Decide What to Teach

Component	Principle	Strategy
Planning Instruction	Decide What to Teach	Assess to Identify Gaps in Performance
		Establish Logical Sequences of Instruction
		Consider Contextual Variables

Chapter 1: Decide What to Teach

Strategy:	**Assess to Identify Gaps in Performance**

Content Skills:	Mathematics/Problem Solving/Calculating; Reading
Learning Difference:	Cognition Low; Attention; Processing Visual Information; Receptive Language/Decoding (listening, reading); Fine Motor (handwriting, articulation, etc.); Processing Verbal Information; Expressive Language/ Encoding (speaking, writing, spelling); Cognition Mixed
Disability Category:	Specific Learning Disabilities; Mental Retardation; Speech or Language Impairments; Serious Emotional Disturbance; Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; Autism; Gifted and Talented; Hearing Impairments; Multiple Disabilities; Traumatic Brain Injury; Visual Impairments; Deafness/Blindness; Orthopedic Impairments; Other Health Impairments

Tactic Title:	**Think-Aloud Problem Solving**

Problem:	Teachers often think that if they knew more about the way students were thinking and reasoning, they would be better equipped to evaluate students' understanding of problem-solving methods.
Tactic:	When evaluating problem-solving or reasoning skills of students (especially in mathematics), take students aside individually and have them describe what they are doing as they work through word problems. Tell them to say exactly what they are thinking and doing. Keep careful records of their verbalizations. (A tape recorder is helpful for this purpose.) The think-aloud procedure can be used alone or as a component of a unit test. After the evaluation is complete, review the strategies that students used to arrive at their solutions.
Example:	I've found this tactic to be very helpful because I can see exactly where a student is going astray in thinking and start reteaching at that point. In fact, the students often show me an excellent alternative to my own thinking. Sometimes, when my time is limited, I've organized the students into dyads and let them talk through their thinking with a peer . . . [a] nice way to include students of differing abilities in shared problem-solving. For those students who have expressive languages issues, I've found that just observing their work closely provides extremely useful information for me, as the teacher. While I've used this idea in my algebra and general mathematics classes, I'm sure teachers in other content areas would find it very useful.

<div align="right">*Arturo C., teacher*</div>

Benefits: Verbalizing thinking enables teachers to

- design instruction that is specific to the exact needs and abilities of students;
- incorporate opportunities for students to use their strategies on tests; and
- ensure that individual learning styles, appropriate modifications, and IEP objectives are being met.

Literature: Marjorie, M., & Applegate, B. (1993). Middle school students' mathe-matical problem solving: An analysis of think-aloud protocols. *Learning Disability Quarterly, 16*, 19–30.

Chapter 1: Decide What to Teach

Strategy:	**Establish Logical Sequences of Instruction**

Content Skills: Mathematics/Problem Solving/Calculating; Reading; Writing; Social Studies; Science; Arts; Music

Learning Difference: Self-Confidence; Social Knowledge; Social Behaviors; Expressive Language/Encoding (speaking, writing, spelling)

Disability Category: Specific Learning Disabilities; Autism; Orthopedic Impairments; Other Health Impairments; Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; Speech or Language Impairments; Specific Learning Disabilities; Serious Emotional Disturbance; Hearing Impairments; Mental Retardation; Multiple Disabilities; Traumatic Brain Injury; Visual Impairments; Deafness/Blindness; Gifted and Talented

Tactic Title:	**Assessing Student Participation in Group Activities**

Problem: When teachers ask questions in a group setting, most students will volunteer answers some of the time. However, other students may hesitate to respond due to shyness, lack of confidence or knowledge, and/or misunderstanding the question. Consequently, teachers may not be able to assess what these students really know.

Tactic: To encourage greater participation, first ask a question to the class as a whole. Select students who raise their hands and thank them for participating. Provide supportive and/or corrective feedback. Then, ask additional questions; however, select students who do not raise their hands as well. Encourage any response (related to the question) and, again, acknowledge participation and provide supportive/corrective feedback. Pay attention to the quieter students to ensure that you notice when they do raise their hands. Be sure that students know why it is important to participate, even if they are not sure of their responses.

