

A Simple Decision-Making Framework for Teachers

Here's a clear, practical framework teachers can use to help select instructional strategies based on assessment results, not preference or habit.



Core Principle

Assessment results don't tell us what students *are*, they tell us what students *need next*. The purpose of assessment is instructional decision-making.



Step 1

Clarify What Students Are Struggling With

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Before jumping to strategies, teams must identify the type of learning need, not just the score.

Use these guiding questions:

- ☐ Is the issue knowledge, skill, reasoning, or application/transfer?
- ☐ Is the error conceptual or procedural?
- ☐ Is the challenge accuracy, fluency, complexity, or independence?



Step 2

Categorize the Learning Need

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Place students into one of these instructional need categories:

Learning Need - What the Data Suggests

☐ Surface Learning Gaps

Students lack vocabulary, facts, or basic understanding

☐ Procedural Skill Gaps

Students know what but not how

☐ Conceptual Understanding Gaps

Students can perform steps but don't understand why

☐ Reasoning & Thinking Gaps

Students struggle to explain, justify, or analyze

☐ Transfer Gaps

Students succeed in practice but fail in new contexts



Step 3

Match Instructional Strategies to the Need

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This is the most important move.

Hint: If the strategy doesn't directly address the need revealed by the data, it's the wrong strategy.

Strategy Matching Guide

Identified Need	High Impact Instructional Strategies
Surface Learning	Explicit instruction, modeling, worked examples, vocabulary routines
Procedural Skills	Guided practice, error analysis, gradual release
Conceptual Understanding	Visual models, representations, discussion protocols
Reasoning	Sentence starters, academic discourse, justification tasks
Transfer	Application tasks, non-routine problems, multiple contexts



Step 4

Plan How the Strategy Will Be Implemented

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Avoid vague plans like "We'll reteach".

- ☐ Teams specify:
- ☐ What students will do
- ☐ What the teacher will do
- ☐ What success will look like
- ☐ How progress will be monitored

Example:

"Students will use sentence starters to justify their answers during guided practice, and teachers will monitor for use of evidence and reasoning."



Step 5

Decide How You'll Know If It Worked

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Close the loop.

Ask:

- ☐ What evidence will show improvement?
- ☐ When will we check again?
- ☐ What will we adjust if students don't improve?
- ☐ This reinforces formative evaluation, not one-and-done reteaching.