

# Critical Teaching Skills for Planning Practice and Monitoring Student Learning

**INTASC** Standard #8: Instructional Strategies  
Standard #6: Assessment

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 7-1 Describe purposes, forms, and types of practice, and summarize planning decisions to make practice effective.
- 7-2 Explain how to monitor learning before, during, and after instruction, and give examples.
- 7-3 Describe effective performance feedback.
- 7-4 Explain the key elements of the teaching/learning cycle.

## CHAPTER OUTLINE

### 7-1 PLANNING PRACTICE

- 7-1a Making Practice Effective
- 7-1b Types of Practice in Lessons
- 7-1c Responding to Skill Diversity
- 7-1d Responding to English Language Learners

### 7-2 MONITORING STUDENT LEARNING

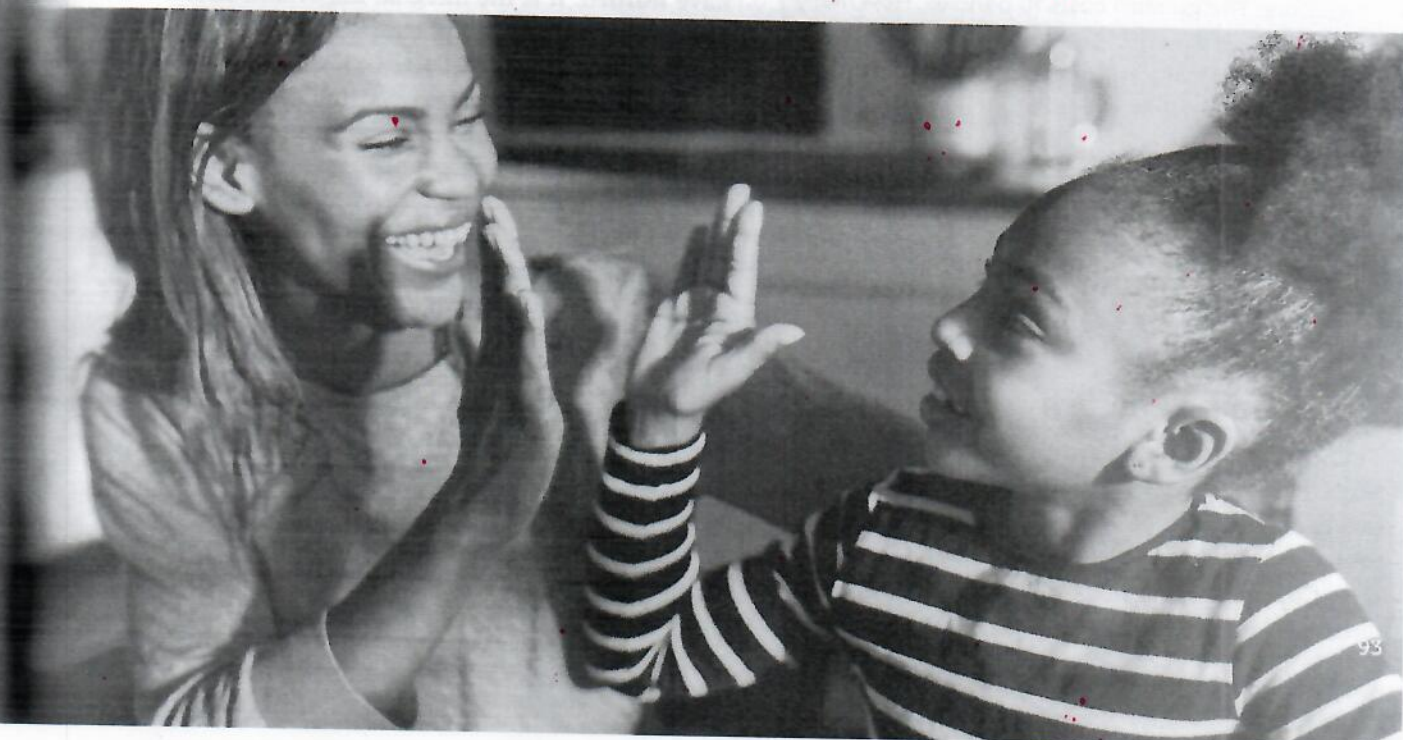
- 7-2a Before Instruction: Preassessment
- 7-2b During Instruction: Formative Evaluation

7-2c After Instruction: Summative Evaluation

7-2d Alternative Evaluation Techniques

7-3 THE ROLE OF PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

7-4 THE TEACHING/LEARNING CYCLE



## Introduction

This chapter is about planning student practice and monitoring student learning. We are presenting these topics together because their uses are intertwined. Student practice events provide students with a way to strengthen knowledge and skills but also provide opportunities for teachers to monitor learning progress. In this way, practice provides teachers with important information they can use to make sound instructional decisions. For example, if a teacher notices that many students are making mistakes when he monitors student practice, he will most likely go back and give more instruction. Or, he could decide that more practice is needed. On the other hand, if he notices that nearly all students are successful with the practice, he will likely decide to go on to the

next lesson and provide additional assistance to students who need it. Student practice and teacher monitoring each play an integral role in instructional decision-making.

