

# Curated Portfolio of Teacher Strategies

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**Abstract:** In the field of early education, more and more teacher strategies need to be combined. This paper comprehensively states seven strategies, with the help of mathematics, letters, graphics and other tools and combined with different teaching skills, in order to achieve better teaching effects. As modern educational means are constantly changing, it is necessary to summarize, explore and share new educational strategies.

**Keywords:** teacher strategies; model; early childhood; skill

## 1. Math Verbalizations and Problem-solving interventions

Mathematics is a critical subject to teach in the early childhood classroom, in which students will have the opportunity to acquire basic math skills and the foundation of math for them to build on and use in daily life. Multitier service delivery model should be used in an inclusive setting with general mathematics instruction in tier 1 and supplementary intervention in tier 2 and 3. Strategies of math verbalizations are emphasized in the tier 1 model and problem-solving interventions are emphasized in tier 2 and 3 models.

The strategies can be used in the Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, and first-grade classrooms. Math verbalizations should be delivered to the whole class while problem-solving interventions will be delivered in small groups of approximately less than six students.

“Math verbalizations are opportunities students receive to express their mathematical thinking and understanding” (<sup>[1]</sup>p. 259), which indicates that students will be able to use math language to speak about their ideas when math verbalizations are encouraged. Teachers should use guided questioning to prompt students in verbalizing math concepts so that students can have a better understanding when they are practicing math language. The first step of math verbalization is for the teacher to model the learning task and explain the new concepts to students. When they have a basic understanding of the new concepts, the teacher should prompt students to verbalize them by using guided questions such as “Does anyone have ideas about why ...?”, “How many ... do you see here?”, “What do you notice?”, and “How are you going to solve this problem?”. Students will, then, think about the question and may use the things that teacher had taught them to answer the questions. In this way, students will get a lot of opportunities to practice math while describing their thoughts verbally and comprehending the new concepts through the practices.

## 2. Encouraging play/social interaction with the use of AIs <sup>[2]</sup>

Play skills are important in the stage of early childhood because children learn through play. When students play, a range of physical skills like gross and fine motor skills, cognitive skills, and language skills can be practiced.

This instructional strategy is to provide assistive technology to encourage turn talking and share the play materials with friends during playtime for students who have autism or just simply have a hard time communicating and interacting with others. This strategy will be implemented in the Pre-K classroom with mainly three to four-year-olds. Depending on students’ needs, the strategy can be used both individually and in small groups.

## 3. Providing visual cues and modeling

Focusing on children’s development of early literacy skills is also a big area for early childhood educators to pay attention to. Students with disabilities like autism require additional support on learning needs and they have unique learning methods to develop their literacy skills. Providing visual cues and modeling can be effective in helping students construct their thinking.

This strategy can be delivered to kindergarten and first/second-grade students who have autism. It can be a whole group instruction that focuses on enhancing students’ awareness of letters, vocabularies, and prints in both inclusive settings and separate settings.

“Many children with autism have excellent visual discrimination and visual memory” (<sup>[3]</sup>, as cited in Wagner, 1999), which means that simple visual cues can motivate students to “identify sight words and use them in context”<sup>[3]</sup>. Visual cues can be hung around the classroom where students can see easily. They should be clearly indicated when designing. Daily schedules, attendance board, weather report board, and mood check-in board are the four main focuses of providing visual cues (for Pre-k kids). For the daily schedules, there should be one picture corresponding to one thing and there should be an arrow pointing to the “current event”. Students will be able to look at the picture of the schedule when the teacher asks “what are we going to do next” and process the information of the next activity. All students’ names should be nice and big shows on the attendance board. In this way, students will be

aware of the letters of their names every day when they are taking attendance. Weather report boards and mood check-in boards can be similar to the look of the daily schedule, in which students will have a sense of vocabulary when they are reporting the weather and mood. Teachers can guide students to make individual visual cues (like daily schedule only for this child) if needed.

#### 4. Using alphabet books and handwriting practice

Continuing talking about instructional strategies that related to literacy skills. “Alphabet knowledge, the ability to identify letters and sounds, and write letters, is one of the most important skills students need as they begin to learn how to read”<sup>[4]</sup> p.31, as cited in McBride-Chang, 1999). Differentiation should be provided based on students’ alphabet knowledge such as letter names and sounds.

This strategy of using alphabet books and handwriting practice should be mainly used in a kindergarten classroom with five-year-old kids.

