

ENGAGEMENT

# Presenting Unusual Information

THE **MARZANO COMPENDIUM** OF  
INSTRUCTIONAL STRATEGIES



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# INTRODUCTION

In 2007, Dr. Robert J. Marzano published *The Art and Science of Teaching: A Comprehensive Framework for Effective Instruction*. The framework, composed of three lesson segments, ten design questions, and forty-one elements, was based on research showing that teacher quality is one of the strongest influences on student achievement—that is, an effective teacher can positively and significantly impact student learning. As such, *The Art and Science of Teaching* sought to identify specific action steps teachers could take to improve their effectiveness.

In 2015, Dr. Marzano updated *The Art and Science of Teaching* framework to reflect new insights and feedback. The Marzano Compendium of Instructional Strategies is based on this updated model, presenting forty-three elements of effective teaching in ten categories. Each folio in the series addresses one element and includes strategies, examples, and reproducible resources. The Compendium and its folios are designed to help teachers increase their effectiveness by focusing on professional growth. To that end, each folio includes a scoring scale teachers can use to determine their proficiency with the element, as well as numerous strategies that teachers can use to enact the element in their classrooms. Indeed, the bulk of each folio consists of these strategies and reproducibles for implementing and monitoring them, making the Compendium a practical, actionable resource for teachers, instructional coaches, teacher mentors, and administrators.

# PRESENTING UNUSUAL INFORMATION

The teacher uses unusual or intriguing information about the content in a manner that enhances student engagement. Research has shown that missing or unknown information captures attention. Presenting interesting and unusual information at the beginning of a lesson can spark students' attention, leading them to be more engaged during the lesson—even if the information is not related to the content. During the course of a lesson, unusual information related to the content can help maintain engagement.

## Monitoring This Element

There are specific student responses that indicate this element is being effectively implemented. Before trying strategies for the element in the classroom, it is important that the teacher knows how to identify the types of student behaviors that indicate the strategy is producing the desired effects. General behaviors a teacher might look for include the following.

- Students' attention increases when unusual information is presented about the content.
- When asked, students explain how the unusual information makes them more interested in the content.

Desired behaviors such as these are listed for each strategy in this element.

Teachers often wonder how their mastery of specific strategies relates to their mastery of the element as a whole. Successful execution of an element does not depend on the use of every strategy within that element. Rather, multiple strategies are presented within each element to provide teachers with diverse options. Each strategy can be an effective means of implementing the goals of the element. If teachers attain success using a particular strategy, it is not always necessary to master the rest of the strategies within the same element. If a particular strategy proves difficult or ineffective, however, teachers are encouraged to experiment with various strategies to find the method that works best for them.

## Scoring Scale

The following scoring scale can help teachers assess and monitor their progress with this element. The scale has five levels, from Not Using (0) to Innovating (4). A teacher at the Not Using (0) level is unaware of the strategies and behaviors associated with the element or is simply not using any of

## Presenting Unusual Information

the strategies. At the Beginning (1) level, a teacher attempts to address the element by trying specific strategies, but does so in an incomplete or incorrect way. When a teacher reaches the Developing (2) level, he or she implements strategies for the element correctly and completely, but does not monitor their effects. At the Applying (3) level, a teacher implements strategies for the element and monitors their effectiveness with his or her students. Finally, a teacher at the Innovating (4) level is fluent with strategies for the element and can adapt them to unique student needs and situations, creating new strategies for the element as necessary.

### Scale for Presenting Unusual Information

4	3	2	1	0
Innovating	Applying	Developing	Beginning	Not Using
I adapt behaviors and create new strategies for unique student needs and situations.	I use unusual or intriguing information to capture students' attention, and I monitor the extent to which this information enhances engagement.	I use unusual or intriguing information to capture students' attention, but I do not monitor the effect on students.	I use the strategies and behaviors associated with this element incorrectly or with parts missing.	I am unaware of strategies and behaviors associated with this element.

The following examples describe what each level of the scale might look like in the classroom.

**Not Using (0):** A teacher knows interesting facts about the content, but doesn't share them with her class because they are not strictly relevant to what students need to know.

**Beginning (1):** A teacher sometimes begins lessons with an unusual piece of information but does not select information that is related to the content of the lesson.

**Developing (2):** A teacher uses intriguing information at the beginning of lessons and throughout her presentations of content. However, she does so without noting whether student engagement has been affected.

**Applying (3):** A teacher presents unusual information at the start of class to grab students' attention. When he notices his students getting bored or losing interest during the course of the lesson, he re-engages them by introducing an intriguing fact or story.