In this chapter, you will learn how practice facilitates learning and how to design effective practice activities and assignments, as well as two types of practice used in lessons. You will also learn about various types of monitoring activities, some of which occur during and some of which occur at the end of lessons or activities. Read about Ms. Kelley and the lesson she is planning for her class in Teachers in Action 7.1. As you read the rest of the chapter, think about how Ms. Kelley could implement practice and evaluation strategies effectively.

### TEACHERS IN ACTION 7.1: A LOOK AT MS. KELLEY'S PLANNING

Ms. Kelley is planning a lesson to teach her students a strategy for finding missing addends (e.g.,  $4 + \underline{\quad} = 10$ ). Her objective is: "Given eight addition sentences with one missing addend and a sum not greater than 10, students will write the missing addend correctly for all of them." She plans to open her lesson by telling little stories, such as "Imagine that you are sitting on your couch watching television. You put your hand under one of the cushions and you find 4 pennies. You're very excited, because you've been wanting a gumball from the machine at the grocery store. The gumball costs 10 pennies. How many more pennies will you need to have enough for the gumball?" Next, she will show a poster of the strategy steps and have students read the steps with her. Then, she'll explain and demonstrate the strategy steps (*Say the number you know. Count on to 10. Write the missing addend.*) with several more story problems. Ms. Kelley plans to have her students practice using the strategy following her instruction.

of these important instructional outcomes. The challenge, clearly, is how to move students from what they currently know to the accomplishment of these long-term objectives.

**Practice** plays a key role in facilitating this important transition. *Practice* means those events that build a bridge between instruction and the achievement of an objective where students have a chance to begin using the skill/knowledge that is being taught. It follows instruction or exploration and matches the learning objective exactly. Practice helps students move from a place where they are watching, listening, reading, or exploring to a place where they can apply the information they have learned. It is the integral, important, necessary link between these two places.

Strengthening knowledge/skills through practice happens because it creates opportunities for students to use the information that has been presented. Using the information helps students remember it better and understand it more deeply. In order to use the information in their daily lives, students need to practice for **accuracy**, **fluency**, and **application**. These concepts develop in the following order:

- **Accuracy** is correct responses and can mean correctly solving problems, following steps, recalling facts, or comprehending ideas.
- **Fluency** means using the knowledge/skill not only correctly, but also smoothly, efficiently, or quickly.
- **Application** means using the knowledge/skill in new problems, situations, or examples and requires a thorough understanding of the information.

## 7-1 Planning Practice

The goal of instruction is to provide students with skills and knowledge they can use in their daily lives inside and outside of school and in preparation for jobs and schooling following high school. The Common Core and other state standards provide clear direction for teachers in planning for the acquisition

Think back to when you learned to ride a bicycle. First you practiced for accuracy, that is, staying upright, steering, and braking. Then you practiced for fluency, that is, riding smoothly and quickly. You may have continued practicing for application so you could ride different types of bikes or ride down mountain trails.

Practice can take many *forms*. It can be simple or elaborate, brief or lengthy. Sometimes students are working toward a long-term objective and they will have many practice activities over time (see Teaching Plans 12 or 13 in the Appendix). Sometimes they are working toward a short-term lesson objective and will practice over a few days at most (see Teaching Plans 6 or 11). Practice may be done as classwork or as homework. Practice may mean rehearsing the skill or knowledge over and over again, using it in new or varied ways, or digging deeper for understanding. The form will also vary depending on the kind of knowledge being practiced. For example, when practicing a strategy, the students might be listing steps, role-playing, solving problems, and so on. When practicing factual knowledge, the students might be reciting, paraphrasing, sorting, matching, and so on. The outcome of practice may be a product or performance. Ultimately, the nature of the practice will depend on the objective you have selected for your students. The following examples demonstrate the wide variety of forms of practice:

