

# **Classroom Instruction from A to Z**

## **How to Promote Student Learning**

### ***Study Guide***

**Barbara R. Blackburn**



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# Meet the Author

Barbara R. Blackburn has taught early childhood, elementary, middle, and high school students and has served as an educational consultant for three publishing companies. She received her Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Now an Associate Professor, she received the 2006 award for Outstanding Junior Professor at Winthrop University, where she coordinates a graduate program for teachers, teaches graduate classes, supervises student teachers, and collaborates with area schools on special projects. She also regularly presents workshops for teachers and administrators in elementary, middle, and high schools.

She has extensive experience working with K-12 teachers providing staff development in the areas of school reform, instructional strategies, literacy across the curriculum, and working with at-risk students. Topics of her published articles include literacy strategies, high-performing schools, effective communication strategies, and grading/assessment. Barbara's workshops are lively, engaging, and filled with practical, relevant information.

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# How to Use This Study Guide

This study guide accompanies the book *Classroom Instruction from A to Z: How to Promote Student Learning*. This guide, used in conjunction with the book, will help you spice up the instruction in your classroom.

For each of the 26 chapters in the book, you will find a series of three activities that will help you reflect on your current practices in relation to the strategies presented in the text. The activities in the guide will help you connect the suggestions and strategies in *Classroom Instruction from A to Z* to your real-life teaching experiences as well as making the information presented immediately applicable. Many of the activities provide an opportunity for you to turn the concepts into actual plans for your own classroom. The three focus activities ask you to ACT now and turn your classroom into a place where students can thrive as you create an atmosphere in which each student feels supported and empowered for success. Each chapter of the study guide prompts you to do the three following things:

- A Assess where you are right now.** Take the temperature of your classroom as it currently exists. Be totally honest with yourself and decide how your teaching holds up to the ideas and standards set forth in the book. Identify your strengths and pat yourself on the back! Then, identify your challenges and get busy deciding how to be more effective.
- C Consider trying something new.** Now that you've reflected on the current condition of your classroom practices in regard to the topic of the chapter, try something different. This portion of the study guide asks you to step out of your comfort zone and consider trying one of the strategies or practices you've read about. If you always do the same thing, you will get the same results. Since our world of education is constantly changing, we must be willing to keep up and try new and improved practices!
- T Take away a valuable idea.** Finally, be prepared to walk away with something you could literally use tomorrow. This last section of each chapter helps you to build a plan to implement a new strategy or practice in your classroom immediately. You can tailor these plans to any lesson, subject or age group. The goal is to put instant ideas in your plan book, making the work you've done beneficial and worthwhile!

I will also make a suggestion on how to best use this study guide. Before reading the full chapter in the book *Classroom Instruction from A to Z: How to Promote Student Learning*, assess where you currently stand on the issue by reading the prompt and answering question *A—Assess Where You Are Right Now*. Then, after reading the chapter, complete *C—Consider Trying Something New* and *T—Take Away A Valuable Idea*.

Now, get ready for a very insightful journey. As with any journey, there will be times that are more relaxing, and times that are more challenging. The course on which you are about to embark will take a willingness to be honest with yourself, and to look for ways to improve your instruction. Remember that the goal is to build a toolbox of instructional strategies that will enable you to meet the needs of each of your students. As you travel through the material, enjoy the stories from teachers across the country. Stop and take the time to self-assess your own teaching practices. Finally, renew your enthusiasm for education and prepare to ACT by becoming the best teacher you can be!

**FYI**

Electronic versions of selected figures and templates from *Classroom Instruction from A to Z* and this Study Guide are available at: <http://www.barbarablackburnonline.com>

# A

## **Active Learning is the Focus**

### **Assess Where You Are Right Now**

How do you view the learning process in your classroom?

Are your students working just as much as you? Or are you the only one actually doing things?

## **Consider Trying Something New**

Consider your students as equals in your classroom; that is equal as far as the work load is concerned. Think about a recent lesson you taught that may have been too teacher-centered. What would it look like if your students had been expected to be as active in the process as you?

Could you have planned for activities that would have required them to be more actively engaged? Explain your answer.

## Take Away A Valuable Idea

Think about a lesson you are going to teach in the near future. Focus on ways to ensure that your students are thinking, paying attention, demonstrating effort, and remaining engaged. How can you adapt your lesson so that you know they are actively involved in the activities?

Lesson:	
<i>Characteristic</i>	<i>How I Plan to Include This in My Lesson</i>
Thinking	
Paying Attention	
Demonstrating Effort	
Remaining Engaged	

*B*

## **Background Knowledge is the Foundation**

### **Assess Where You Are Right Now**

How often do you assess your students' background knowledge?

Can you think of a time when learning up front what the students did or did not know literally changed the direction of your lesson?

## **Consider Trying Something New**

Consider using one of the strategies discussed in this chapter to activate your students' prior knowledge. Which method appeals to you most?

How do you see it playing out in your classroom?

Do you have any logistical concerns about any of the suggested strategies?

## Take Away A Valuable Idea

Take some time to find picture book titles for lessons you will teach this year. Your librarian/media coordinator is a good source of information. You are more likely to use the titles if they are readily available as you plan your lessons. Think of three major topics you will cover in your curriculum and find books that will help to activate prior knowledge in your classroom. Consider asking your librarian/media coordinator to order them in advance.

<i>Topic to be Covered</i>	<i>Potential Picture Book Title</i>	<i>Author</i>

### For More Information

The Children's Literature Web Guide has a wide variety of book lists and recommended Internet links: <http://www.ucalgary.ca/~dkbrown/>

C

## **Choices Add Interest**

### **Assess Where You Are Right Now**

When is the last time you gave students a choice in what they learned, who they worked with, or how they were assessed?

What was their reaction to the choices? Looking back, did you notice any difference in the learning outcome?

## **Consider Trying Something New**

Consider trying learning centers in your classroom. Decide on the objective to be covered and ways to differentiate activities.

How will you physically organize your classroom?

How will you divide your students?

How will you assess the work of students?

## Take Away A Valuable Idea

Create a Tic-Tac-Toe chart (see page 15) for a unit you will teach soon. Include a variety of assessments that appeal to various learning styles. Organize the placement of the activities so that students demonstrate a rounded body of knowledge.

Kinesthetic	Visual-Spatial	Logical-Mathematical
Intrapersonal	Logical-Mathematical	Kinesthetic
Verbal	Interpersonal	Nature