**Innovating (4):** A teacher uses unusual information to spark students' attention at the beginning of a lesson and to increase waning engagement levels throughout class. Occasionally, however, he will find that a particular lesson does not hold students' attention, even with the unexpected facts he presents. In these cases, he has students briefly research the topic using their iPads independently or in small groups to find their own unusual information and present it to the class.

# STRATEGIES

Each of the following strategies describes specific actions that teachers can take to enact this element in their classrooms. Strategies can be used individually or in combination with each other. Each strategy includes a description, a list of teacher actions, a list of desired student responses, and suggestions for adapting the strategy to provide extra support or extensions. Extra support and extensions relate directly to the Innovating (4) level of the scale. Extra support involves steps teachers can take to ensure they are implementing the strategy effectively for all students, including English learners, special education students, students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and reluctant learners. Extensions are ways that teachers can adapt the strategy for advanced students. In addition, some strategies include technology tips that detail ways teachers can use classroom technology to implement or enhance the strategy. Finally, each strategy includes further information, practical examples, or a reproducible designed to aid teachers' implementation of the strategy.

## **Teacher-Presented Information**

The teacher presents unusual or intriguing information to capture students' attention. Facts related to the content are preferred, but any unusual information can attract students' attention and help them feel interested in what the teacher is about to say.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Identifying unusual or intriguing facts or information related to the content
- Presenting content-related unusual or intriguing facts during lessons to increase students' engagement with the content
- Identifying unusual or intriguing facts or information unrelated to the content
- Presenting non-content-related unusual or intriguing facts at the beginning of class to capture students' attention

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Exhibiting increased attention and engagement in response to unusual or intriguing facts or information
- Referring to unusual facts or information when talking about the content

### **Extra Support**

- Using video and audio clips to present unusual or intriguing information

### **Extension**

- Inviting students to investigate unusual or intriguing information that interests them in more depth

### **Technology Tips**

- Use a class website or blog to post interesting information and encourage students to comment.



## Planning Worksheet for Unusual Information

Lesson or topic: \_\_\_\_\_

Most interesting aspects of this content:

To capture students' attention at the beginning of the lesson, I will present the following information:

If students seem to be getting bored or losing interest during the lesson, I will re-engage them with the following information:

## Webquests

Students explore the Internet and find a range of obscure but interesting facts and ideas associated with the content being studied. Typically, webquests involve a teacher-designed learning path. That is, students visit specific links or websites provided by the teacher to answer a set of questions. Older students may use a more open-ended approach, but teachers of any age group should be careful to ensure that students stay on task when using the Internet.

### Teacher Actions

- Creating guidelines to help students explore the Internet productively
- Asking students to find interesting content-related facts and information on the Internet

### Desired Student Responses

- Finding interesting content-related facts and information on the Internet
- Following guidelines for exploring the Internet

### Extra Support

- Creating a list of links related to the content for students to explore and allowing students to explore these links in class

### Extension

- Asking students to look for errors in information they find on the Internet

### Designing a Webquest

A webquest, as it will be presented to students, typically has six components:

1. **Introduction:** Explains general information about the webquest and its purpose, or sets up an imaginary situation as a frame for the webquest to capture students' interest
2. **Task:** Presents the ultimate goal of the webquest
3. **Sources:** Lists links to online resources where students can find the information needed to complete the task
4. **Process:** Describes a clear set of steps that students should follow to complete the task
5. **Guidance:** Provides students with a structure, such as a set of questions or a graphic organizer, for organizing the information they find
6. **Conclusion:** Concludes the webquest by reminding students what they have learned and prompting them to reflect or make connections to other knowledge

## **Fast Facts**

Students quickly share the most unusual (but factual) information they have discovered about a particular topic. To use this strategy, time must be provided for students to research information about the topic being addressed.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to identify unusual factual information about a topic
- Providing time for students to research the topic
- Asking students to briefly share their unusual information

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Researching unusual factual information about a topic
- Sharing their unusual information succinctly

### **Extra Support**

- Helping students summarize information

### **Extension**

- Asking students to find information about an upcoming topic and having them present a fast fact to introduce the lesson

## Summary Sheet for Fast Facts

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Main Topic: \_\_\_\_\_

1. As you investigate the topic, write down the facts and details that you find.

2. Circle the most interesting fact you found.

3. Summarize that fact into a short headline.

## **Believe It or Not**

Students create an electronic database of unusual or little known information about the content being studied. This can be preserved from one year to the next, with each class reading previous contributions, correcting misconceptions where appropriate, and adding their own unusual information.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Asking students to bring little-known or unusual information about the content to class
- Compiling students' contributions from year to year
- Referring to facts found by previous students while presenting content

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Bringing little-known or unusual information about the content to class
- Describing the teacher as someone who loves to learn about the content

### **Extra Support**

- Collecting and archiving pictures that illustrate unusual or little-known information related to the content

### **Extension**

- Asking students to categorize unusual information related to the content and make generalizations about the content based on their categorizations

## **Creating a Database of Unusual Information**

When creating the database of unusual information, teachers should make sure that each entry includes the following information.

