Explicit teaching in NSW public schools

NSW GOVERNMENT

Explicit teaching happens every day in classrooms across NSW. Identified in What Works Best since 2015, explicit teaching is a recognised part of teacher professional practice.

edu.nsw.link/explicit-teaching

Explicit teaching strategies to optimise student learning

Using effective questioning

Teachers use questioning to deepen student thinking and to gather information about what students know (CESE 2020). Student responses inform effective decisions about teaching and learning. Teachers intentionally employ structures that support all students to participate and share their thinking.

Chunking and sequencing learning

Learning is a cumulative and systematic process. Working memory is optimised when new content is broken into a sequence and manageable steps, each consolidated with practise. This helps students build on what they already know, understand and can do.

Sequencing intentionally orders learning to manage students' cognitive load. Chunking breaks complex concepts, strategies or skills into smaller, more manageable components (AERO 2024a).

Checking for understanding

Teachers check for understanding throughout the lesson to establish where all students are in their learning. Checking for understanding is crucial to identify gaps and adjust teaching before moving to independent practice or removing scaffolds. When every student's learning is monitored it helps create a safe learning environment where students feel supported to be active participants (AERO 2024c).

Connecting learning

Teachers actively support students to make connections to prior learning and across knowledge, skills and understanding as well as to prior learning experiences. This is important because students need to connect new learning to their existing knowledge (AERO 2023).

Using effective feedback

Feedback is effective when it is both timely and task focussed (CESE 2020). It focuses on growth and improving understanding for future learning experiences. Feedback is effective when planned for and students are given the opportunity to reflect and act on the feedback they're provided.

Sharing success criteria

Success criteria are the measures used to determine whether, and how well, learners have met the learning intentions. They are aligned to the syllabus and use language students understand. They are referred to throughout a lesson or sequence (AERO 2024b). Success criteria provide the basis for feedback (Wiliam 2011), help teachers understand the impact of their teaching and help students have clarity about their learning (AITSL n.d).

