



# School of Modern Skills Teaching and Learning Policy

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## Introduction

Every student of Dubai School of Modern Skills, including those identified as having special educational needs, possess the right to receive and enjoy, high-quality learning, teaching, and subsequent achievement. This policy outlines our shared understanding of what constitutes effective teaching and learning.



The key elements of the policy are:

- Procedures and Practices
- Learning Environment
- Lesson Structure
- Student Self-Evaluation
- Student Progress
- Planning
- Paradigm
- Differentiation
- Homework



## Procedures and Practice

Students excel in a structured environment. All of our teachers are expected to set the tone for purposeful learning. Our shared expectations include:

- Students must enter and leave the classroom in an orderly way at the instruction of the teacher;
- Teachers should welcome students into the room; Students should not enter the room unless a teacher is present;
- Students must place books, planner and equipment on the desk and place school bags safely under their desk or in designated area as per teacher preference;
- Teachers must take a register.
- Teaching and learning routines should be well established and all students should be engaged in learning at all times and as soon as they enter the room, to allow time for registration and settling in. For example;
  - have an open-ended problem on the board to be solved which reviews previous learning.
  - have a morning message with deliberate grammar or spelling errors (linked to previous learning) for students to find and correct
- Prior to dismissal students must return their belongings to their school bag, push their chair under their desk, check for litter and stand quietly behind their chair;
- Teacher to dismiss students one-by-one - scanning their area to ensure it is tidy and no belongings have been left behind.
- Do not release a large group of students into the hallways all at once.
- At the end of the last session the chairs should be placed on desks in classrooms not designated for the school's extra-curricular activities;
- Should a student need to leave the classroom at any point during the lesson, the teacher must issue the student with the relevant "hall pass" (bathroom, doctor etc..) See Behaviour for Learning Policy.
- At the end of the last session, all students should be accompanied at dismissal in an orderly fashion to allow a calm and efficient exit from school.

**Note:**

- A formal record must be kept when students are absent. Unexplained absences must be reported to the relevant HOP (Head of Pastoral Care).
- Punctuality and regular attendance are essential. Sanctions for lateness apply.
- Teachers must be present and prepared in the classroom prior to the arrival of their class

**Learning Environment**

Students learn, progress, and develop in a stimulating classroom. Furthermore, clean, uncluttered classrooms set the tone for a purposeful learning environment. It is very important in Elementary Classrooms for all materials to be clearly labeled to support students' independence and care for their environment. Classrooms in Dubai School of Modern Skills must be inviting, bright, and vibrant.

- Classroom displays must be related to current student work, well-designed and changed as appropriate;
- To create a sense of ownership, student work should be displayed in the classroom
- with the topic/theme date, objective, and feedback clearly visible (student worksheets are not to be displayed);
- Classroom Rules to be clearly displayed;
- Appropriate health and safety procedures should be followed always; no teacher or student should ever stand on furniture to deal with displays nor tamper with their computer cables;
- Rooms should be kept well ventilated;
- Window blinds to remain open to allow plenty of light to enter the environment;
- Graffiti to be reported;
- Teacher desks to be neatly organized;
- Classroom whiteboard to display the following labels: learning objective, success criteria, date, attendance, class group.
- Seating charts to be displayed.



### Students should be encouraged to:

- Respect their environment and keep it clean and tidy;
- Listen to each other;
- Lead their own learning;
- Engage Actively;
- Raise their hand when they wish to ask a question or contribute to a discussion;
- Adopt various roles in groups;
- Be prepared to volunteer their thoughts and opinions;
- Respect the values, ideas, contributions and beliefs of others;
- Give honest and positive feedback to each other;
- Demonstrate mutual respect for their peers and teachers.

Teachers should praise much more than criticize using formal and informal approaches, thus setting a positive tone in the classroom.

Rewards recognize achievement and motivate learners;

*Formal rewards* include but are not limited to: issuing Class Dojo points; phoning/e mailing students' parents; work on display; sending a postcard/letter home; inviting the student to see SLT for praise; 'Breakfast with Principal'; achievement assemblies and school prizes. (Please see Behaviour for Learning policy, also

*Informal rewards* include, but are not limited to:

Congratulating students privately or publicly within a class; saying 'well done' to the whole class; positive written feedback on written work; positive comment in the student planner.





## Lesson Structure

Lessons, which are structured and well-planned, create a purpose for learning.

Teachers should follow the Gradual Release of Responsibility model (I do, We do, You do) of scaffolded instruction. This model is broadly recognized as a successful approach for moving classroom instruction from teacher-centered, whole-group delivery to student-centered collaboration and independent practice.

