

You Teach the Students, Not the Textbook

Teaching is not covering the textbook. Neither is the textbook the curriculum. More on this concept is in the **Going Beyond** folder for Chapter 21 at EffectiveTeaching.com.

Far too many teachers teach “out of” the textbook. The textbook is not the course of study; the textbook is not the curriculum.

The purpose of the textbook is to enhance the effectiveness of the teacher. The textbook serves the teacher; the teacher does not serve the textbook. The textbook exists to help the teacher more effectively teach the lesson. The textbook is like the backdrop on a stage play—it enhances the performers and the production on the stage.

Students do not learn when teachers teach to a self-selected mishmash of topics and activities. In many schools, what is taught varies wildly from teacher to teacher even in the same subject and at the same grade level in the same school. There is no curriculum coherence when teachers pick and choose whatever they want to teach.

There is far too much concern with what teachers teach and not on what students learn.

The effective teacher teaches the students. You do not teach the textbook. As explained in this chapter, it is ineffective for the teacher to say, “Your assignment for this week is Chapter 7.” That is a meaningless statement because it does not specify the goal, the objective, or the purpose of the lesson.

To help students develop responsibility to complete their lessons and succeed, John Hattie of the University of Auckland in New Zealand says,¹

Simply tell students what they will be learning before the lesson begins and you can raise student achievement as much as 27 percent. (This is explained in Chapter 21.)

Additionally, provide students with specific feedback about their progress and you can raise achievement as much as 37 percent. (This is explained in Chapter 23.)

To structure an effective lesson:

1. Tell the students upfront what they will be learning.
2. Gather resources—textbooks, media, live assets, and the like—to teach what you want the students to learn.
3. Check for understanding along the way.
4. Adapt lesson as needed.
5. Test for lesson mastery.
6. Reteach, if necessary.

The textbook plays a minor role in whether or not the students learn.

¹ John Hattie. “Influences on Student Learning.” Inaugural Lecture as Professor of Education, University of Auckland, New Zealand. August 2, 1999.