is not my background in teaching.

I use effective teaching techniques to deliver these lessons. This helps me



to keep track of the progress my class is making towards our goals. I share this data with my Instruction Coach at the end of the week, so we can review it and discuss patterns and issues. This enables me to find ways to further accelerate my students learning.

About effective teaching

For more information about effective teaching, visit www.goodtogreatschools.org.au

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