

## Matching Instruction to the Student's Gap of Knowledge

No responsible parent would let a teenager drive a car alone without knowing the basics of driving, steering, braking, traffic laws, etc. Yet, somehow, we fully expect a child to learn expository writing without knowing how to sequence information, differentiate between fact and opinion, and create a complete paragraph. Likewise, it is difficult for a child to learn to solve equations without first mastering addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division or understanding variables. There are specific steps of building block skills that must be learned in a certain sequence, similar to climbing the steps on a ladder. The quickest way to de-motivate a student is to present material that is too difficult so that he becomes frustrated, or on the other end of the spectrum, so easy that he is not challenged and becomes bored. Many studies have shown that matching instruction to a student's gap of knowledge is an effective way to remediate that child.

How does this work in real life? About 35% of an average classroom's students are right at grade level expectations, about 15% are above grade level, about 30% are one grade level below, and 20% are two or more grade levels below expectations. Now, compound that by realizing that while some students may be behind in one subject, they could also be ahead in the other subjects. Individualizing instruction is the only way to address a student's gaps in knowledge.

Individualizing instruction is easy with Rapid Resources®. Choose a skill in which a student is currently deficient, and choose the Learning Plan Selector. This will display a list of all the precursor or building block skills. Hover the mouse over the skill name, and an informal assessment question will appear. Ask the student the appropriate question and determine if the student has mastery. If not, or you're not sure, mark the box to the right of the skill. Continue this process until you're sure the student has mastered the earlier skills. At the bottom of the list, enter the student's name and print the Individual Learning Plan in either English or Spanish, as appropriate. The Individual Learning Plan will display all of the appropriate skills sequentially, from easiest to most difficult, with an open-ended assessment at the end of each skill. This ILP is designed for the student to work on independently, with a parent, a classroom aide, a volunteer or even as part of a formal remediation program.

The process of creating an Individualized Learning Plan is the same for math, reading, language arts, and science--from pre-kindergarten to high school exit exams. This process will leverage the teacher's time and knowledge by the number of parents, aides, and volunteers. **The formative assessments included are designed to give the teacher the necessary feedback to accurately gauge the student's prior learning.** Many of these ILPs can be completed in less than one day, in hardly any time, and your students will be back on target—performing at grade level or above.

Complement the ILP with an individualized reading list, customized to the student's interests (baseball, basketball, horses, music, etc.) and his or her Lexiled reading level, and you will see reading comprehension soar. Test scores will reflect this achievement from end-of-grade summative assessments to high school exit exams.