**Special Education Strategies**

**Class-wide peer tutoring**

An instructional strategy that uses group/partner pairing that enhances content learning while providing immediate error correction. Through the use of cooperative learning all students are actively engaged and participating in the learning process. This strategy influences social and communication skills necessary to promote teamwork and a safe environment in the classroom. This strategy implements peer instruction in a dual role whereas each student is either the tutor or the tutee at different points in the learning process. Success has been shown with students in diverse skill levels including those with learning disabilities, ESL students and show achievement levels. I have selected the Reciprocal Peer Tutoring model.

How to use:

1. Introduce the concept of peer tutoring to the class. The expected etiquette, dos and don’ts, best practices. (Show respect, be polite, patient, listens, rephrases, don’t give answers, ask questions, be helpful and dependable.)
2. Students are given a pre-test to measure his/her current knowledge of an upcoming lesson.
3. Students are then placed in pairs to teach/ learn/evaluate each other’s progress during the week for the lesson. (Pairs can be random, low proficiency with high proficiency or formal placement by the teacher.)
4. The students work together throughout the week tutoring each other on the content in lesson. They should be allotted 30 minutes a day to peer tutor. 10 minutes student A is tutor and student B is tutee, next 10 minutes student A becomes the tutee and student B the tutor. As they work their way through the pre-test they receive immediate feedback from their partner. Praise for answering the question right and re-clarification if the answer is incorrect. The last 10 minutes should be devoted to reassessing wrong answers.
5. The teacher should be monitoring all groups during the peer tutoring period. Answering questions, praising behavior or readjusting pairs if necessary.
6. At the end of the week a post-test is given by the teacher to show the learning achievement made by each student during the week.

When to use:

Class-wide peer tutoring has been shown successful teaching vocabulary by assigning full and modified lists to paired students, increasing reading proficiency (research has found that partners should have contrasting levels to make this more successful), increased efficiency in math problems (full and modified lists can be used), a successful way to enforce paragraph summations for both ESL and SPED students and as a way to introduce positive behavioral modifications in the classroom.

Variations:

Groups – The class can be divides into groups of 4 instead of pairing. The time limit for each will be decreased to 5 minutes but the others in the group will be observing and learning from several different individuals who may help increased understanding with various inputs in rephrasing and repetition.

Mixed grade level partnerships – Have volunteers from higher grade levels come in and tutor younger students. This may help build the self-esteem and productivity of the younger student. The older student would use their time to review by correctly enunciating reading/words, demonstrate how to solve problem, answer questions and rephrase for understanding. The time for the student should be increased to 15 minutes allowing 15 minutes of review for the older student.

Parents, Teacher Aids, Volunteers / Student partnerships – Similar to the mixed grade partnership the teacher assigns a parent, teacher aid or volunteer to take the place of an older student in the mixed grade level partnership.

**Self-Monitoring Strategy**

The behavior management strategy, self-monitoring, is a student-centered strategy effective in improving attention behaviors and academic performance. Self-monitoring allows the student to keep track of their behavior. It empowers the student to recognize his/her behavior, increase positive social behaviors while staying on task at school. Self-monitoring is effective for practicing skills, collaborative work times and independent study.

How to use:

1. Train the student to distinguish between paying attention and not paying attention. This can be done through direct instruction and teacher modeling on/off task behaviors. Use the behaviors that you have witnessed the child display.
2. Introduce materials: self-monitoring cue tapes and self-recording sheet. (Free downloads are available at TeachingLD.org)
3. Run self-monitoring cue tapes during the activity, when the student hears the chime have the student ask himself “was I paying attention?”
4. Have the student record by marking “yes” or “no” on a self-recording sheet
5. At end of task/day (end of task - if new to the process, end of class - if have been using for a period of time) assess the recording sheet. Praise increased time on task and productivity. If student has not improved rephrase training in #1.
6. When the child is exhibiting proper behavior after 5 or 6 days start to gradually decrease use of the process.
7. Keep data on improvements in time on task and academic productivity for the student to use in parent/teacher conferences, other teachers and their student file.

When to Use:

Self-monitoring strategy can be used to improve attention behaviors during all phases of the lesson plan: focus, teacher input, guided practice, independent study and closure. It is also beneficial during group interactions.

Variations:

Self-monitoring cue tapes can be tape recorded, recorded on a CD and downloaded to the student’s computer.

If recording devices are not available an egg timer can be used along with a signal from a teacher/peer buddy.

Peer Aided Self-Monitoring: Assign a peer who is not likely to engage in distraction methods to help monitor their peer buddy. They can have a signal to help the buddy regain focus when it is lost.

**Direct Instruction (SPED/ELL)**

Direct Instruction is a rapid fire Q & A lesson that relies on proper wording, timing, sequencing and repetition to be successful. There three main components to Direct Instruction programs: design, organization, and student/teacher interactions. Program design - the teacher uses wording, timing, sequencing and repetition to focus on basic skills, when mastered it continues on to harder content. Organization of materials – groups information based on the students current skill level. Teacher/Student Interaction – teacher asks individual/class question, student/students respond immediately. This strategy has been proven effective for core content.

How to use:

1. Review the skill, what they are going to learn and why it is important for them to learn it.
2. Teacher models the procedure: Teacher models procedure to students using rapid fire questions with immediate error feedback. Direct instruction takes only a small amount of time to practice. It is quick way to reinforce learning in only 20 minutes a day.
3. Teacher leads the instruction. Normal interaction has students answering ten questions per minute. The pacing of instruction is crucial in successful teaching.
4. Teacher assesses learning. Checks for understanding.
5. Re-tests the learning. Repetition is the key factor to retention.

When to use:

Direct instruction is used to reinforce math problems, spelling words, reading, language arts and social skills.

Variations:

Partner direct instruction – have the students break into pairs and have them take dual turns asking/answering the questions. Teacher need to monitor individual progress.

Student led direct instruction – break the class up in groups based on skill level. Have a student from each of the levels who have mastered the skill lead the rapid fire Q & A using a pre-made list of questions. Teacher needs to monitor individual progress.

Student input direct instruction – the students create the questions either individually or as a group on a skill set by the teacher for homework or when they require more help with the skill be taught. The teacher then includes these questions into the next Q & A in that skill area.