Types of Instruction

Direct Instruction

The Direct instruction strategy is highly teacher-directed and is among the most commonly used. This strategy includes methods such as lecture, didactic questioning, explicit teaching, practice and drill, and demonstrations.

The direct instruction strategy is effective for providing information or developing step-by-step skills. This strategy also works well for introducing other teaching methods, or actively involving students in knowledge construction.

Direct instruction is usually deductive. That is, the rule or generalization is presented and then illustrated with examples. While this strategy may be considered among the easier to plan and to use, it is clear that effective direct instruction is often more complex than it would first appear.

Direct instruction methods are widely used by teachers, particularly in the higher grades. The predominant use of direct instruction methods needs to be evaluated, and educators need to recognize the limitation of these methods for developing the abilities, processes, and attitudes required for critical thinking, and for interpersonal or group learning. Student understanding of affective and higher level cognitive objectives may require the use of instructional methods associated with other strategies. To ensure that the Saskatchewan Goals of Education are achieved, teachers will need to employ a variety of instructional strategies.

Indirect Instruction

Inquiry, induction, problem solving, decision making, and discovery are terms that are sometimes used interchangeably to describe indirect instruction. In contrast to the direct instruction strategy, indirect instruction is mainly student-centered, although the two strategies can complement each other. Examples of indirect instruction methods include reflective discussion, concept formation, concept attainment, cloze procedure, problem solving, and guided inquiry.

Indirect instruction seeks a high level of student involvement in observing, investigating, drawing inferences from data, or forming hypotheses. It takes advantage of students' interest and curiosity, often encouraging them to generate alternatives or solve problems. It is flexible in that it frees students to explore diverse possibilities and reduces the fear associated with the possibility of giving incorrect answers. Indirect instruction also fosters creativity and the development of interpersonal skills and abilities. Students often achieve a better understanding of the material and ideas under study and develop the ability to draw on these understandings.

In indirect instruction, the role of the teacher shifts from lecturer/director to that of facilitator, supporter, and resource person. The teacher arranges the learning environment, provides opportunity for student involvement, and, when appropriate, provides feedback to students while they conduct the inquiry (Martin, 1983). Indirect instruction relies heavily on the use of print, non-print, and human resources. Learning experiences are greatly enhanced through cooperation between teachers, and between teachers and the teacher-librarians.
The indirect instruction strategy can be used by teachers in almost every lesson. This strategy is most appropriate when:

- thinking outcomes are desired;
- attitudes, values, or interpersonal outcomes are desired;
- process is as important as product;
- students need to investigate or discover something in order to benefit from later instruction;
- there is more than one appropriate answer;
- the focus is personalized understanding and long term retention of concepts or generalizations;
- ego involvement and intrinsic motivation are desirable;
- decisions need to be made or problems need to be solved; and,
- life-long learning capability is desired.

In order for students to achieve optimum benefits during indirect instruction, it may be necessary for the teacher to preteach the skills and processes necessary to achieve the intended learning outcomes. Skills and processes include observing, encoding, recalling, classifying, comparing/contrasting, inferring, interpreting data, predicting, elaborating, summarizing, restructuring, and verifying.

Indirect instruction, like other strategies, has disadvantages. Indirect instruction is more time consuming than direct instruction, teachers relinquish some control, and outcomes can be unpredictable and less safe. Indirect instruction is not the best way of providing detailed information or encouraging step-by-step skill acquisition. It is also inappropriate when content memorization and immediate recall is desired.

**Interactive Instruction**

**Interactive instruction** relies heavily on discussion and sharing among participants. Seaman and Fellenz (1989) suggest that discussion and sharing provide learners with opportunities to "react to the ideas, experience, insights, and knowledge of the teacher or of peer learners and to generate alternative ways of thinking and feeling" (p. 119). Students can learn from peers and teachers to develop social skills and abilities, to organize their thoughts, and to develop rational arguments.

The interactive instruction strategy allows for a range of groupings and interactive methods. These may include total class discussions, small group discussions or projects, or student pairs or triads working on assignments together. It is important for the teacher to outline the topic, the amount of discussion time, the composition and size of the groups, and reporting or sharing techniques. Interactive instruction requires the refinement of observation, listening, interpersonal, and intervention skills and abilities by both teacher and students.

