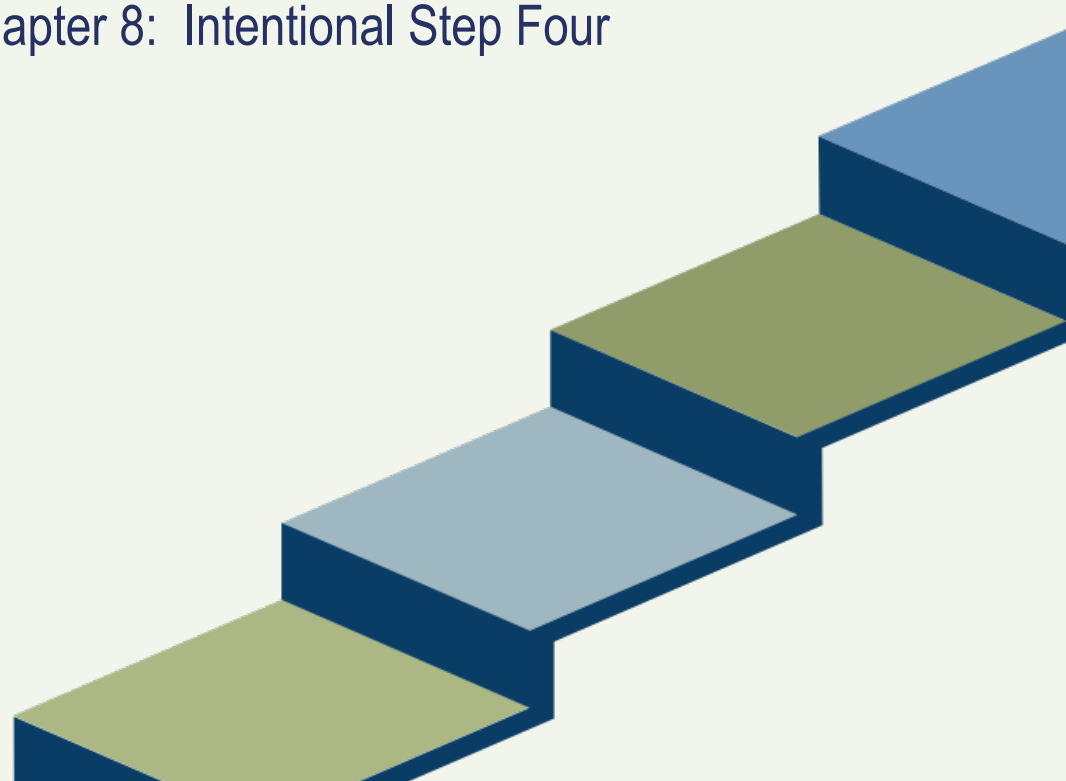
Intentional Instructional Moves

Strategic Steps to Accelerate Student Learning

Companion Guide

Chapter 8: Intentional Step Four



Chapter 8

Intentional Step Four: Include Multiple Checkpoints for Understanding

As teachers are delivering direct instruction, they should plan to include multiple checkpoints to evaluate student comprehension. Formative assessments can both reinforce the knowledge and skills students have learned and provide teachers with valuable information about student progress and achievement (see Chapters 9 and 10).

In addition to checking for understanding, teachers should provide descriptive feedback on student work. When combined, assessments and feedback will help teachers adjust instruction and introduce appropriate interventions and support.

Strategy 1: Peer Coaching

The teacher invites learners to work with another student in the class for part of the work. This strategy works best when students understand what's expected of them and how to work successfully with their classmates. Keep in mind that students might be inexperienced at tutoring their peers; they might be hesitant to teach others or lack the proper knowledge and skills to do so. Stronger students might be inclined to do more (or all) of the work, and struggling students might be discouraged by this. To avoid these common issues, teachers should introduce peer coaching skills and strategies (Guido, 2017).

1. **Introduce Role Playing** - The teacher explains the activity and then role plays how students might interact during the activity. For example, the teacher might act out a scene with a student where they model how to deliver praise and corrective feedback. They can then lead a discussion with students about how the comments were received and what makes for effective feedback. Students can then work in pairs to try role playing

themselves.

2. **Teach Coaching Skills** - The teacher can model different coaching methods for different kinds of activities.
    a. Directive Coaching - The peer coach explains a new concept and gives examples. This approach can help fill knowledge gaps and reinforce content. However, the peer coach must be confident and knowledgeable in the content. Ex. Student A teaches Student B how to use a specific math formula.
    b. Non-Directive Coaching - The student asks open-ended questions to prompt critical thinking and help their peers come to their own conclusions. To ensure this type of coaching is effective, students must understand when and how to ask these thinking questions. Ex. During a reading buddy activity, students can ask open-ended questions about the text.

Be sure to discuss the best approach with students before beginning an activity.

3. **Explain How to Give Feedback** - Like any skill, students will need instruction and practice on how to give effective feedback.
    a. Positive Feedback - Students should offer genuine praise and encouragement to their peers. Compliments work best when they are specific and meaningful. Teachers can model positive feedback by writing a list of examples and inviting students to practice using them.
    b. Corrective Feedback - When their peers make a mistake, students need to be able to explain what happened and help their peers revise. Corrective feedback is specific and aims to help the student improve.

Be sure students understand that they will need to deliver both kinds of feedback during

peer coaching activities. For more ideas on delivering effective feedback, see Chapter 9.

4. **Use Reciprocal Peer Tutoring** - In a mixed-ability classroom, teachers can pair students of different levels and invite them to take turns coaching each other. With this approach, everyone gets the opportunity to be a tutor and tutee (Guido, 2017). For example, if students are working on math problems, Student A will coach their peer on how to solve the first problem; then they will switch roles and Student B coaches Student A on the second question. If one of the partners makes a mistake, the other will offer corrective feedback and encouragement to help reach the solution.

Peer coaching encourages students to learn the material well enough to be able to teach it to someone else. More advanced students can help coach developing students, which reinforces the content for all. It's also valuable for learners to hear the thinking of their peers and then process how to perform the task correctly. These metacognitive strategies reinforce the value of the learning process versus the end product. When applied appropriately, peer coaching activities have the potential to improve students' reasoning, critical thinking, confidence, and interpersonal skills (Guido, 2017). They also reinforce active learning strategies, self-awareness, and help-seeking (.72).

Strategy 2: Self and Peer-Assessment

While teacher feedback is integral to student success, we also want to ensure students have opportunities to engage in self and peer-assessment. For suggestions on how to implement peer and self-assessments, see Chapter 9.

Strategy 3: Team Answer

The teacher places students in designated small groups and gives them a question to answer. Student 1 records their answer on the graphic organizer; then, Student 2 records their response, then Student 3, and so on. Students can also record their answers on Post-It notes and stick them to the handout. Next, the team must decide which answer they think is best and record it in the middle of the organizer. The teacher will check in with groups throughout the activity and can offer support as needed. See the "Team Thinking and Team Answer" handout for a sample.

This strategy invites students to collaborate and give feedback to each other, developing both their social and self-awareness. They must also practice critical thinking, flexibility, and leadership as they collectively work toward a solution. According to Hattie, providing students with opportunities to evaluate and reflect on their learning has an effect size of .75. Cooperative learning has also been shown to improve student outcomes, with an effect size of .55.