Students have the opportunity to work in different ways, such as individually, in pairs, in small groups, and in whole-class situations. Leadership, group work, and teamwork are promoted where students know their roles. This provides students with accountability, an understanding of group dynamics, and opportunities to lead.

Unbroken teacher talk in Elementary classrooms should NEVER exceed the child's age plus 5 minutes. e.g. In Grade 1, students vary between 6 and 7 years of age, therefore unbroken teacher talk should not be longer than 11 - 12 minutes. Strategies such as 'think, pair, share', table discussions, KWL charts are a small number of strategies that can stimulate student engagement.

All students in Elementary should be heard reading **or** engaged in phonics work at least once per week (guided reading in small groups within a 'Daily Five' process will help achieve this goal) with the aim to increase this to twice per week by hearing students read individually during a daily DEAR session. Classroom assistants and/or parent volunteers should also hear individual students whenever possible.

An appropriate lesson structure includes:

- A starter/warm-up activity to engage students' interests and assess students' prior learning.
- Lesson objectives and success criteria that allow students to engage with the process of learning;
- Teachers making learning objectives and success criteria explicit to all students;





- Introduction of new learning;
- A variety of activities to embed learning and assess formatively (pair work, group work, individual work)
- Student Self-Evaluation - Can the student express where he/she is on their learning journey?  
Is the student able to articulate their next steps?
- A review of learning

Points to note:

- Lesson objectives should be written or projected onto the board and discussed with students.
- Reflection upon lesson objectives and progress both throughout and at the end of the lesson to improve learning.
- Objectives can be revisited throughout and at the end of the lesson by:
  - Students reviewing their learning against the lesson objectives;  
Note: Students must show the ability to self-evaluate - Can the student express where he/she is on their learning journey? Is the student able to articulate his/her next steps?
  - Using differentiated questioning strategies including ICQs and CCQs;
  - Students being encouraged to explicitly reflect upon their behavior: for example, positive and negative behavior, their ability to concentrate, and their motivation;
  - A range of teacher/student-led and student-centered activities



Roles and Responsibilities		
Teacher		Student
<p><b>I do it</b> <i>Direct Instruction</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides direct instruction</li> <li>▪ Establishes goals and purpose</li> <li>▪ Models</li> <li>▪ Think aloud</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actively listens</li> <li>▪ Takes notes</li> <li>▪ Asks for clarification</li> </ul>
<p><b>We do it</b> <i>Guided Instruction</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Interactive instruction</li> <li>▪ Works with students</li> <li>▪ Checks, prompts, clues</li> <li>▪ Provides additional modeling</li> <li>▪ Meets with needs-based groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Asks and responds to questions</li> <li>▪ Works with teacher and classmates</li> <li>▪ Completes process alongside others</li> </ul>
<p><b>You do it independently</b> <i>Independent Practice</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provides feedback</li> <li>▪ Evaluates</li> <li>▪ Determines level of understanding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Works alone</li> <li>▪ Relies on notes, activities, classroom learning to complete assignment</li> <li>▪ Takes full responsibility for outcome</li> </ul>
<p><b>You do it together</b> <i>Collaborative Learning</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Moves among groups</li> <li>▪ Clarifies confusion</li> <li>▪ Provides support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Works with classmates, shares outcome</li> <li>▪ Collaborates on authentic task</li> <li>▪ Consolidates learning</li> <li>▪ Completes process in small group</li> <li>▪ Looks to peers for clarification</li> </ul>



## Student Self-Evaluation

Is the student able to articulate their next steps? Express where he/she is on their learning journey?

## Student-Progress

Do students make visible progress during your lesson?

## Planning

SMS believes that lesson planning is at the heart of being an effective teacher.

It gives teachers the opportunity to think deliberately about their choice of lesson objectives, the types of activities that will meet these objectives, the sequence of those activities, the materials needed, how long each activity might take, and how students should be grouped. Teachers can reflect on the links between one activity and the next, the relationship between the current lesson and any past or future lessons, and the correlation between learning activities and assessment practices. Because the teacher has considered these connections and can now make the connections explicit to learners, the lesson will be more meaningful to them. Elementary teachers should offer cross-curricular learning experiences. These should be highlighted within their plans in order to maximize the learning time, and support students understanding, and the relevance and purpose of their learning.

- Teachers to use both Internal and External Assessment Data effectively to inform their lesson planning. See Assessment Policy.
- Grade-level teachers plan collaboratively to ensure shared expectations and consistency of high-quality teaching and learning.
- Yearly, semester and daily plans are to be submitted to the relevant HoD for review, as per the Department schedule.



## Paradigm

Teachers are required to update the Paradigm on a weekly basis in order to inform parents and teachers of classwork and homework requirements. Please see also **Communication Policy**.