- Playing and replaying one section of a sonata for piano
- Writing persuasive essays

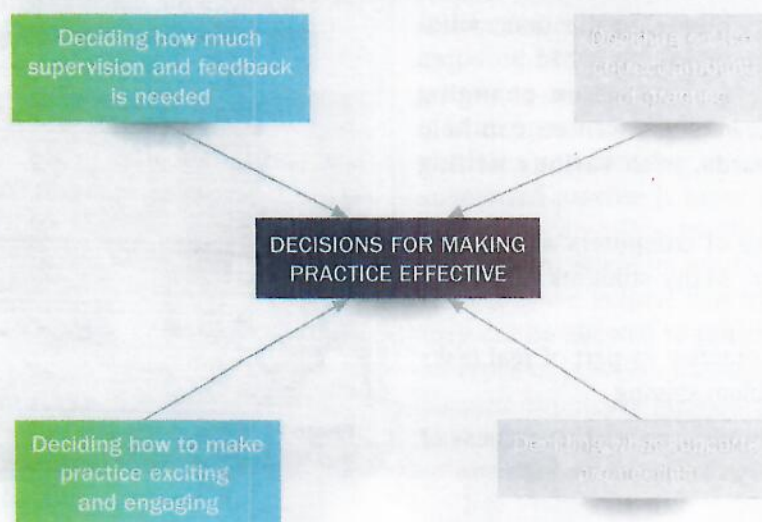
- Setting up a demonstration of the effect of gravitational pull
- Role-playing how to resist peer pressure
- Drawing angles with a protractor
- Sorting words by number of syllables

### 7-1a Making Practice Effective

Practice is considered effective if students are successful and their success will result in meeting the learning objective. Students learn best when they are making correct responses during practice. This is one reason it is important that you monitor as you explain and demonstrate the new learning so you know for sure whether students are “getting it.” The feedback you receive from monitoring will let you know whether you should give more instruction (e.g., explain it in a different way, do another demonstration, give additional examples) or let students begin practice.

Once you’ve decided that students are ready for practice, you will need to make several decisions about how to make the practice activities/assignments effective. You will want to think about how to best supervise the practice and give feedback, how much practice should be provided, how to make the practice engaging and motivating, and what types of supports will be necessary to help student practice correctly. The decisions appear in Figure 7.1, and each is explained further in the following section.

**Figure 7.1** Decisions for Making Practice Effective



## Decisions for Planning Effective Practice

The first decision is about supervision and feedback, and it is influenced by when the practice is to happen. *Initial* practice usually requires close supervision and immediate feedback so a teacher can intervene immediately to stop or prevent errors and to coach students as needed. This is true whether or not students are practicing with supports. Eventually, students are ready to work without direct monitoring, and positive or corrective feedback can be delayed (e.g., teacher grades in-class/seatwork or homework practice later). This is typical when students are accurate but need to develop fluency.

The next decision is deciding on the *correct amount of practice*. Too much practice wastes learning time and turns off students. Too little practice and the skill/knowledge won't be usable. You'll need to provide the amount of practice that students need to reach the level of accuracy, fluency, or application established in the objective. (See Chapter 2 for information on measurable objectives.) It is best to have plenty of practice tasks prepared and then adjust as necessary.

Next, you will need to decide how to make the practice *engaging and motivating*. If students are interested in the practice activities and in improvement, they are more likely to work hard to be successful. Following are strategies to try:

- Have students chart their progress; it's motivating to see improvement.
- Have students set goals and choose practice methods they know help them learn.
- Build in variety by changing the task, without changing the content, to avoid boredom during a practice session. Even changing where or how answers are written can help (e.g., on whiteboards, with various writing implements).
- Incorporate the use of computers and mobile devices as possible. Many students find these engaging.
- Provide authentic practice as part of real tasks and real-world problem solving.
- Demonstrate the importance and usefulness of the skill or knowledge being practiced.

- Include carrier content of interest to the students to make dull content more engaging. (See Chapter 1 for information on carrier content.)
- Use skits and role-playing for practice when possible. (See Chapter 18 for suggestions for using role-playing to practice behavioral skills.)

