

V Putting it All Together - What a Snow Sports Instructor Does

On the snow with the guest.

With all the background you now have on the psychology of learning and teaching, how to diagnose the situation, not just movement, how to use 'enabling language', how to provide 'feedback' effectively, how to manage group dynamics, how to develop collaborative learning environments, how to plan for lessons... you are ready to put it all together and have some fun with the guest/s! Remember to look for where the guest is already skillful and to build on that!

A. Guest Contact

1. Introductions

As a snow sports instructor, you are one of the employees on the mountain that spends the most time in direct contact with the guests. Often first impressions set the stage for future success. What will be your basic framework or model when you first meet the guest?

2. Creating Group Cohesion

Many times as a new instructor, you will be instructing in group lessons. Describe how you might be able to draw out each guest and begin a dialogue amongst those in your group.

3. Developing Trust

You will find that developing trust is discussed many times in the literature. One of the primary concerns of most of your guests will be safety. A common apprehension in the beginner skier is the 'new' factor. They do not know much about skiing and that can be worrisome, for adults as well as children.

As you begin to interact with your guests and you begin to develop a level of trust, explain how you will encourage them to feel safe and be more eager rather than apprehensive. Explain how this will help develop a trusting relationship. _____

B. Lesson Planning

1. Observation/Assessment - CAPS (CAWPS) data input

Observation begins even prior to actually greeting your guests. It continues as you follow through the initial introductions. You 'dig' deeper as you ask more questions and possibly even take a warm-up run, if the group can indeed already ski. Practice by writing some of your 'always' questions below:

2. Setting Goals - the "DO" plan

Your skills as an instructor relate to your ability to create and manage a learning environment collaboratively with the guest.

a. Including the guest

After you have collected enough data about and from the guests, you will need to make a plan as to what to do. Why is it important to include the guest in this planning process?

b. Goals for the day

Remember S.M.A.R.T. goal setting. The daily goals will vary and be based the guest/s abilities as well as their expectations and desires and needs. What will you do when you achieve the goals?

What will you do if you do not achieve the goals? _____

c. Longer term goals

Many times long term goals will facilitate return business and a long term learning partnership with your guest. Under what circumstances would you not discuss such long term goals with your guest and why? _____

C. Dealing with class skill and personality diversity

Quite often, when instructing a group, you will have not only varying personality types, but also skill levels. Many snow sports schools have an arrangement for moving guests around in the groups at the beginning of a lesson, however, this is not always possible. How will you arrange the learning environment so that each individual will end up feeling like they received their own private lesson?

D. Prudent Snow and Terrain Selection

Terrain selection will depend on the snow conditions. Familiarize yourself with your choices at your resort for the various skill levels. Fear generally inhibits learning. Aside from the inherent difficulty in the terrain and conditions, what other factors will you consider in making a terrain choice?

E. The Game - What you “Do” on the Snow

1. Full Engagement

Once you know what you are going to do and where you are going to do it, you start doing it! Safety, fun, and learning are foremost. This is the time we help create ‘memorable experiences’; this is the time that ultimately is about ‘life balance’ and engaging in the lifestyle that are the snow sports. This is the time that we spend together, but ultimately also within our own selves as we “Do It - Feel It- Be It”.

Full engagement refers to the whole spirit, soul (mind/emotions/will) and body. The more successful both your guest/s and yourself will be, depends on full engagement. Research the literature and online and learn about what this entails. Explain what your goal regarding full engagement:

2. Oscillation

In our world here on earth, there are rhythms in every living thing: we breathe in and out, our heart pumps, the tides flow, the sun rises and sets, we are awake and we sleep, we run and we rest, we concentrate on study and we relax, we play and we relax. As you spend time with your guest, executing your 'plan' and adapting, learning to sense when to change, to stop, to start will help you develop into a master instructor. If you are not aware of oscillation in human behavior, the challenge now is to become aware of it.

3. Energy Management

Often when we speak of energy management in snow sports, we only think of pacing in regards to the physical realm. However, learning how to manage our energy within our beings is a critical aspect to nurturing full engagement with maximum performance with 'flow'.

If you are scratching your head now regarding the previous sentence, add this to your oscillation challenge - research, ask and learn.

4. Flow

Learning how to use enabling language, enabling non-verbal language, creating an enabling environment to produce maximum performance, 'brilliant' (thank you Weems) skiing/riding, 'flow' is perhaps the 'holy grail' of snow sports instruction.

Olympic bump skier Shannon Bahrke Happe (the pink haired young lady) relates how she would prepare herself for a competition run. As she would stand in the starting gate, she would first look up and gaze at the mountains, then down on the crowds, scanning for her parents, then finally at the course and go. She was in the moment, with her whole being, she could flow.

Curious about 'flow'? You know what to do.

5. Adaptation

While you are with your guests, you will need to be adept at adapting your action plan to your goals, or even adapting your goals to reality. This is where the 'art' of what an instructor does comes into play - and literally it is often 'play' (play energizes - it releases and even creates energy).

Consider the above mini-discussions about full engagement, oscillation, energy management, flow and adaptation. What is your response? Thoughts? Plans for yourself? Your guests?