- Content area
- Topic
- Piece of unusual information
- Space to add supplemental information

When students submit interesting information, their submissions should consist of the content area, the topic, and the piece of unusual information. For example, a student might submit the following entry.

Content area: Science

Topic: Reptiles

Did you know? The black mamba snake can move at fourteen miles per hour!

When students are looking through the database, they can add supplemental information to an entry if they find a fact that they know more about. If students discover a misconception or mistake in the database, they can correct it.

## History Files

Students research different historical perceptions in the content areas being studied. For example, medical facts have changed a great deal since the time of Hippocrates, and comparing one fact (such as the role of blood in the body) throughout history can yield new insights for students.

### Teacher Actions

- Identifying different historical perspectives about the content being studied
- Asking students to research and report on different historical perspectives on content
- Asking students to compare different historical perspectives about content

### Desired Student Responses

- Describing different historical perspectives on the content
- Reporting on a historical perspective about the content

### Extra Support

- Creating and archiving a list of historical perceptions related to the content from which students can pick one perception to study

### Extension

- Asking students to compare historical perceptions of a concept or idea at different points throughout history

### Technology Tips

- Share content-related primary sources (such as letters from soldiers, audio files, video files, images, or news headlines) from the online resources of the Smithsonian, the National Archives, PBS, or NPR.

### Sample Topics

Attitudes toward indigenous cultures	Child labor	Children's education	Dinosaurs
Diseases	Intelligence	International relations	Leadership
Marriage	Nature and the environment	Nutrition	Psychology
The role of technology	The shape of the Earth	The solar system	Space exploration
Treatment of animals	Use of controlled substances	Women's rights	

## **Guest Speakers and First-Hand Consultants**

Students learn about real-world applications of the content by listening to guests share experiences from their careers.

### **Teacher Actions**

- Inviting people who use the content in their lives and professions to share their experiences with students
- Helping students prepare questions to ask guest speakers and first-hand consultants

### **Desired Student Responses**

- Describing how the content is used in the real world
- Asking relevant questions of guest speakers and first-hand consultants

### **Extra Support**

- Asking guest speakers to bring visuals and media that explain how they use the content in the real world

### **Extension**

- Asking students to suggest people they know who use the content in the real world and who might be willing to speak to the class

### **Technology Tips**

- Use an online videoconferencing tool such as Skype to invite a guest speaker to present to the class.
- Find recorded presentations, such as TED Talks, online and share them with students.

## Get Ready for a Guest Speaker

A guest speaker will be visiting our class on (date) \_\_\_\_\_.

Our guest speaker's name is \_\_\_\_\_.

This person is going to help us learn more about the topic of \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_, which we've been discussing in class.

Our guest speaker knows a lot about this topic because \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

To prepare for the speaker's visit, please respond to the following prompts.

What I already know about this topic:

What I still want to know about this topic:

Three or more questions I could ask our guest speaker:



## REPRODUCIBLES

Teachers can use the following reproducibles to monitor their implementation of this element. The reproducible titled Tracking Progress Over Time helps teachers set goals related to their proficiency with this element and track their progress toward these goals over the course of a unit, semester, or year. Tracking Teacher Actions and Tracking Student Responses allow observers in classrooms to monitor specific teacher and student behavior related to this element. Teachers themselves can also use the Tracking Student Responses reproducible to document instances of student behaviors during class. The Strategy Reflection Log provides teachers a space to write down their thoughts and reflect on the implementation process for specific strategies related to this element. Finally, this section provides both a student survey and a teacher survey, the results of which provide feedback about teachers' proficiency with this element.

# Tracking Progress Over Time

Use this worksheet to set a goal for your use of this element, make a plan for increasing your mastery, and chart your progress toward your goal.