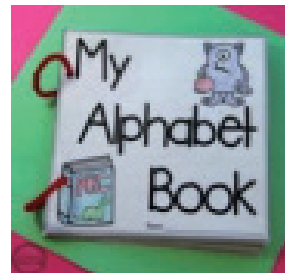
As shown in figure one, teachers can use individual alphabet books to teach the letters one at a time. When reading the book, the first step is to point to the uppercase letter and name the letter out loud for students. Guiding the students to look at the print, for example, “heart”, to allow them to try “h-h-h-heart”. After teaching all the uppercase letters, lowercase letters will become easier to remember. Based on students’ performance, differentiation of learning will be teaching four letters a day for those students who can focus a long period of time and remember the letters easily; teaching only one to two letters a day for those students who cannot focus too long to learn. Other differentiation can be distinguishing alphabet books and designing students’ own alphabet books for students who learned the letters fast (figure two and three); “Research finds that the movement of handwriting helps students learn to visually recognize letters and sounds”<sup>[4]</sup>, p.33, as cited in Bradley & Jones, 2007), handwriting practice is also an effective way to help students learn alphabets. One of the practices is the daily attendance sheet, which children need to sign in when they come to school.



(Figure one)



(Figure two)



(Figure three)

#### 5. Giving students appropriate think time

Children’s Thoughts on Spelling: Considering Children’s Strategies and Errors to Guide Instructional Remediation. Insights on Learning Disabilities, 171-181. “Spelling is a highly complex process and is often characterized as an area of difficulty for students with learning disabilities (LD)”<sup>[5]</sup> p.171, as cited in Carpenter & Miller, 1982), which means that specific instructional strategies need to be implemented when teaching students about vocabulary.

Giving students appropriate thinking time will be a suitable instructional strategy when students need to remember the spelling of words. This can mainly be used in the first/second-grade classrooms when teaching subject-related content but it can also be used in Pre-K classrooms and Kindergarten classrooms in an inclusive setting. Teachers can use this strategy for both large group and small group activities.

Sometimes students will struggle with memorizing words. Especially when they are in the classroom, they will feel stressed when they saw other people memorize the words. Providing enough but not too much thinking time and waiting time will allow students to process the information and prepare a response successfully. Next, leave about two minutes for children to understand the words and process the spelling by themselves. Ask students if they are ready to spell the words or not. Teachers should also say sentences like “pay attention to the spelling of ...” and “you have to try really hard to remember the words” to encourage students in the learning process.

#### 6. Elaborating words in the text and connecting them to the life

Language is an important area of development, especially in early childhood. During this stage, children develop their speaking skills, comprehensive ability, vocabulary, and word reading skills. Therefore, educators need to choose the appropriate instructional strategies to facilitate their language proficiency. One of the activities that help the development of language is storytelling/shared book reading. Children can practice speaking skills and comprehensive ability when they are sharing the reading of a book with an adult.

This strategy is counted as “medium-level strategies”, which refers to “comments and questions that extended the story, providing additional information that is not visible in the book” [6]. When doing a shared book reading, it will be beneficial for teachers to not only use visual illustrations to simply read the story but also elaborate words in the text that have important meanings. This allows the children to think beyond the text, develop their own way of organizing language to express ideas, and scaffold understandings. Teachers need to prepare for the words that need to be elaborated before reading as the first step. Then, when the reading ends, the teacher should point to the specific words and add details to them so that the children can understand the ideas in deep. It is also important for the teacher to connect the words to real-life situations, which children can have the opportunity to relate the words to themselves and thus, improving comprehensive skills. In addition, more comments can be prepared to add during the storytelling because the data in the research had indicated that “with each additional occurrence of these medium-level comments per minute, children could obtain 1.16 more points in word comprehension and 0.59 more points in word reading”<sup>[6]</sup>.

## 7. Creating meaningful partnerships

Students are coming from various backgrounds and all have different ways of learning. In order to create an inclusive learning environment for English language learners, creating meaningful partnerships can be one of the differentiating instructional strategies to support their learning.

This strategy can be used in Pre-K classrooms with three to four-year-old students in an inclusive setting. Peer support can be done in small groups of two to three students so that they are able to help each other to learn.

Since English language learners are students who come from a non-English speaking environment, they may be shy or have a hard time expressing their ideas to the whole class. Creating meaningful partnerships allows ELLs to share only with a few friends, who are willing to be patient when having a conversation. The first step for teachers to do is selecting “students with strong interpersonal skills, and easygoing demeanor, and a willingness to be patient in paired learning activities” (<sup>[7]</sup>, p. 24) to pair with ELLs. In this way, ELL students’ partners will initiate the conversation while solving a problem together. ELLs are able to learn effectively with a partner and develop their social communication skills.

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