Example: With more and more students with disabilities being included in my classes, it is essential that I make every effort to encourage them to participate. Some are really hesitant . . . at first, because they may not know the other students in the class and, then, because they are not sure of the content. Some are simply shy; they like to listen. However, I've always tried to create a community of learners that accepts others abilities and disabilities; it just makes the conversations so much richer. I make sure that I ask a variety of questions, both open- and closed-ended and at different levels of Bloom's taxonomy. In fact, I keep a "Bloom's Guide" with me most of the time when I'm teaching; it's invaluable. Sometimes

during class discussions, I divide the students into two groups and monitor their participation as a group. Now, so many students volunteer that it sometimes hard to keep track of it all.

Emma F., teacher

Benefits: Using this tactic will

- encourage all students, including those with disabilities, to participate more often;
- demonstrate to the entire class that everyone's participation is valued; and
- give teachers more data with which to assess student understanding and learning.

Literature: Henderson, H. A., & Fox, N. (1998). Inhibited and uninhibited children: Challenges in school settings. *School Psychology Review, 27*, 492–505.

Chapter 1: Decide What to Teach

Strategy:	**Consider Contextual Variables**

Content Skills:	Mathematics/Problem Solving/Calculating; Reading; Writing; Social Studies; Science; Arts; Music
Learning Difference:	Cognition Low; Attention; Processing Visual Information; Receptive Language/Decoding (listening, reading); Fine Motor (handwriting, articulation, etc.); Processing Verbal Information; Expressive Language/Encoding (speaking, writing, spelling); Cognition Mixed
Disability Category:	Specific Learning Disabilities; Mental Retardation; Speech or Language Impairments; Serious Emotional Disturbance; Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder; Autism; Gifted and Talented; Hearing Impairments; Multiple Disabilities; Traumatic Brain Injury; Visual Impairments; Deafness/Blindness; Orthopedic Impairments; Other Health Impairments

Tactic Title:	**Mapping Your Classroom**

Problem:	Deciding what to teach involves much more than just the content. Teachers are constantly monitoring the "atmosphere" of their classrooms to arrange the context to ensure opportunities for student learning. Determining which students work most effectively with one another is critical; otherwise, learning may be disrupted by off-task behavior, friction among students, or lack of motivation.
Tactic:	Give each student a class list with three columns (see Grouping Chart Part I) to indicate which students they would like to work with: 1 = Very Much; 2 = OK; 3 = Preferably Not. Assure the students that their responses are confidential and that you will use the information for grouping purposes only. Use another grid with students' names entered in alphabetical order horizontally and vertically (see Grouping Chart Part II). Starting with the first student in the vertical column, enter each student's rankings across the page. Total responses horizontally and vertically. When you have finished, you will have a clear "picture," a map, of your students' preferences and groups of students that might work well together.
Example:	I've used a similar sociometric tool for years and found it invaluable in "taking the temperature" of my classroom. It's important to repeat the assessment several times during the school year, as student relationships are constantly changing. I realize that standard seating arrangements may be necessary in some situations (testing, homeroom, music, etc.). However, when grouping students is appropriate, giving them some say really seems to increase their motivation.
	Denny S., teacher

Benefits: Sociometric tools enable

- students to express their learning preferences;
- teachers to gauge interpersonal relationships and grouping prefer-ences to facilitate student learning; and
- greater student involvement in determining the contexts for their learning.

Literature: Campbell, P., & Siperstein, G. (1994). *Improving social competence: A resource for elementary school teachers.* Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

Grouping Chart (Part 1)

Directions: List student names alphabetically in **Student Names** column. Ask students to select one of the three choices (Very Much, OK, Preferably No) to choose peers with whom they would like to collaborate. Give one sheet to each student in the class.

Student Names	1 Very Much	2 OK	3 Preferably No

Grouping Chart (Part 2)

Directions: Enter student names in Column 1 (vertically) and Row 1 (horizontally) in alphabetical order. Using individual student worksheets (Part 1), begin with Student 1 in Column 1. Working horizontally, enter that student's ratings (1–3) for all classmates (from left to right). Note: There will be no ratings entered in the box that corresponds vertically and horizontally for a particular student. Total ratings horizontally to see what one student thinks about others. Total ratings vertically to see what other students think about a student. Review totals carefully to determine which students would work together well, which students need a classmate who would be willing to work with them, and which students are willing to work with others. Repeat this assessment periodically as relationships change.

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