

CT Reading Institute Newsletter

January 2012

I resolve to exercise at least three times a week, clean out the garage and ...



Adult Ed

Happy New Year!

I hope everyone had an enjoyable and restful break. As we return we all fall “back into the routine” of classes and planning. Just as we take comfort in routine so do our students. The ability to teach our students well starts every year with the development of routines - the predictability of learning. This issue focuses on **instructional routines** and how we can help ourselves and our students by creating good routines in our instruction.

- Aileen Halloran
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What are instructional routines?

Routines are defined as “prescribed, detailed courses of action to be followed regularly; a standard procedure; a set of customary and often mechanically performed procedures or activities.” At “LearNet” an instructional routine is defined as “all the elements of teaching/learning events other than specific content to be taught and the specific materials used in the teaching”. (www.projectlearn.net.org/tutorials/instructional_routines.html)

The use of a routine provides students with a familiar sequence that becomes automatic so a teacher can simply substitute new learning (skills/content) into the routine. By using instructional routines **students will be able to focus solely on the content, and not on the task.**

Why are instructional routines important?

Routines reflect best classroom practices and are effective at organizing instruction and setting clear expectations for students. Routines help students focus on the new learning task, rather than on learning a new way to do something. They help teachers scaffold instruction, maximize student participation while minimizing instructional time and teacher talk, and overall make learning a new skill easier.

Why do instructional routines work?

The repetition and organization inherent in routines provide a structure that is naturally conducive to learning. Smith (2002) summarizes the power of instructional routines: “Many students are able to participate at a higher level when routines are used because they need the following things that routines provide: consistency of expectations, predictability of what help is being given, anticipation of what is going to happen next and practice of new skills in natural, functional contexts”.

Good judgment comes from experience, and often experience comes from bad judgment.

--Rita Mae Brown

Tips for Teachers

#1 Lessons/Instructional Routines should keep a **brisk pace** so the teaching is continual and moves swiftly. In order to achieve this brisk pace you have to know the steps of the lesson inside and out, which takes planning, and practice. The more you practice your instructional routines, the better you become!

#2 Instructional Routines should be **systematic**. This means you're focused on the critical content as well as skills, strategies, vocabulary terms, concepts and rules. Systematic Instruction is sequenced logically with easier skills before harder skills, high frequency skills before low frequency skills and prerequisites are taught first.

#3 Lessons are organized and focused with effective transitions and use instructional routines so the students will be able to focus solely on the content, and not on the task.

You have an opening to your lesson that gets student's attention. You review past lessons and preview what's to come. Your lesson has a body that includes modeling, plenty of opportunities for guided practice and application that allows the student to demonstrate that they are able to apply the new skill in a variety of ways.

(Explicit Instruction-see September 2011 newsletter).The instructional routine includes the transition into the lesson and the transition out of the lesson, which are especially important components for students who have difficulty.

#4 Instruction is **relentless** (and engaging)! You teach to mastery and you continually monitor student performance. You give immediate affirmative and corrective feedback so the students stay on track to learning.

We must not, in trying to think about how we can make a big difference, ignore the small daily differences we can make which, over time, add up to big differences that we often cannot foresee.

~Marian Wright Edelman

Websites

This website sponsored by Idaho Reading First provides a series of instructional routines to use with any student.

<http://csi.boisestate.edu/readingfirst/coach/>

Florida Center for Reading Research has links to instructional materials including videos at a variety of grade levels in all reading component areas.

http://www.fcrr.org/FAIR_Search_Tool/FAIR_Search_Tool.aspx

CT Reading Institute Update

Using Evidence-based Reading Research (EBRI) and the STAR model, (www.startoolkit.org), the **CT Reading Institute** offers a series of workshops focusing on reading strategies. Although the series began in September we still have a few left for this year. In addition, a new workshop, **Using Explicit Instruction**, will be repeated on February 29, from 1-4 pm at New Haven Adult Education. This workshop would be useful for teachers in any content area. To see the complete schedule and register go to:

<http://www.crec.org/cetes/atdn>

... be consistent with my instructional routines!