Element: \_\_\_\_\_

Initial Score: \_\_\_\_\_

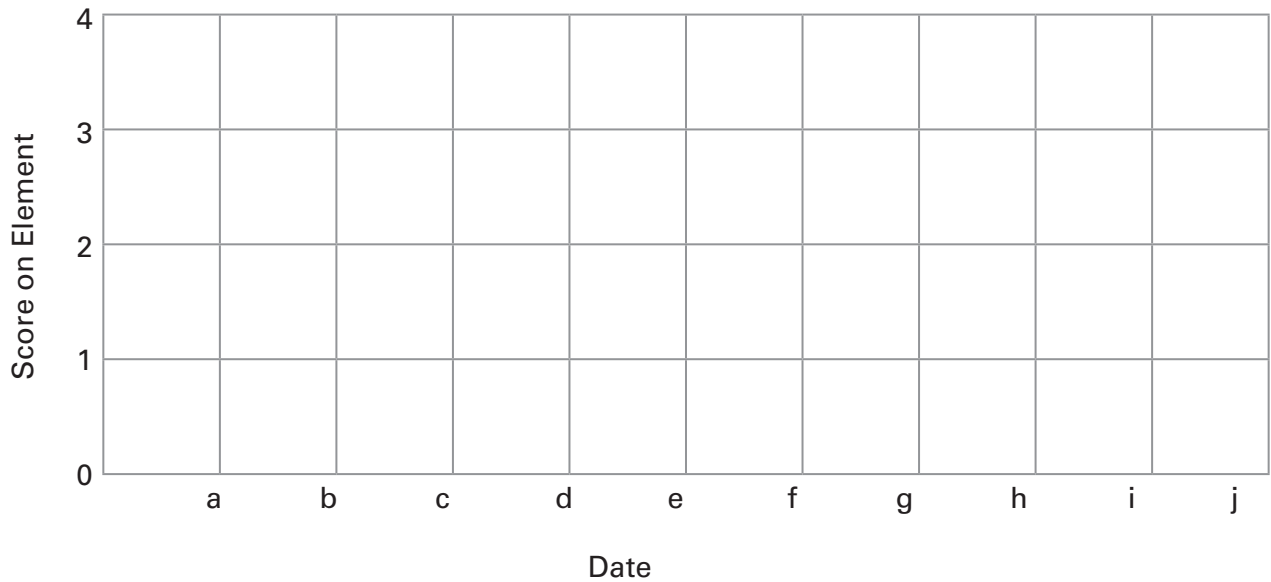
Goal Score: \_\_\_\_\_ by \_\_\_\_\_ (date)

Specific things I am going to do to improve: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



a. \_\_\_\_\_

f. \_\_\_\_\_

b. \_\_\_\_\_

g. \_\_\_\_\_

c. \_\_\_\_\_

h. \_\_\_\_\_

d. \_\_\_\_\_

i. \_\_\_\_\_

e. \_\_\_\_\_

j. \_\_\_\_\_

## Tracking Teacher Actions

During an observation, the observer can use this form to record the teacher's usage of strategies related to the element of presenting unusual information.

Observation Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Check Strategies You Intend to Use	Strategies	Description of What Was Observed
	Teacher-Presented Information	
	Webquests	
	Fast Facts	
	Believe It or Not	
	History Files	
	Guest Speakers and First-Hand Consultants	
	Other:	
	Other:	

## Tracking Student Responses

A teacher or observer can use this worksheet to record instances of student behavior to inform planning and implementation of strategies associated with presenting unusual information. Any item followed by an asterisk is an example of undesirable behavior related to the element; the teacher should look for a decrease in the number of instances of these items.

Observation Date and Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of Observation: \_\_\_\_\_

Behavior	Number of Instances
Becoming more interested in the content	
Appearing bored during instruction*	
Becoming more attentive when presented with unusual information	
Maintaining engagement throughout class	
Referencing unusual information	
Investigating unusual information on their own	
Sharing unusual information with peers	
Other:	
Other:	

## Strategy Reflection Log

Use this worksheet to select a strategy, set a goal, and reflect on your use of that strategy.

Element: \_\_\_\_\_

Strategy: \_\_\_\_\_

Goal: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date	How did it go?

## Student Survey for Presenting Unusual Information

**1. My teacher tells me interesting or unusual facts about what I am learning.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**2. My teacher tells me interesting or unusual stories about what I am learning.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**3. The unusual information that my teacher tells me helps me feel interested in what I am learning.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**4. The interesting information that my teacher tells me helps me remember what we are learning.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**5. My teacher asks me to find unusual or interesting information and facts about what I am learning.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

**6. My teacher often invites people from the community to come and talk to us about their experiences related to what we are studying.**

Strongly Disagree      Disagree      Neither Agree  
Nor Disagree      Agree      Strongly Agree

## Teacher Survey for Presenting Unusual Information

**1. I provide students with interesting facts and details about the content.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know

**2. I tell interesting stories about the content.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know

**3. I use unusual or intriguing information to capture or re-engage students' attention.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know

**4. I ask students to investigate unusual information related to the content.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know

**5. I invite guest speakers to present to my class.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know

**6. My students are more engaged in class when I present unusual information.**

Often                      Sometimes                      Rarely                      Never                      I don't know