Principles of Learning and Teaching: Early Childhood (0521)

Discrete Multiple-Choice Questions

Directions: For each question, select the best answer and mark the corresponding space on your answer sheet.

1. Classroom management research findings suggest that one of the most effective ways to maximize the amount of time elementary school children spend on academic activities is for the teacher to do which of the following?
   (A) Plan for, teach, and enforce routines for transition times and classroom housekeeping tasks.
   (B) Assign homework three times a week in the major subjects.
   (C) Assign individual reading on new topics before discussing the topic in class.
   (D) Introduce new material in a lecture followed immediately by a questioning session on the material.

2. Which of the following would be the best indication to a teacher that students are beginning to think critically about science?
   (A) They talk about earthquakes, space probes, and science-related information in the news.
   (B) They begin to read more books and articles about science on their own.
   (C) They successfully plan and carry out simple experiments to test questions raised in classroom discussion.
   (D) They ask the teacher to read stories to them about scientific topics.

3. The portfolio a teacher keeps on each child in a class for assessment purposes could reasonably include all of the following EXCEPT
   (A) Weekly classroom lesson plans and curriculum goals
   (B) Dated work samples accompanied by teacher commentary
   (C) Anecdotal records and records of systematic observations
   (D) Checklists, rating scales, screening inventories
4. For developing the language abilities of kindergartners, which of the following would be the most appropriate way to follow up the writing of a group essay?

(A) Prepare a list of the most difficult words for the children to learn to spell.

(B) Show the children how to revise the sentences to make them longer and more complex structurally.

(C) Have the children print the essay for themselves, then practice writing it, using cursive letters.

(D) Read the essay aloud, in unison with the children, then leave it displayed where they can examine it.

5. Kate and Marc are working in the art center making a bird using paper towel rolls, Styrofoam, feathers, sequins, scissors, scraps of material, and glue. In which of the following types of play are the children engaged?

(A) Dramatic

(B) Constructive

(C) Exploratory

(D) Parallel

6. Which of the following instructional approaches is likely to be most effective in helping children in a multiculturally diverse class of 3- and 4-year-olds achieve the goal of developing strong, positive self-concepts?

(A) Inviting parents to bring to school foods traditionally associated with the holidays observed in the ethnic groups represented in the class

(B) Requiring that children accept each other equally, change playmates frequently, and show courtesy to all regardless of cultural and ethnic background

(C) Providing a wide range of multicultural materials, such as books and pictures about children from different countries including those countries represented by the students’ families

(D) Providing both learning activities and materials that affirm aspects of the different cultures of the children’s families, such as learning to say “good morning” in the language used by children’s families
Questions 7 and 8 are based on the following passages.

The following passages are taken from a debate about the advantages and disadvantages of a constructivist approach to teaching.

Why constructivist approaches are effective

The point of constructivist instruction is to have students reflect on their questions about new concepts in order to uncover their misconceptions. If a student cannot reason out the answer, this indicates a conceptual problem that the teacher needs to address. It takes more than content-related professional expertise to be a “guide on the side” in this process. Constructivist teaching focuses not on what the teacher knows, but on what and how the student learns. Expertise is focused on teaching students how to derive answers, not on giving them the answers. This means that a constructivist approach to teaching must respond to multiple different learning methods and use multiple approaches to content. It is a myth that constructivist teaching never requires students to memorize, to drill, to listen to a teacher explain, or to watch a teacher model problem-solving of various kinds.

What constructivist approaches take advantage of is a basic truth about human cognition: we all make sense of new information in terms of what we already know or think we know. And each of us must process new information in our own context and experience to make it part of what we really know.

Why constructivist approaches are misguided

The theory of constructivism is appealing for a variety of reasons—especially for its emphasis on direct student engagement in learning. However, as they are implemented, constructivist approaches to teaching often treat memorization, direct instruction, or even open expression of teacher expertise as forbidden. This demotion of the teacher to some sort of friendly facilitator is dangerous, especially in an era in which there is an unprecedented number of teachers teaching out of their fields of expertise. The focus of attention needs to be on how much teachers know about the content being taught.

Students need someone to lead them through the quagmire of propaganda and misinformation that they confront daily. Students need a teacher who loves the subject and has enough knowledge to act as an intellectual authority when a little direction is needed. Students need a teacher who does not settle for minimal effort but encourages original thinking and provides substantive intellectual challenge.
7. The first passage suggests that reflection on which of the following after a lesson is an essential element in constructivist teaching?

(A) The extent to which the teacher’s knowledge of the content of the lesson was adequate to meet students’ curiosity about the topic
(B) The differences between what actually took place and what the teacher planned
(C) The variety of misconceptions and barriers to understanding revealed by students’ responses to the lesson
(D) The range of cognitive processes activated by the activities included in the lesson design and implementation

8. The author of the second passage would regard which of the following teacher behaviors as essential for supporting student learning?

(A) Avoiding lecture and memorization
(B) Allowing students to figure out complex problems without the teacher’s intervention
(C) Emphasizing process rather than content knowledge
(D) Directly guiding students’ thinking on particular topics

Answers
1. The best answer is A. Too much time is often spent supervising students in relation to personal needs and everyday housekeeping tasks, and interruptions for this purpose are a major source of discontinuity in academic activities. Teachers can minimize these problems by preparing the classroom and students to handle routine activities on their own.

2. The best answer is C. Of the choices given, C is the only one that suggests that the students may be engaging in critical thinking about science, since they presumably must do so in order to complete such experiments. Choices A, B, and D suggest interest in science topics, but the activities do not require critical thinking.

3. The best answer is A. Choices B, C, and D are types of items that may be found in a portfolio kept to assess student progress. Weekly lesson plans and curriculum goals are items that do not need to be in such a portfolio.

4. The best answer is D. The most appropriate follow-up is one that motivates children toward continued expression. Displaying the essay serves as a form of
publication and allows the children to reread the essay on their own terms. Reading in unison provides a nonthreatening way for the children to practice the language skills they have learned.

5. The best answer is B. The students are constructing a bird sculpture. Because Kate and Mark have a goal in mind and are using the materials to create a specific structure, it would be incorrect to characterize their behavior as simply exploratory play (option C). Additionally, as the two are working together with a shared focus, this would not be considered parallel play (option D). Dramatic play (option A) may occur after the students have completed their project but is not described in the given scenario.

6. The best answer is D. This instructional approach is likely to be most effective because young children construct their cultural identities primarily in relation to families. In choice C, simply providing multicultural materials will not accomplish the goals described, nor will providing only the activity described in choice A. Choice B is unlikely to work for children of this age, because such behaviors cannot be dictated.

7. The best answer is C. Constructivist teaching depends on the connection of new information to already learned information or understandings, whether or not they are accurate. The passage says, “The point of constructivist instruction is to have students reflect on their questions about new concepts in order to uncover their misconceptions. If a student cannot reason out the answer, this indicates a conceptual problem that the teacher needs to address.” Thus, a consideration of barriers and/or misconceptions in response to the presentation of new material is an essential follow-up to a constructivist lesson.

8. The best answer is D. The second author maintains that students require teacher guidance and a direct expression of the teacher’s expert content knowledge in order to learn most effectively. Choices A (avoiding lecturing), B (learning without teacher intervention), and C (de-emphasis on content knowledge) are not consistent with this approach to teaching. Direct guidance of students’ thinking is consistent with the second author’s approach.