

Instructionalists under the Sun

JTM III

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Educational instructionalists are a unique group of teachers within the school. They are the teachers that take classroom instruction to the next level by mixing advanced content knowledge with all the other things that are needed to not only make a teacher great but to give optimal opportunity for all learners in a classroom to be educationally excited and more successful. Though advanced content knowledge is important, there are many other traits that make a teacher and teaching great. There are ten traits besides advanced content knowledge that determine if you are providing students the best opportunity to be successful and to grow in exciting fashion as a learner who will enter into the competitive 21st century job market.

1. **Interactive communication** is critical in the classroom to allow for a smooth flow of ideas between students and teacher. Also it provides clarity for what the tasks may be and what it will take to complete the tasks at hand. Interactive communication allows for the creation of trust which allows for an educational comfort to be enacted where education is exciting in the confines of a trusting space. Interactive communication is a must to allow for shared opportunities to dissect indicators and rebuild them together.
2. Creation of **knowledge structures** are imperative in the inception of an exciting classroom. The manner in which a teacher flows the material to a student and how the student begins to understand the material is based on how the knowledge structures are being built indicator to indicator on a daily and weekly basis. A teacher that allows the student to help in the building of these instructional structures shows a keen interest in their students and believes that these students have much to add to these knowledge structures.
3. **Instructional rhythms** are an important facet in the classroom environment. How conversations flow and how they tie into the previous indicator is important. How current indicators flow into the following topic is critical. Especially important is the manner in which the flow and flow of time occurs. Is it nice and easy, making perfect sense or is it garbled and unclear leading to confusion for the student. A teacher who does this well is irreplaceable.
4. **Measuring understanding** is a critical piece in which we discover if a student knows and retains what he learns from our class. We as teachers find this out through a plethora of formative assessments that ultimately leads to a summative assessment of the material. These formative assessments are too many to mention but can occur orally, written or technologically. Keeping track of what a student is learning helps you decide if you need to reteach something or tweak the lesson depending on what the student data analysis

reveals. Measuring understanding is necessary and can be an exciting way for students to see if they are learning the material and if the teacher is delivering an exciting lesson.

5. **Ethos of Learning.** This is simply what are our guiding beliefs of what we are teaching and what are the guiding beliefs that the students have for their learning. A top level teacher is able to meld these two beliefs together student by student and elevate the learning for each of their students. A student that believes that you care about their learning is going to care more about you as the teacher. Within this created milieu, both student and teacher maximize their learning connection and future learning possibilities.
6. **Instructional instruments** play a large role in the tools that we use to teach students with. Great textbooks, the classics and especially technology can aid you in the classroom. With technology changing every 6 months, Smartboards are being upgraded into fantastic educational tools. Access through the internet to cutting edge strategies and paradigms can enhance your teaching greatly. Knowing how to use these new tools well can help you give your students the best opportunities for learning and success.
7. **Aura of expectation** works in 2 different ways and if adhered to meets in the center of instruction and ultimate learning. There is an expectation students have and or is cultivated in unison with the teacher. A student must know what the given teachers expectation is in that class. The reciprocal of that is that the teacher must be held to an expectation of teaching and learning, caring and growing themselves. In a quality classroom this equipoise is a shared creation that when working correctly, the student and the teacher come together in a shared learning environment of elevated expectation, excitement and learning. The student themselves and the teacher are able to hold each other's class expectations close at hand and caring and learning is extended in an exciting and useful way. Each person's expectations are met. If a teacher can't or won't expect greatness, then the administration may step in and help lead those expectations.
8. **Stages of knowledge creation** is when teacher and student have an organized plan of learning that flows clearly from one indicator to another that is highly organized and understandable. The best way that I have found to do this is with portfolios. Portfolios allow the student to organize their learning throughout the year and be able to refer back to it for a summative exam. This could be a unit test or a standardized test. What a great reference to use to study with, organize your class and for students to collect easy points for accomplishing and organizing your stages of learning for that given class. Popplet is an electronic way of organizing these stages of learning whether it's indicator to indicator or unit to unit. The best way is both, organizing indicators within that particular unit.
9. There are many things that are pertinent to **peripheral learning**. Peripheral learning takes cores working across the curriculum such as math and science and adds art to mix. When you do this more indicators are covered from more classes but the best part is that 3 different teachers will cover each indicator. What is so fabulous about that is that

each teacher will have their own style in reviewing that indicator which allows for a better chance at mastery of the indicator. The camaraderie that this creates with the co-teachers and students is fabulous. Another example is Language Arts, Social Studies and Gym to partner up. Also Language Arts and other Language Arts classes in your school and other schools could team teach and create a cool blog. Doing this allows for teachers to take their students to other building venues to learn with other kids and even outside, generating excitement.

10. Lastly **instructional extensions** are the key for every student in every grade. What can we do as a teacher to extend the learning of a student whether it is a special education student, the regular population of students or our advanced and gifted students? How we as teachers are able to draw the students into our teaching, analyze what each student is doing and then extending each of their individual learning goals is a fine art. Great coaches are able to do this, great fine arts teachers absolutely do the same. Instructional extensions are interconnected to Value Added and play an important role in your schools growth and rating.

Being an educational instructionalist is far more than being an expert in your content. It's more about the fundamental way you can share that knowledge and excite your students to be cutting edge learners in a 21st century classroom of high expectations. A fabulous teacher who creates excitement for learning in their classroom is a teacher who will get more than a years' worth of growth from their students.