Explicit teaching strategies

Enabling factors

Using effective questioning

Chunking and sequencing learning

Checking for understanding

Connecting learning

Using effective feedback

Sharing success criteria

Gradual release of responsibility

Sharing learning intentions

Know students and how they learn

High expectations

Know the content and how to teach it

Safe, inclusive learning environment

Teaching and learning cycle

Gradual release of responsibility

Informed by evidence of student learning, teachers intentionally support new learning. This is most effective when teachers break down new information by explaining, demonstrating and modelling (AERO 2024a). Skills and concepts are modelled and teachers provide opportunities for students to apply their understanding in guided and independent practice. Teachers respond to student understanding by moving backwards and forwards between teacher modelling, guided practice and independent practice (NESA 2022; Fisher and Frey 2021).
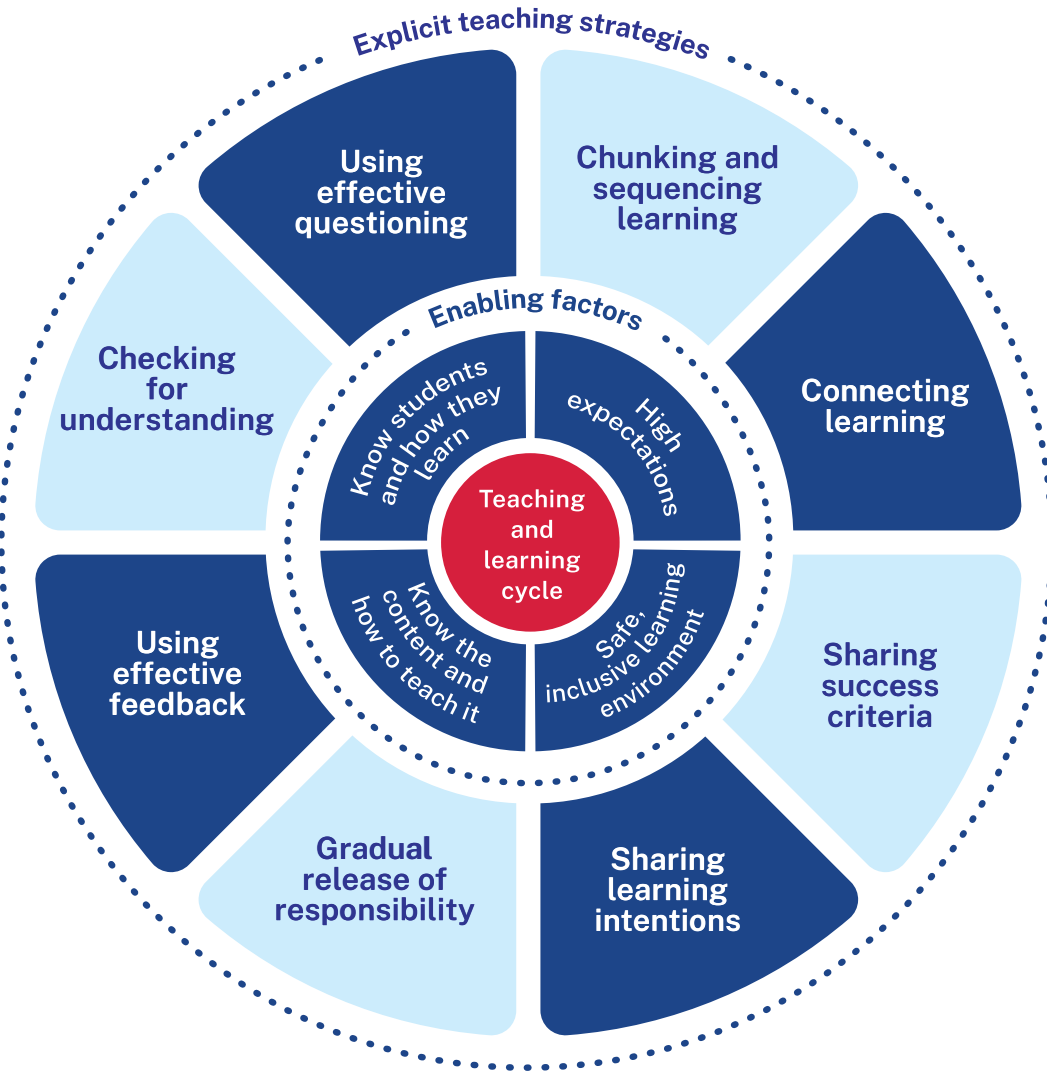
Sharing learning intentions

Learning intentions are statements aligned to the syllabus which clearly describe what students should know, understand or be able to do following an activity, lesson or series of lessons. Effective learning intentions are communicated in student-friendly language, modelled by the teacher and shared in ways that make sense to students to ensure they know what they are learning and why (Clarke, Timperley & Hattie 2003). The teacher uses the learning intentions throughout a lesson and series of lessons to guide their decision making.

Enabling factors

Students learn best in safe and inclusive environments that consider the cultural, social, emotional, behavioural and physical aspects of learning. Teachers hold high expectations of learning for every student. They use their deep knowledge of curriculum and their understanding of how learning occurs to plan effective learning for all students (Australian Professional Standards for Teachers).

Leaders ensure there is a coherent, inclusive school-wide approach to deepening teacher understanding of cognitive load theory and explicit teaching practice. Student learning improvement is monitored over time.

Planning for explicit teaching

Guided by the iterative nature of the teaching and learning cycle, teachers use evidence to plan for the intentional use of explicit teaching strategies. This allows them to manage the cognitive load of students as they learn, providing the right balance of challenge and support for every learner (Martin and Evans 2018).

Explicit teaching strategies

Explicit teaching strategies are inclusive of all students and benefit every student when learning new knowledge and skills (AERO 2024a). Teachers intentionally use explicit teaching strategies at the right time for the right purpose and in the right combination to optimise learning for every student.