Learning Strategy Instruction

Learning strategies refer to all of the things that learners do to enhance their understanding, improve their comprehension, or increase their performance on learning tasks.

Teachers need to devote instructional time to explicitly teach strategies, and show students how they can use the strategies that they have been taught in other learning environments. (This is referred to as generalization.)

Students need to be self-directed learners, and should be able to choose the appropriate strategies for specific learning tasks. Both overt and covert strategies should be taught.

Overt Strategies: Those that can be seen – underlining, note-taking, completing a graphic organizer, writing summaries, etc.

Covert Strategies: Those that require only mental processes – predicting, inferring, visualizing, questioning, activation of prior knowledge, monitoring their comprehension, etc.

When teaching students how to use strategies:

√ Explicitly explain the strategy to the students and tell them when this strategy would be the most effective.

√ Model the strategy for students, thinking aloud as you go. When you think aloud, do so on the level that the students would be thinking.

√ Provide opportunities for students to practice the strategy with different tasks. Have class discussion about the benefits of using the strategy.

√ Provide an opportunity for students to attempt a learning task using a strategy, and another by skipping the process. Have them evaluate their performance in both situations.

√ Help students develop ways to monitor and evaluate their comprehension of materials read, and consistently reinforce the concept that the habitual use of strategies will be of benefit to them as learners.

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