DOINGWHATWORKS

Presentation
FULL DETAILS AND TRANSCRIPT

Organizing Instruction in Out-of-School Programs
April 2010

Topic: Increased Learning Time: Beyond the Regular School Day
Practice: Organize Instruction

Highlights

- Research has shown that the most effective out-of-school academic programs are those that provide individualized instruction that is tailored to student needs and geared towards student interests.
- It is important to identify the sub-skills particular students need help with, as well as the form of instruction each student is likely to respond well to.
- Sharing training materials, instructional resources and tools, and student academic information can enable program instructors tailor instruction to students' needs.
- There are many ways to make instruction engaging an fun, for example: using hands-on activities, connecting topics to students' everyday life and hobbies, having students work in pairs or small groups, and building a caring learning community where students build connections to peers and adults.

DOINGWHATWORKS

Full Transcript

Slide 1: Welcome

Welcome to the overview on Organizing Instruction in Out-of-School Programs.

Slide 2: Top priorities

Research has shown that the most effective academic programs are those that provide individualized instruction that is tailored to student needs and geared toward student interests.

Slide 3: Instructional aspects

Instruction can be tailored to fit different learning styles and degrees of academic progress. Many aspects of instruction can be individualized, such as:

- the pace of instruction;
- the difficulty of the content;
- the types of learning aids used, such as graphic organizers, step-by-step instructions, and use of manipulatives; and
- the way feedback is given to students.

Slide 4: Individualized instruction

Individualized instruction presents a complex set of challenges for teachers. It is important to identify the subskills that particular students need help with, as well as the form of instruction that each student is likely to respond well to.

Assessing students' strengths, weaknesses, and learning styles helps teachers individualize instruction. This kind of assessment can be conducted when students enter the program for the first time, and then revisited before and after new skills are taught as well as during lessons.

Slide 5: Smaller classes and tutoring

Students who are at risk of academic failure often have difficulties learning well in traditional classrooms or in larger groups. Program instructors can provide students with more individual attention by working with small groups of students or dedicating time for tutoring.

When there are not enough teachers to provide one-on-one attention to students, trained volunteers,

educational software aids, and small-group cooperative learning strategies can help to individualize instruction.

Slide 6: Student engagement

Research has clearly shown that strategies to increase student engagement can also increase academic effort and test scores. Strategies to promote student engagement may include:

- Providing hands-on practice opportunities;
- Incorporating innovative projects, field trips, and guest speakers;
- Using games, manipulatives, and computers, especially with younger students;
- Forging connections to students' everyday life experiences, interests, and hobbies;
- Having students work in pairs or small groups;
- Hiring staff with backgrounds and interests that complement those of their students; and
- Cultivating a classroom climate in which students feel supported and cared for.

Slide 7: Practical steps

There are several concrete things that districts can do to help before and after school, weekend, and summer programs support high-quality instruction that is both individualized and engaging. Districts can provide resources and develop tools to enhance the quality of instruction in the program. They are also the primary source for access to data systems, professional development, funding, and resources.

Slide 8: Student data

By accessing data systems, program instructors can use the results of standardized tests and periodic assessments, as well as other student information such as attendance and special needs data, to plan instruction that better serves their students. Additionally, districts can provide tools, guidelines, and supports for analyzing student data. For example, districts can provide training and/or step-by-step guidance for using data to organize instruction.

Slide 9: Professional development

Districts can allow program instructors to register for existing districtwide professional development opportunities, such as those available for regular school teachers. These might include trainings on using assessment data in instruction, lesson planning, individualizing instruction, and learning about instructional strategies for different subject areas. Professional literature, sample lesson plans, and other materials can

help program instructors match educational strategies to their program's goals and students' needs.

Slide 10: Matching training to expertise

Program staff may have significantly varied levels of experience. Districts can help match appropriate training opportunities with teachers' knowledge and skill levels. Proper pairing of amount and frequency of training and coaching to teachers' experience helps to ensure that district resources are used to their maximum efficiency.

Inexperienced instructors should be observed and coached by more experienced colleagues during the initial stages of teaching in order to monitor quality and to identify whether any additional training is needed.

Slide 11: Time and cost estimates

When considering the cost associated with organizing academic instruction, factors to consider include:

- the time of program staff (both instructional time and time spent in professional development);
- the cost of textbooks and educational software; and
- the time of coaches, specialists, or experts who will provide professional development, technical assistance, and ongoing observation and support.

Some of these costs may be reduced by building on existing professional development opportunities; utilizing experienced staff to mentor noncertified or new teachers; and sharing materials, equipment, and facilities with the school.

Slide 12: Funding resources

Continuous efforts to apply for grants and enlist local businesses and community support for out-of-school programs are key to ensuring the sustainability of the programs.

Slide 13: Communication

In working with school staff and program instructors, districts can emphasize both the role that student interest plays in academic progress, and the need to continually explore new ways of implementing innovative teaching strategies in order to engage students. Districts can also play a vital role in communicating the importance of using data to identify student needs and to effectively align instructional strategies with them.

Slide 14: Learn more

To learn more about Organizing Instruction in Out-of-School Programs, please see the additional resources on the Doing What Works website.