To avoid wastage of paper, assignments etc.. are to be uploaded under classwork/homework rather than photocopied in vast quantities.

## Differentiation

Differentiation takes into account the needs of all groups of learners and plans to ensure that all learners are set challenging goals and make expected progress. We plan our teaching and learning so that each student can aspire to the highest level of personal achievement.

Different students have different needs, related to influences both within and beyond the classroom. Awareness of the needs of specific groups will enhance the provision for individuals.

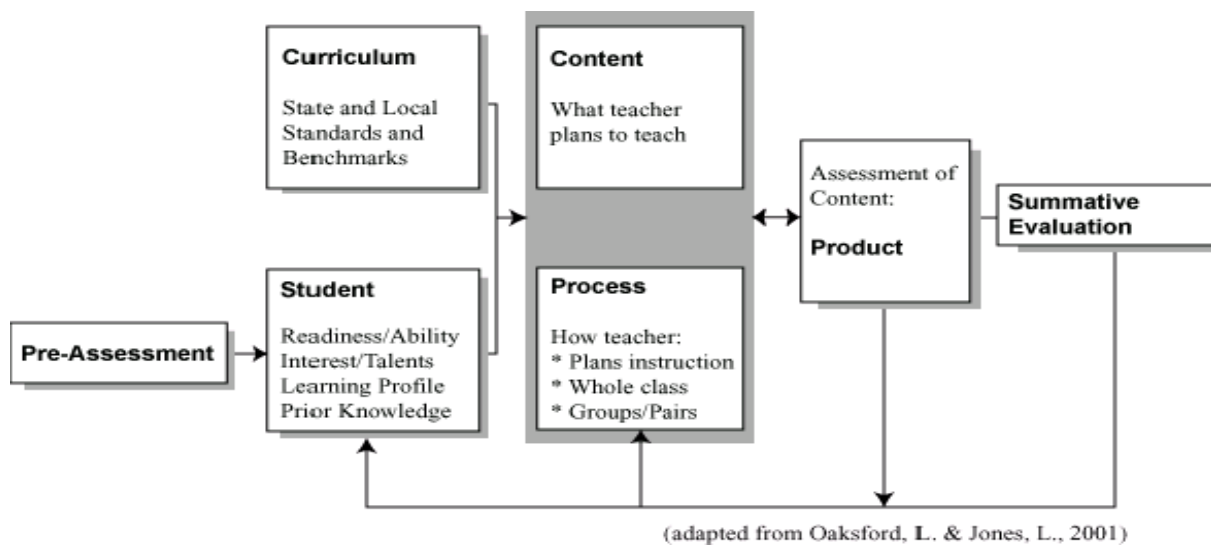
Teachers will:

- Be aware of the needs of specific groups such as SoD, G&T and will provide the appropriate support, challenge and extension.
- Incorporate the IEPs of SoD students in their planning.
- When planning, consider the variety of students' abilities and aim to maximize progress for all.

Offer students opportunities to generate their own learning;

- Be familiar with the school support staff and appropriate reporting processes in line with the school policy.
- Update the appropriate support staff, HOD, and VP's with all relevant data in a timely manner to support student learning and staff awareness of support.

Differentiation can take many forms and can often be grouped into differentiation by *process* (how students learn), and/or differentiation by *content* (what students learn) and/or differentiation of *product* (assessment).



Note: Whether teachers differentiate content, process, products, or the learning environment, the use of on-going assessment and flexible grouping makes this a successful approach to instruction.

Providing a range of alternative tasks;

- Deliberate grouping of students according to tasks (e.g. grouping all of the most able students together to work on a particularly challenging task; using 'jigsaw' grouping; mixed ability grouping for peer teaching);
- Assigning roles to individual students (e.g. leader, scribe, Questioner, spokesperson);
- Support provided by a TA;
- Varying degrees of challenge within teacher questioning and response;
- Developing and adapting resources to both support and extend students, taking into account all students' needs.
- Each teacher/department to include provision for EAL and G&T students in their lesson plans/action plans.



## Homework

The purpose of homework is to enhance and consolidate classroom learning. It encourages student responsibility and develops time management and organization skills.

- The assignment of homework is at the discretion of each individual teacher. It is not mandatory.
- Homework must always be purposeful and relevant.
- Students to receive feedback in a timely manner. See Feedback policy.

## Teaching and Learning Policy and Classroom Observations

Kindly note, the criteria against which lessons shall be evaluated will stem from the above policy. In addition, 5 key areas shall receive specific focus:

1. Learning Environment
2. Lesson Structure
3. Journey from teacher-led to student-centered learning.
4. Differentiation
5. Visible Progress
6. SoD Support Evidence