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ABSTRACT

This learning package assists in selecting learning strategies. Upon completion of this package, the learner should be able to: (a) define the term "learning strategies"; (b) list at least five different examples of learning strategies; (c) locate, within printed context, examples of three different strategies; (d) plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific cognitive objective; and (e) plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific affective objective. (MJM)

I.A.

SELECTING LEARNING STRATEGIES

A LEARNING PACKAGE

Dave Fraser

W.W.S.C.

Upon completion of this learning package, the i.m. will be able to:

Task #I: (Knowledge)	(a)	Define the term, "learning strategy."
	(b)	List at least five different examples of learning strategies.
Task #II: (Comprehension)	(a)	Locate within print context, examples of three different strategies.
Task #III: (Application)	(a)	Plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific cognitive objective.
(Optional)	(b)	Plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific affective objective.

Task #1: (Knowledge)

(a) Define the term, "learning strategy."

Performance Criterion #1:

Given the definition which follows, the i.m. to the satisfaction of his laboratory supervisor, will paraphrase in writing the complete definition.

Definition--"Learning Strategy"--A plan or method of (1) grouping learners (small groups, independent study, etc.) and or (2) of using learning media (films, books, etc.), and or (3) of employing learning methods (inquiry approach, listening to exposition, observing, constructing, etc.) so that a predetermined learning objective can be achieved.

(b) List at least five different examples of learning strategies.

Performance Criterion #1:

Given the resource that follows the i.m. will be able to list at least five different learning strategies (modes) together with a one sentence explanation of each strategy listed.

See: "Providing Variety in Modes of Learning"--taken from Taba, Hilda, Curriculum Development, Theory and Practice, New York: Harcourt, Brace and World. 1962.

PROVIDING VARIETY IN MODES OF LEARNING

We know that not all individuals learn most effectively by the same method, by the same type of activity, or by using the same media. One student may successfully master generalizations about health or about growth of plants from a book, another may get the same thing more effectively from observation or experimentation. While some students are stimulated to thought by books, others need group discussion to accomplish the same purpose. Some people are moved to a clear organization of ideas by having to write about them, while others accomplish the same end by composing a summary chart.

Different individuals also *need* different types of learning activities for their self-development. A shy person *needs* experience in group participation. A person given to overgeneralization *needs* the corrective experience of analyzing precise data and drawing accurate inferences from them. Finally, students *need* to acquire a tool chest of methods of learning which will help them to continue their education beyond school. The wider the range of learning techniques which an individual masters, the better equipped he is for continuing to learn after formal schooling has ceased. Chapter 8 discussed the differences in mental systems and the need for corresponding variations in approaches to learning tasks. For all students to use identical methods of learning, no matter what their abilities and backgrounds, is a highly questionable procedure from the standpoint of efficiency in stimulating and using intelligence.

It is well to remember, further, that interests attach not only to the content of learning but also to the ways of learning. There are preferences and predilections regarding the use of verbal and quantitative materials, the handling of precision da a and generalities, and the ways of expressing what has been learned. Additional suggestions for variation in learning activities come from analysis of the effect of groups on individuals. The research on group processes seems to suggest that the patterns of group relations in which an individual finds himself have a great deal to do with his achievement. In heterogeneous groups, some individuals can learn from each other what they cannot gain from books. Others respond to motivational support from peers when they cannot respond to teachers' invitations to learning or to such motivational devices as grades (see chapter 11).

All this seems to suggest that a balanced array in the modes of learning and in the conditions under which learning takes place is required if there is to be equality of opportunity to learn.

What, then, are the kinds of balance that need to be considered? Learning activities need to represent a balance of various *means* of learning: reading, analyzing, doing research, observing, writing, experimenting, manipulating, and constructing. Too often there is a tendency to depend more or less exclusively on one mode of learning and thus to limit the scope of learning. Often either the traditional means, such as reading books, or some new dramatic teaching techniques, such as group discussion, tend to dominate. Such a dependence on one way of learning deprives some students of an adequate access to learning. A physics class in which reading the physics text is the sole means of learning the principles of mechanics offers a less than optimum opportunity to learn physics to those who perceive these principles more readily by operating and manipulating machines, studying blueprints, or experimenting.