The success of the interactive instruction strategy and its many methods is heavily dependent upon the expertise of the teacher in structuring and developing the dynamics of the group.


**Types of Instruction**

**Experiential Learning**

Experiential learning is inductive, learner centred, and activity oriented. Personalized reflection about an experience and the formulation of plans to apply [earnings to other contexts are critical factors in effective experiential learning. Experiential learning occurs when learners:

- participate in an activity;
- critically look back on the activity to clarify [earnings and feelings;
- draw useful insights from such analysis; and,
- put [earnings to work in new situations. (Pfeiffer & Jones, 1979)

Experiential learning can be viewed as a cycle consisting of five phases, all of which are necessary:

- **experiencing** (an activity occurs);
- **sharing** or publishing (reactions and observations are shared);
- **analyzing** or processing (patterns and dynamics are determined);
- **inferring** or generalizing (principles are derived); and,
- **applying** (plans are made to use [earnings in new situations).

The emphasis in experiential learning is on the process of learning and not on the product. A teacher can use experiential learning as an instructional strategy both in and outside the classroom. For example, in the classroom students can build and stock an aquarium or engage in a simulation. Outside the classroom they can, for example, observe courtroom procedures in a study of the legal system, or conduct a public opinion survey. Experiential learning makes use of a variety of resources.

There are obvious limitations to the kinds of experiences that students may gain first hand. Concern for student safety, limitations on financial resources, and lack of available time are some of the reasons this strategy cannot be applied in all situations. The benefits to students, however, justify the extra efforts this strategy may require.

Experiential learning is an effective instructional strategy if direct or "hands-on" experience is needed before teaching methods that involve iconic learning (for example, looking at pictures) or symbolic learning (for example, listening to the teacher talk). Experiential learning greatly increases understanding and retention in comparison to methods that solely involve listening, reading, or even viewing (McNeil & Wiles, 1990). Students are usually more motivated when they actively participate and teach one another by describing what they are doing.

**Independent Study**

For the purposes of this document, **independent study** refers to the range of instructional methods which are purposefully provided to foster the development of individual student initiative, self-reliance, and self-improvement. While independent study may be initiated by student or teacher, the focus here will be on planned independent study by students under the guidance or supervision of a
classroom teacher. In addition, independent study can include learning in partnership with another individual or as part of a small group.

The importance of independent study is captured in the following statement:

*Independent learning has implications for responsible decision-making, as individuals are expected to analyze problems, reflect, make decisions and take purposeful actions. To take responsibility for their lives in times of rapid social change, students need to acquire life-long learning capability. As most aspects of our daily lives are likely to undergo profound changes, independent learning will enable individuals to respond to the changing demands of work, family and society. (Saskatchewan Education, 1988, p. 53)*

A primary educational goal is to help students become self-sufficient and responsible citizens by enhancing individual potential. Schools can help students to grow as independent learners. However, if the knowledge, abilities, attitudes, and processes associated with independent learning are to be acquired, they must be taught and enough time must be provided for students to practice. Use of independent study methods may begin as early as kindergarten and should continue to be used through all the grades. Students should be able to continue to learn after they have left the structured learning environment of the school.

Independent study encourages students to take responsibility for planning and pacing their own learning. Independent study can be used in conjunction with other methods, or it can be used as the single instructional strategy for an entire unit. The factors of student maturity and independence are obviously important to the teacher's planning.

Adequate learning resources for independent study are critical. The teacher who wishes to help students become more autonomous learners will need to support the development of their abilities to access and handle information. It is important to assess the abilities students already possess. These abilities often vary widely within any group of students. Specific skills and abilities may then be incorporated into assignments tailored to the capabilities of individual students. The co-operation of the teacher librarian and the availability of materials from the resource centre and the community provide additional support.

Independent study is very flexible. It can be used as the major instructional strategy with the whole class, in combination with other strategies, or it can be used with one or more individuals while another strategy is used with the rest of the class.

*For more information visit: Instructional Strategies Online
http://olc.spsd.sk.ca/DE/PD/instr/index.html*