

# Teaching Decisions Examined through the Conditions of Learning

## Some Suggestions for Turning a Theory of Learning into Instruction

Instructional Area: *Writing*

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Condition	Aspects of the Condition That Apply to Teaching: Writing	Some Possible Classroom Strategies (Note to reader: This is not an exhaustive list.)
Immersion	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aural saturation of sounds of written texts, words, syllables, etc.</li> <li>• Visual saturation with conventional spellings, letters, syllables, letter groups, and other parameters of print.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell “stories” of role, history, purposes, rationale, etc., of importance of writing.</li> <li>• Conduct wall print, print walks, shared book (big books) with a writing focus.</li> <li>• Use read aloud and shared reading, in which writing skills, knowledge, and understandings are modeled.</li> </ul>
Demonstration	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeated opportunities to witness both overt and covert processes that make effective writing possible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use teacher think-alouds of different aspects of writing process. (e.g., brainstorming a topic, drafting, free writing, leads, tightening, proofreading activities).</li> <li>• Use teacher-led individual conferences and peer-conferencing.</li> <li>• Rewrite informational texts as fairy tales/narratives using the same content.</li> <li>• Model the process of “reading like a writer.”</li> </ul>
Engagement	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Constant reminders of the power and value of effective writing.</li> <li>• To understand that writing is not just a tool of communication but also the most powerful tool available to us for thinking and learning.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tell stories or share examples that make explicit the reasons for becoming an effective user of writing.</li> <li>• Share one’s own (or others’) attempts at using writing to clarify and extend our own thinking and learning.</li> </ul>
Expectation	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To believe you are an adult whom they can trust, and who has their best interests at heart. (i.e., you have bonded with them).</li> <li>• To believe that that anyone who has learned to talk can learn to write.</li> <li>• To be convinced that you truly believe they are smart enough to become effective users of writing.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Share your own writing to present yourself as an adult whom the students can trust—and who has their best interests at heart.</li> <li>• Repeatedly remind students that anyone who has learned to talk can learn to write.</li> <li>• Highlight, share, and celebrate the gems the students produce.</li> </ul>

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Employment	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To know and understand that a “successful” text is one that achieves its purpose with its intended audience.</li> <li>• Multiple opportunities to use, apply, and adjust their emerging writing skills and know-how until an appropriate level of competence in creating “successful” texts has been achieved.</li> <li>• To understand and apply the processes for going from blank page to successful text.</li> <li>• To understand and apply the process of conferring or shaping and refining texts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Repeatedly draw attention to, explore, and discuss examples of “successful texts.”</li> <li>• Negotiate and construct a class contract that makes explicit the minimum number of pieces they <i>must</i> “publish” in a given time span (e.g., three pieces per term).</li> <li>• Model the conferring process.</li> <li>• Provide time and space for conferences to occur.</li> </ul>
Responsibility	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand that effective learners are independent learners, i.e., they decide what and how they’ll learn.</li> <li>• To know how to avoid surrendering control of their learning to someone else (aka the Just-Tell-Me-What-I-Need-to-Learn Syndrome).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Model the decision-making process to continually make explicit the idea that good learners know how to make learning decisions.</li> <li>• Model and demonstrate examples of “taking responsibility” or “ownership” of learning.</li> <li>• Draw attention to and publicly notice and acknowledge when students take responsibility.</li> </ul>
Approximation	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To understand that “having-a- go” is fundamental to learning.</li> <li>• To understand how “mistakes” help us adjust and refine our knowledge, understandings, and skills so that next time we do better.</li> <li>• To understand that ultimately approximations must become conventional. (See Expectations).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explain how baby talk is a necessary stage in learning to talk and how this relates to learning to write and spell.</li> <li>• Cease applying such terms as <i>mistake, error</i> and <i>correct/incorrect</i> to students’ oral or written responses. Instead, replace with the language of approximation.</li> <li>• Honor and respect all approximations.</li> <li>• Never let a chance go by to model and/or share examples of approximations and how they support learning.</li> </ul>
Response	<p><i>Students Need:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive, supportive responses (“feedback”) which support their burgeoning control over using writing to create “successful texts.” (See Employment).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Closely attend to learners’ approximations in order to reference them in future demonstrations that contain information or knowledge they’ve not yet got under control (see “Upping the Ante” in Chapter 6).</li> <li>• Draw explicit attention to salient features of demonstrations that will help learners modify approximations.</li> </ul>