A balance is needed also between experiences or activities that represent "intake" and those that represent synthesis, reflection, and expression. Too long a stretch of absorbing new information is bound to result in the erosion of the previous learning by the new. An appropriate rhythm of absorbing and

consolidating, internalizing, and reorganizing seems to hold a much greater possibility. It incorporates the idea of intake and of feedback and utilizes what is known about dynamics of creative learning.

A similar rhythm is important for incorporating "feeling insights" into cognitive mastery, especially in areas in which concepts and ideas tend to be colored by feelings and attitudes. This means that the intake of facts and ideas needs to be alternated with learning activities and materials which open up and extend feelings and sensitivities. To use a previous example, in studying the hardships of pioneers it might be important to precede the factual study with films or stories which create new insights into what the "hardships" of pioneers mean.

Providing a rationally balanced variety of learning experiences not only increases the capacity to learn and motivation for learning. It is also one way of dealing with the problem of individual differences and heterogeneity. It is quite possible that making a greater range of means of learning available will also extend the capacity to master the content and to develop the powers of thought and feeling in individuals now deprived of this mastery.

A balanced variety in learning techniques also makes possible a flexibility in the approaches which are so necessary in a heterogeneous group. Usually the problem of heterogeneity is dealt with in two contrasting ways, neither of which is adequate. One is to accommodate to the variation in pace of learning by reducing the material covered: to give fewer and lighter assignments and easier tasks to the less able. In this reducing the fundamentals are likely to be reduced also. The other is to vary the expectations--to cover the same ground but to expect a lower level of understanding or of mastery from the less able. This plan has the danger of leaving some students progressively less able to cope with the curriculum.

Perhaps a more effective way of providing for heterogeneity in ability is to design methods of learning according to differences in needs, levels of comprehension, or ability. This way presents a problem of formulating open-ended tasks which serve a similar purpose for all but which enable students to use alternate procedures and a different level of materials. For example, in one sixth-grade classroom individuals in a group responsible for the study of and reporting on economic conditions of Latin American countries worked on several levels. Some studied fairly abstract materials on the economic status of a given country, from which they derived an analysis of the factors responsible for this status, such as the trade balance. Slow readers in the same group had the task of using the ideas of the bright members in the group, figuring out what the United States exported to Canada and Mexico and imported from these countries, and then making a graphic map of the movement of goods to and from these countries. While the less able readers could not get the idea about the trade balance from books, they could perceive it once it was explained by those who could read well. They could then do an effective job in making the idea concrete. Thus each type of learner got something from the other type of learner, each also contributed to the other, and each mastered the basic idea. Had the assignment been for all to read a chapter in the text, only those with a certain degree of reading ability would have learned. The students of high ability would have worked below their capacity, and the low-ability students would have learned little or nothing.

Task #II: (Comprehension)

(a) Locate within print context, examples of three different strategies.

Performance Criteron #1:

Given one or more of the resources, which follow, the i.m. to the satisfaction of his laboratory supervisor, will be able to write three paragraphs, each of which describe a strategy employed or implied within the resources.

See: Broudy, Harry and John Palmer. Exemplars of Teaching Method. Chicago: Rand McNally, 1965. (particularly Chapters I and II).

Highet, Gilbert. The Art of Teaching. New York: Alfred Knopf, 1952.

Kaufman, Bel. Up the Down Staircase. New Jersey: Avon Press, 1964.

Neill, Alexander. Summerhill. New York: Hart, 1964.

Skinner, Burrhus. Walden Two. New York: MacMillan, 1960.

Suchman, J. Richard. Developing Inquiry. Chicago: Science Research Associates, 1966.

Task #III: (Application)

(a) Plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific cognitive objective.

Performance Criterion #1

Given two groups of one or more students in a live classroom context, the i.m. to the satisfaction of his laboratory supervisor, will outline in lesson plan form, and subsequently will provide for the student groups, two diverse strategies, utilization of which results in achievement of a single cognitive learning objective.

(Optional)

(b) Plan and teach a lesson which involves at least two different strategic approaches to achievement of a single specific affective objective.

Performance Criterion #1:

Given two groups of one or more students in a live classroom context, the i.m. to the satisfaction of his laboratory supervisor, will outline in lesson plan form and subsequently will provide for the student groups two diverse strategies, utilization of which results in achievement of a single affective learning objective.