Finally, decide whether you need to build in **supports** to make it more likely that students are successful at initial practice. For example, when you were practicing bike riding, you may have begun with training wheels or someone running alongside holding the bike to help with balance. Teachers use differentiation in choosing supports, and decisions will depend on *what* the students are practicing, their beginning skill/knowledge levels, and on student interests and preferences (see Photo 7.1). As students become more skilled and knowledgeable, fade the supports. Following are some examples of supports:

- The *teacher leads* practice of subtracting with regrouping by solving problems on the board as the class calls out what to do, before asking students to practice problems independently.
- The *teacher guides* practice in distinguishing between "tattling" and "telling" through whole-group questioning and response.
- Students practice describing cell division by working *in small groups* to create a skit depicting it before practicing writing and drawing the process by themselves.
- Students sort examples of common and proper nouns *with a partner* before doing it alone.
- Students write business letters by filling in a *template* before practicing writing them independently.



**Photo 7.1** Having students work in groups before they attempt to work alone is one strategy for supporting student practice.

- Students practice writing complete sentences using *word banks* of subjects and verbs before practicing writing them without support.
- Students practice identifying bias in websites using a *checklist* of questions before practicing doing it on their own.
- Students practice writing letters of the alphabet using a *software application* on a tablet computer that flashes the starting and ending point of the letter and uses arrows to show the correct direction to write—before practicing on paper.

As you see there are many types of support possible, including *people supports* (e.g., teacher, teaching assistants, older students, peer tutors, classmates, family members) and *materials/technology supports* (e.g., graphic organizers, posters, checklists, word banks, templates, study guides, and many software applications).

See Teacher Checklist 7.1 for a summary of how to make practice effective.

#### TEACHER CHECKLIST 7.1: PLANNING PRACTICE

- ✓ Have I planned how to supervise the practice of every student and give feedback to each one?
- ✓ Am I planning for all students to participate in individual supervised practice?
- ✓ Am I planning a clear explanation of the purpose of in-class or out-of-class practice?
- ✓ Have I planned to clarify directions for practice by stating, writing, and demonstrating them?
- ✓ Am I planning enough practice for *accuracy* (in-class supervised practice), *fluency*, and *application* (in- and out-of-class extended practice) as appropriate?
- ✓ Have I planned to make practice activities motivating and engaging?
- ✓ Have I planned appropriate people supports and materials/technology supports?
- ✓ Am I planning varying amounts of practice to match varying learning rates of my students?
- ✓ Have I planned to have students practice in a setting that is as realistic as possible?

Professional Resource Download

### 7-1b Types of Practice in Lessons

There are two main types of practice commonly used in lessons: *supervised practice* and *performance practice*. Both types are typically needed in order for students to meet the lesson objective. They differ primarily in purpose, how they are monitored, when feedback is given, and the use of supports.

#### Supervised Practice

Supervised practice is individual practice of the skill/knowledge as defined in the lesson objective and must *match* the instruction provided. For example, if the objective states that students will *write similes*, then students will receive instruction on how to *write similes*, and supervised practice will be to *write similes*. It will not be practice on *circling the similes in a story*. As part of the explanation and demonstration components of the lesson, the teacher may have checked student understanding of the term *simile* and checked that students could identify *similes*—as well as telling and showing how to write similes. But the supervised practice must be of the whole or final skill—not just parts of it. In the preceding example, students would practice writing similes rather than practice identifying them. Supervised practice follows instruction and is congruent with the lesson objective and instruction. (See Teaching Plans 3 or 4 for examples of supervised practice.)

By definition, supervised practice is *closely monitored* and students should receive *immediate feedback*—both positive and corrective. This means that the teacher is right there, overseeing the practice so he can prevent or correct errors. If the practice is seatwork or other in-class assignment, the teacher is moving around to check each student's work. If it is performance practice, the teacher is carefully watching and listening to each student. Obviously, supervised practice is never homework. Supervised practice is carefully controlled and directed because in a lesson, students are typically learning something new—it is their first try, and it is critical that they not be allowed to practice incorrectly. As with all types of practice, the teacher will decide on the *amount* of practice necessary. In this case, students should be provided enough supervised practice to become accurate with the knowledge or skills



specified in the objective. The teacher will encourage students to build accuracy by making the supervised practice *motivating and engaging*. Sometimes, more than one supervised practice activity is used to keep practice interesting.

