

7 Activity Sequence and Choice

Definition

Activity sequencing: this involves thoughtful consideration and adjustment of the order in which instructional tasks, activities, or requests are presented. The goal is to optimise learning outcomes and foster desired behaviours by strategically interspersing tasks and leveraging behaviour momentum.

Offering choice: intentionally planning to provide options to students. Options could include method of response, tools and supplies, working independently or with peers, order of tasks or location for working.

Rationale

For students who can do the task, but choose not to do it, activity sequencing and choice strategies may be helpful. (KERN & CLEMENS, 2007; STORMONT, ET AL., 2012)

Activity sequencing and offering choice are preventive (antecedent interventions) because they are implemented before problem behaviours occur. (KERN & STATE, 2009)

- Task interspersal:**
- allows for review of previous content
 - promotes greater confidence and motivation
 - encourages sustained work and task completion
 - positively impacts student perception of the assignment.
- Behavioural momentum:**
- increases the likelihood the more difficult task will be completed (BROSS ET AL., 2018)
 - helps build positive adult-student relationships.
- Choice of activities:**
- provides scaffolded opportunities to practice decision making, students explore their academic identity, and connect their learning to interests and passion. (KERN & STATE, 2009)

Guidelines

- Activity sequencing may not be necessary for all students but can be very important for students who are at-risk for learning or behaviour concerns. (DARCH & KAME'ENUI, 2004)
- An item must truly be at mastery level before it can be used for interspersing.
- Students prefer assignments with a mix of already mastered tasks with current skill tasks.
- Students prefer academic tasks when up to 30% of items are new. (LOGAN AND SKINNER, 1998)
- When students have the opportunity to make choices, it can enhance their sense of autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to positive outcomes, including increased student engagement.

Getting started

STEP 1

Intersperse tasks strategically

- Intermixing easier tasks among more difficult tasks. (MEADOWS & SKINNER, 2005)
- Intersperse at 1:3 ratio of one mastered to 3 more challenging or new items.
- Slowly fade the mastered items as fluency builds with new ones.
- After successful completion, reinforce the student with positive feedback.

STEP 2

Utilise behaviour momentum

- Use simple instructions to precede more difficult instructions.
- Identify behaviours that have a high probability (**high-p**) of completion.
- Precede more difficult requests (**low-p**) by giving 3 or more (**high-p**) requests.
- After successful completion, reinforce the student with positive feedback.
- Then present the (**low-p**) task.
- Reinforce with positive feedback.

STEP 3

Increase student choice

- Choice can be used class wide, with groups or with individual students.
- Create a menu of choices that are practical and doable.
- Plan lessons incorporating student choices in a variety of ways (order, materials, partners, location).
- Teach students how to select choices.
- Ask for student feedback and input.

Examples

Create a menu of choices you would be willing to provide to students.

Type of activity or task mode	Draw a diagram or write a paragraph or prepare an oral presentation
Order or sequence tasks are completed	Three tasks are assigned, student selects which to complete first.
Materials used to complete an assignment	Computer or pencil/paper
How the work will be done	Choose to complete a task with a partner, in a group or individually.
Where to work	Complete a task at student desk or study centre.
What to do when the task is done	Select a book to read, help a peer or free drawing.

Trauma lens

- Creating more effective and equitable learning environments benefits all students.
- Providing choice develops student independence.

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KERN & CLEMENS, 2007; STORMONT, ET AL., 2012