

Effective teaching:

A Foundation teacher's perspective



Miss H teaches Prep students at a primary school in a remote community school in Northern Australia. She has experienced the benefits of using effective teaching in the classroom.

I love teaching students in their first year of school. It's incredible how far they can go in such a short time when I use effective teaching. The students love the structure and get really excited by their progress. They really enjoy showing off their reading skills.



Before school (45 minutes) Getting prepared

Andy, my Teaching Assistant, and I head into the classroom to prepare for the day.

I start by reviewing my Teacher Presentation Book to ensure I know the materials needed to present the lesson. I also check which students need to be tested that day and which will need reading checkouts. I do reading checkouts every five lessons.

We talk through the language lesson, discuss individual students and agree on strategies to help increase student achievement.

Then I prepare individual seat work and extension activities for students who finish their work early. This means that I don't waste valuable learning time gathering resources during class.

The students come quietly into class. I have taught them to prepare for their learning day by putting away their drink bottles and lunch boxes and removing any resources that aren't needed.

I collect data every day so I know what I can do to accelerate learning.





Assembly and transition to class (15 minutes)

Getting started

We greet our students just before assembly starts. Most of my students are five years old. Some are older who have either missed a lot of school or have just started at the school – so they are not at their year learning level.

We walk them to our classroom, which is decorated with student learning and charts that reinforce the concepts being taught.

We also display the classroom rules, behaviour charts and picture charts that show progress towards our reading goals.



Morning literacy session (90 minutes)

Reading Mastery

We start by singing the 'Good Morning' song while I mark the attendance register. Then we discuss our calendar and weather chart, review our classroom rules and behaviour expectations and discuss our character strength focus for the week.

Over the course of the morning, I teach all three groups a reading lesson at their learning level.

Using Reading Mastery, I monitor how each child is pronouncing each sound.



Instruction

I place my students into three groups, and I rotate them every twenty minutes.

The Goannas are the lowest group and are with me first for reading. The Kookaburras are the middle group who are with my Teaching Assistant for language. The Emus are the high group, so they are doing the independent activities I organised.

To do this, the students respond in unison on my signal. This allows me to truly see which students know the sound or word and which students need more support.



Independent work

After reading as a group, the students begin independent work. I supervise them in their skill practice as they take turns reading aloud from our readers. I monitor the completion of their Student Workbooks. Today, they are doing letter tracing to improve fine motor skills.

The middle group are building their language and vocabulary with Andy.

First, they respond to his questions as a group, then he does individual turns followed by students completing their language workbooks.

The high group are doing independent seat work. These are activities I designed to enrich the program and further develop the skills the students have already mastered.

We continually check for understanding, so we know when to move on and when to remediate. Students must master concepts before moving on.

Next, I do a 'Time to Shine' to allow students to respond to questions such as 'What sound?' or 'What word?' as individuals. This activity allows me to check for students' understanding and ensure all children have mastered the concepts being taught.

After we complete our phonics and word work, we read a sound, word, sentence or a story depending on the group's ability level.



Remediation

Both Andy and I have been taught how to check for students' understanding. I use my judgement about when to remediate if I don't feel the students are firm on the content. I also get feedback and support from our Instruction Coach on how best to do this.

The data recently showed that some of our students needed to increase their reading of minimum words per minute during their reading checkouts.

Our School Instruction Coach modelled how to teach students to quickly blend sounds and read words the fast way. She demonstrated this with the students, and I practiced until I felt comfortable with the new technique.



Mid-morning math session (60 minutes)

DISTAR arithmetic and positive reinforcement

DISTAR arithmetic

After morning break, it's time to teach maths. I have a few more six-year-olds in the class who are at the same learning level as my other students.

We start our lessons by doing some numeral identification. The students have now learnt to recognise all numerals from 0–10 and symbols such as + and =.

Then we work on strategies to help students learn how to solve addition and subtraction equations.

We practise counting forwards and backwards from a range of different numbers.

Next, we complete a workbook page that allows students to independently demonstrate their understanding of concepts taught during our group instruction. Once students have completed their Student Workbook, they move to maths games and activities I have planned and created to reinforce learnt concepts.

Positive reinforcement

I have been trained to teach routines and use positive reinforcement, so the students stay engaged and the classroom is calm and orderly. We play a simple student-teacher game with the students where they get a student point for every correct response, and I get a teacher point if students do not follow classroom rules. The game is designed to ensure behaviour is maintained, so the students always win, and we have a little celebratory cheer or small reward. This program really helps with behaviour in the classroom because it's structured and fast moving. The students know they have to be paying attention and listening.

They have to be ready to answer as soon as you give that signal.





Afternoon literacy session (60 minutes)

Reading and language

After second break, I have my morning group of students back. It's important my students get a second session of reading and language when they are trying to master the basics.

My kit has all the materials I need to teach. It has my Teacher Presentation Book and supporting Teaching Guide, literatures guides and tips for extra work.

I have a Student Workbook for each student that contain the guided practice tasks aligned to the concepts I teach and reading books

for each student so they can practise reading short stories at their current learning level.

I start by settling the students with a storybook using vocabulary they have been learning.

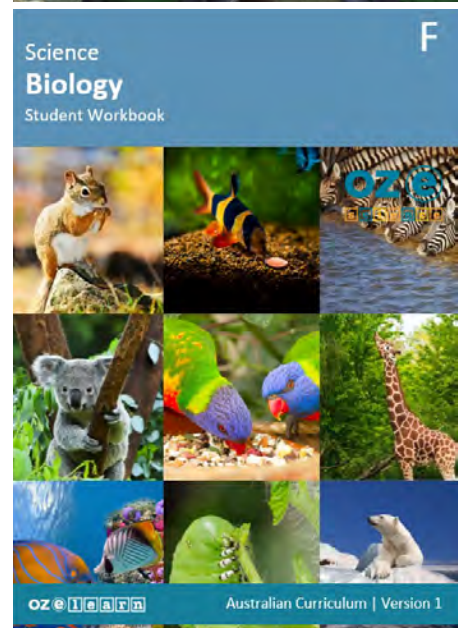
We then start on the afternoon rotations. One of my students needs assistance to read words the fast way, so while the others are working independently, I take him aside to practise his last reading checkout again. Then I do catch-up testing for students who have been away.



Science session (60 minutes)

Science is an important part of our curriculum. In our weekly class, I use the prepared lessons that form part of the Oz-e-Science program. The students find the lessons a lot of fun as they are engaging and broken down into chunks, so that complex information is easy to understand.

In today's lesson, we are learning about forest habitats. The materials that come with this program made it easy for me to see how this topic sits within the Australian Curriculum, so I know I am covering all of the content descriptions and achievement standards.



After school (30 minutes)

Collegiality and professional development

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About effective teaching

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