Chapter 13

Fostering Integrated Learning Outcomes Across Domains

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Editors' Foreword

Preconditions

Content

- Must span multiple domains of learning

Learners

- All students

Learning environments

- All kinds, except the teachers and administrative structure must be supportive.

Instructional development constraints

- Requires relatively more development time and unconventional resources, including joint planning time for teachers

Values

about ends (learning goals)

- The learning should be relevant to students' lives.
- Relationships among domains are important to learn.
- Transfer to the "real world" is important.

about priorities (criteria for successful instruction)

- Effectiveness and appeal are of great importance.
- Efficiency may be relatively less important.

about means (instructional methods)

- Goals, activities, resources, and assessments should all be tied directly to a unifying theme.
- Rich resources and varied instructional activities are important.

about power (to make decisions about the previous three)

- Teachers should be willing to give up some elements of direct control.
- Flexibility is needed from rigid administrative demands and state curricular requirements.

Universal Methods

1. Use a unifying theme to which all instruction is related.
   - Criteria for selection include that the theme: is interesting to students, relates directly to student lives, supports the learning objectives, is age- and experience-appropriate for the learners, and provides a rich setting for learning experiences.
   - Select themes with full participation of students when possible.
   - One kind of unifying theme is the yearlong theme.
   - Themes may be problem- or task-oriented, or they may be topic-oriented.
   - Themes should be pervasive and integrative.
2. Focus instruction on primary learning goals.
   - Goals may be stated in terms of what students must learn.
   - Themes may be divided into curricular components, which in turn are divided into specific topics, which in turn are divided into key points (concepts, skills, and knowledge).
   - Students may play a role in deciding on learning goals.
3. Use a variety of instructional activities.
   - These typically include introduction, demonstration, opportunity for practice with feedback, and final performance with assessment.
   - Learning activities are structured to help learners move from slow to fast, small to large, and simple to complex conceptual understandings.

- Students engage in a cycle of concrete experience, followed by reflective observation, leading to abstract conceptualization, and resulting in active experimentation, which is concrete experience.
- In some cases, students help determine specific activities. In others, teachers are provided with unit plans and lesson plans that spell out every detail of a series of lessons. In most cases, teachers improvise and adapt lessons.
- There should be multiple opportunities for students to apply what they are learning in fun and meaningful ways.
- Many thematic units include a culminating activity that usually results in a meaningful artifact.

4. Provide useful instructional resources.
   - Use resources from real life, such as content experts, community groups, and technologies, as well as resources in the classroom.
5. Evaluate achievement through authentic assessment practices.
   - Use portfolios, public presentations, reflection on and revision of work produced, reflective reports, and culminating experiences.
   - If possible, this activity should require collaboration among students and other members of the learning community.
   - Self-assessment should often be used, especially for adult learners.

Situational Principles

- In absence of completely flexible administrative structures, teachers should work within whatever flexibility they do have, such as perhaps combining classes some of the time or swapping teaching responsibilities for short periods of time.
- In highly flexible, open entry/open exit systems, modularize units and/or build in frequent interactions across levels.
- Instruction should be flexible to adapt to needs of individual learners:
  a. If unable to adapt activities and resources, find alternative ones.
  b. If learning goals are too advanced, new ones may be needed.
  c. If there are great differences among students, offer more multilevel instructional activities.
  d. If diversity of learners is valued, activities can be structured to build that appreciation.
- The amount of integration of disciplines may need to vary on a continuum of 5 levels:
  a. For the least administrative flexibility, integration is carried out by teachers individually.
  b. For the most flexibility, a coherent theme is established across several grade levels and subject areas.
- The amount of integration may vary on a different dimension: multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary. Selection of these alternatives depends on schedule flexibility, staff support, and curriculum requirements.

— CMR & ACC