The teacher may choose to go directly from instruction/modeling to individual supervised practice. However, to build learner confidence and ensure correct practice, the teacher may decide to lead up to individual practice by first providing *supports*. These can be *people supports* and *materials/technology supports*. Consider the following example of a teacher's decision making about the use of supports in supervised practice:

Mrs. Albright is planning a lesson. The lesson objective is that students will find five places on a map, given the latitude and longitude, with 100 percent accuracy. Mrs. Albright tells and shows how to do that. Because there are several steps to follow and each must be done exactly right, she decides to provide supports for initial practice rather than counting on them getting it by just listening and watching her. First, Mrs. Albright finds a place on the map with the class's help ("What do I do first, everyone? What direction do I move? Now what?" and so on). Next, the students practice with peer help ("Work with your group of three to find this place. . . #1 reads the numbers, #2 moves his/her fingers on the lines, #3 writes the name of the place. . . then switch roles. . . and switch again."). After several items, students practice individually ("Do the next three by yourselves") while Mrs. Albright quickly moves around to monitor and give feedback to each student ("That's correct" or "Show me how you found this one").

Notice that Mrs. Albright used a typical support sequence for a supervised practice session:

- The teacher does the practice task with the students' help.
- Students do the practice task with peer help.
- Each student does the practice task alone, but with teacher supervision.

Mrs. Albright could have decided to have her students practice finding places on a map with the support of cued materials (e.g., color-coding, arrows) before having them practice individually with

no supports. This represents another common support sequence to consider:

- Students do the practice task with materials/technology support.
- Each student does the practice task alone, without supports, but with teacher supervision.

Notice that in each sequence, the supports are removed and each student has the opportunity to individually practice the skill/knowledge described in the objective, with teacher supervision. Supervised practice *always* ends with individual practice.

## Extended Practice

Extended practice is another type of practice used in lessons. It follows supervised practice and differs from it in several ways. One difference is the purpose of the practice. Extended practice is used for building fluency, application, or generalization, while supervised practice is intended to build accuracy. For example, Mrs. Albright decides to use extended practice to help her students get faster at finding places on the map using latitude and longitude. She might also offer extended practice on finding places on various kinds of maps and globes. Teachers use extended practice to provide more or different practice for students. In some lessons, extended practice is used to provide opportunities for enrichment, exploration, synthesis, integration with other subjects, and deepening understanding. (See Teaching Plans 10 or 11 for examples of extended practice.)

Another way extended practice differs from supervised practice is in the areas of monitoring and feedback. Because students developed accuracy during supervised practice, you can be confident that they will not be practicing errors. Therefore, extended practice will not need to be monitored as directly and closely, and feedback can be delayed. Students are more independent at this point, and extended practice can occur in or out of class as seatwork, performances, or homework. However, you will still examine student work carefully to make sure that high levels of accuracy are achieved, that fluency is developed, or that students are able to apply or generalize the new learning. In lessons, the teacher needs to monitor student success during practice activities to decide when to evaluate.

Extended practice also differs in the use of supports. The teacher moves to extended practice

only when it is obvious that the students will be successful with less support. Students may receive some support, but it will not be as intensive as might be supplied in supervised practice. For example, they might receive support from family members when completing homework. Or they might receive peer support while working on projects or performances. In lessons, however, the intention is that each student meets the objective—individually and independently. Therefore, be sure that the final extended practice opportunities allow the student to practice alone without supports.

Regardless of the type of practice, the teacher must decide on the *amount* of practice necessary to achieve the fluency or application levels needed to reach the learning outcome. You will carefully scrutinize student performance to decide whether the students need more extended practice, more instruction, or are ready for the evaluation component of the lesson.

Finally, when planning extended practice opportunities, you will need to decide how to make the extended practice activities *engaging and motivating*. It is also important to consider the principles of differentiating instruction and universal design for learning to make sure you're providing practice activities appropriate for all of your students. (See Chapter 3 for more information.)

See Figure 7.2 for a summary of the differences between supervised and extended practice.

## Planning Effective Seatwork and Homework Practice

Teachers often assign *seatwork* practice as well as *homework* practice. Both need to be planned carefully if they are to be effective. *Seatwork* is usually practice that students do alone at their desks or somewhere in the classroom. This practice can be important for developing independent expertise with new learning, but it is easy to overuse. Cegelka and Berdine (1995) state that students spend anywhere from 50 to 70 percent of the school day in independent activities. When you do use seatwork, the following suggestions can help you plan to make it effective.

- Explain the purpose of the seatwork practice so that students know why they are doing it.
- Say, write, and show the directions for completing the practice task, and check for understanding.
- Move around quickly at the beginning of seatwork to make sure each student gets started correctly. It may be best to have students complete just a few items before correcting their work to ensure they are practicing accurately.
- Frequently check on students you think might have difficulty, but don't spend all your time with just one or two students. Try materials or technology support instead.
- Monitor by looking carefully at each student's work, not just those who raise their hands. Stop

**Figure 7.2** Supervised and Extended Practice: Similarities and Differences

