



SUSAN KOVALIK & ASSOCIATES

Questions & Answers About the ITI Model

INTEGRATED THEMATIC INSTRUCTION

Established on the understanding of the biology of learning, ITI is a systemic educational model that can be used to guide comprehensive schoolwide reform. Reality based, it can provide the framework for orchestrating a plan for continuous improvement in a school or district. The key aspects of the model include professional development, curriculum writing, and effective instructional strategies. Connecting with families and the community is an integral part of the ITI model.

How do students master standards and benchmarks?

Standards and benchmarks identify the knowledge and skills that students must master, clearly define for teachers what is to be taught, and indicate the expected level of performance. ITI curriculum is conceptually stated and based on *being there* experiences that give all students common ground from which to build knowledge and understanding. When standards and benchmarks are tied to these experiences, students understand the skills at a contextual level and can apply them when needed.

Standards can be integrated effortlessly and naturally when students visit locations such as a local car dealership to see how mathematics is important for sales and marketing or observe the importance of oral and written communication skills as orders are placed and sales are finalized. Back at school, students figure out the base cost of a car and the percentage of dealer markup, write a proper business letter to the city council regarding sign ordinances for advertising automobiles, plot the increase in number of automobiles during the past 50 years, or consider the effect of growth in relation to pollution, road development, and traffic. ITI students master the standards and benchmarks through studying curriculum that is meaningful and experienced in real-world contexts through *being there*.

Is ITI research based?

The ITI model has been successfully replicated in schools serving urban, suburban, and rural communities with diverse student populations. The model includes proven strategies and methods for student learning, teaching, and school management. Independent researchers in Indiana and Texas, plus a case study presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, provide evidence of significant gains in student achievement in mathematics and reading. Many of the elements of ITI, such as collaboration, absence of threat, and immediate feedback, have been the subject of countless research studies that demonstrate their effectiveness in raising student academic achievement. Comparison studies are now underway to further demonstrate the effectiveness of ITI in improving student academic achievement.



How do ITI teachers assess student progress?

ITI curriculum is written with assessment in mind. Teachers look for student work that is correct, complete, and comprehensive. They provide exemplars for students to see and rubrics to encourage self-assessment and appropriate goal setting. In addition to traditional tests and quizzes, ITI teachers arrange opportunities for students to demonstrate their mastery before appropriate audiences. ITI teachers also provide real-world situations for applying skills and concepts. These might include the city council, younger students, or the community-at-large as students take social or political action by lobbying for their viewpoint, or perform a community service project that requires a range of new knowledge and skills.

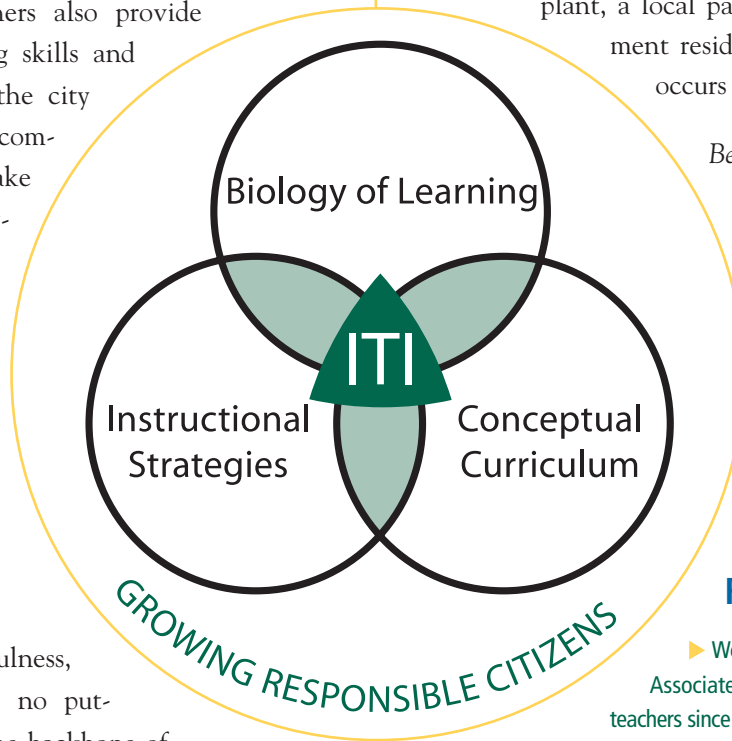
What about classroom management and discipline procedures?

The Lifelong Guidelines (truthfulness, trustworthiness, active listening, no put-downs, and personal best) form the backbone of agreements about how youth and adults at school will treat each other. The result is a calm, respectful environment that creates the required emotional climate for powerful learning. Personal best is defined by 18 LIFESKILLS that include social and personal skills, such as caring, flexibility, resourcefulness, collaboration, organization, curiosity, and sense of humor. These increase achievement and fun of working together. Students develop self discipline and learn to direct their own learning.

How does ITI use community locations?

Being there locations or community events are the starting point for curriculum integration. Research shows that when students make an in-depth study of a location—we call it a *being there* experience—the exploration reveals important understandings from the core subjects and the need to master essential skills. Students might visit the school playground, a waste treatment plant, a local park, the hospital, or a nearby retirement residence. Starting this way, integration occurs naturally and makes sense.

Being there experiences at the core of a unit of study provide the foundation for powerful learning for all students, thereby equalizing opportunity. The human brain and body collaborate at each step of the learning process. *Being there* experiences tap into this collaboration, allowing for rich sensory input in a meaningful context.



Facts about SK&A:

- ▶ We are teachers training teachers: SK&A Associates, ITI teachers themselves, have been training teachers since 1984
- ▶ We are mission driven: The mission of Susan Kovalik & Associates is to assist educators in translating brain research into practical curriculum and instructional strategies for the classroom, and to participate in the creation of learning communities that are dedicated to developing competent, caring, and responsible citizens
- ▶ One-of-a-Kind Training: We are the only professional development organization to offer a Model Teaching Week, where your teachers have an opportunity to observe a trained ITI instructor teaching your students in a brain-compatible classroom.
- ▶ We offer grant support and customized training plans.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Contact Susan Kovalik & Associates at **253-815-8800** or e-mail your questions to **skovalik@kovalik.com**. You may also consult our web site (www.kovalik.com) and our numerous books and videos available through **Books For Educators, Inc.** call toll-free **888-777-9827** or visit www.books4educ.com.