

Instructional Strategies Descriptors

What is Direct Instruction?

The direct instruction strategy is **highly teacher-directed** and is among the most commonly used. This strategy is effective for **providing information or developing step-by-step skills**. It also works well for **introducing other teaching methods**, or actively involving students in knowledge construction.

What is Inquiry?

Inquiry learning provides opportunities for **students to experience and acquire processes through which they can gather information** about the world. **Questioning is the heart of inquiry learning**.

Students become actively involved in the learning process as they:

- act upon their curiosity and interests;
- develop questions;
- think their way through controversies or dilemmas;
- look at problems analytically;
- inquire into their preconceptions and what they already know;
- develop, clarify, and test hypotheses; and,
- draw inferences and generate possible solutions.

What is Guided Practice?

After a skill or concept has been introduced through *direct instruction*, the teacher provides **guided support (scaffolding)** for the students as they learn. This strategy helps the teacher to **assess**, either informally or formally, if the students are ready for *independent practice*.

What is Independent Practice?

Independent practice 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 practice may be initiated by student or teacher, the focus here will be on **planned independent practice** by students with **very little, if at all, guidance or supervision by the teacher**. In addition, independent practice can include learning in partnership with another individual or as part of a small group. Independent practice can be used as a **formal assessment**.