

The Learn Unit: Essential Elements of Effective Instruction

At the core of good instruction lies the "Learn Unit", a 3-step process in which the student is invited to engage in an academic task, delivers a response, and then receives immediate feedback about how he or she did on the task (Heward, 1996). Here is an explanation of the stages of the 'Learn Unit':

1. **Academic Opportunity to Respond.** The student is presented with a meaningful opportunity to respond to academic task. A question posed by the teacher, a math word problem, and a spelling item on an educational computer 'Word Gobbler' game could all be considered academic opportunities to respond.
2. **Active Student Response.** The student answers the item, solves the problem presented, or completes the academic task. Answering the teacher's question, computing the answer to a math word problem (and showing all work), and typing in the correct spelling of an item when playing an educational computer game are all examples of active student responding.
3. **Performance Feedback.** The student receives timely feedback about whether his or her response is correct— often with praise and encouragement. A teacher exclaiming 'Right! Good job!' when a student gives an response in class, a student using an answer key to check her answer to a math word problem, and a computer message that says 'Congratulations! You get 2 points for correctly spelling this word!' are all examples of corrective feedback.

The more frequently a student cycles through complete 'Learn Unit' trials, the faster that student is likely to make learning progress. If any one of these steps is missing, the quality of instruction will probably be compromised.

Reference

Heward, W.L. (1996). Three low-tech strategies for increasing the frequency of active student response during group instruction. In R. Gardner, D. M. Sainato, J. O. Cooper, T. E. Heron, W. L. Heward, J. W. Eshleman, & T. A. Grossi (Eds.), *Behavior analysis in education: Focus on measurably superior instruction* (pp.283-320). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole.