

# HOST Implementation Playbook: The Step-by- Step Guide to Smart Teaching



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# 3. The 3-Levels Teaching Structure

*A Core Framework of the Highly Optimised Structured Teaching (HOST) Model*

Despite decades of research into instructional design and evidence-based teaching strategies - such as Merrill's Component Display Theory and First Principles of Instruction, as well as large-scale meta-analyses by Hattie, Marzano, and the Education Endowment Foundation - many educators still struggle to translate these findings into effective classroom practice. The challenge is not a lack of research, but a lack of **practical, structured frameworks** that guide teachers in applying this research consistently and efficiently.

The **3-Levels Teaching Structure** was developed to address this gap. It offers a **clear, practical, and implementable framework** that enables educators to apply high-impact teaching strategies systematically. As a central component of the **HOST** model, the **3-Levels Teaching Structure** is designed to support **faster, better, and stronger learning**.

The framework reflects the core elements of effective teaching and provides several key benefits:

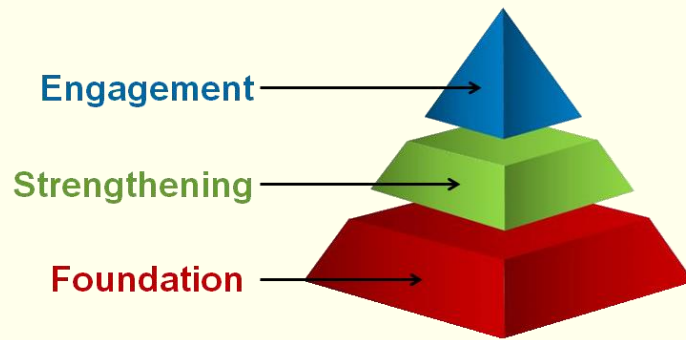
- It establishes a **common instructional language** that defines teaching and learning processes.
- It supports the implementation of **high-quality, evidence-based instructional practices**.
- It provides a **well-specified and structured intervention** for improving teaching effectiveness.
- It lowers the barrier to pedagogical change by making improvement **manageable and actionable**.
- It enables educators to improve teaching performance **rapidly and sustainably**.

## Overview of the Three Levels

The 3-Levels Teaching Structure classifies instructional activity into three interrelated levels:

1. **Foundation Level**
2. **Strengtheners (Booster) Level**
3. **Engagement Level**

The overall structure of the **HOST** model is represented in **Figure 5**, which illustrates the three levels as a unified instructional framework.



*Figure 5. The 3 Levels Teaching Structure*

This figure presents the hierarchical yet interdependent structure of effective teaching. The Foundation Level forms the instructional base, the Strengthening Level amplifies learning through evidence-based strategies, and the Engagement Level creates the conditions necessary for sustained learning.

Effective teaching does not occur within a single level. Rather, optimal learning outcomes are achieved through the **strategic integration of all three levels**. Teaching is inherently dynamic, and expertise develops through learning how to move purposefully between levels and within each level as learning unfolds.

## Foundation Level: The Structural Core of Teaching

The **Foundation Level** represents the backbone of effective instruction. It ensures clarity, coherence, and cognitive accessibility, and is grounded primarily in **Merrill's Component Display Theory (CDT)**.

While CDT identifies both content dimensions (facts, concepts, procedures, principles) and performance dimensions (remembering, using, finding), the **HOST** model places particular emphasis on **presentation forms**, as these most directly shape instructional clarity and learning effectiveness.

Merrill identified four **Primary Presentation Forms (PPFs)** that constitute the Foundation Level:

- **Tell** – presenting rules, definitions, or principles
- **Show** – demonstrating concepts through examples or worked solutions
- **Ask** – prompting recall and checking for understanding
- **Ask to Do** – engaging students in guided or independent practice

These four forms are illustrated in **Figure 6**.



Figure 6. The Four Primary Presentation Forms (PPFs)

This figure illustrates the four instructional actions - Tell, Show, Ask, and Ask to Do - that form the core structure of the Foundation Level. Effective teaching depends on the deliberate sequencing, balance, and timing of these forms.

The instructor actively manages these presentation forms to reduce cognitive load, establish clear learning pathways, and ensure that students understand not only *what* they are learning, but *how* to engage with the content.

## Strengtheners Level: Amplifying Learning Through Evidence-Based Strategies

The **Strengtheners Level**, also referred to as the **Booster Level**, extends Merrill's concept of **Secondary Presentation Forms**. Within the Highly Optimised Structured Teaching (HOST), this level encompasses **all high-impact, evidence-based teaching strategies** that deepen, accelerate, and consolidate learning.

At this level, instructors deliberately integrate strategies with strong empirical support, such as those identified by Hattie, Marzano, and the Education Endowment Foundation. These strategies are embedded purposefully within instruction rather than applied as isolated techniques.

Examples include:

- Direct instruction and worked examples
- Feedback and formative assessment
- Spaced practice and retrieval practice
- Teaching metacognitive and problem-solving strategies
- Cooperative and collaborative learning
- Mastery learning and concept mapping

In addition, instructional techniques such as **chunking, sequencing, overviews, contextualization, cognitive lenses, zooming in and out, and structured summarization** are integral components of this level.

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The Strengtheners Level enables students to learn **faster**, understand **more deeply**, and retain knowledge **more securely**, while simultaneously increasing instructional efficiency.

## Engagement Level: Creating the Conditions for Learning

The **Engagement Level** addresses the affective, behavioural, and social conditions that make learning possible. Student engagement is a critical determinant of instructional success and influences achievement, persistence, motivation, and classroom climate.

This level includes factors such as:

- Sustaining **attention**
- Effective **class management**
- Establishing a **positive learning atmosphere**
- Enhancing **motivation and participation**

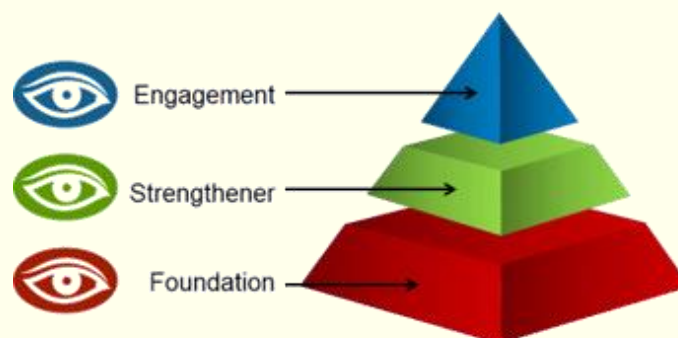
Contemporary research views engagement as a multidimensional construct, encompassing academic, cognitive, behavioural, psychological, and social elements. Rather than adopting a single engagement taxonomy, the HOST framework treats engagement as a **dynamic condition** that must be continuously monitored and regulated throughout instruction.

The 3-Levels Teaching Structure provides an organisational framework for instructional decisions rather than a fixed lesson sequence.

## Metacognition: Regulating Teaching Across the Three Levels

Metacognition plays a central role in the 3-Levels Teaching Structure. It refers to instructors' awareness of their instructional decisions and their ability to regulate teaching in response to student needs.

This regulatory function is illustrated in **Figure 7**, which represents metacognition as simultaneous awareness of all three levels.



*Figure 7. The Three Levels and the “Three Eyes”*

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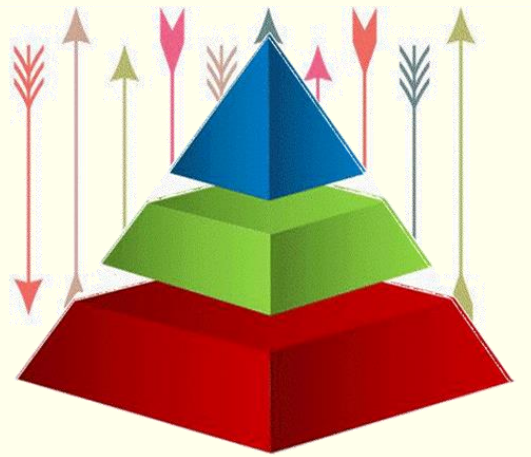
This figure depicts metacognitive regulation within the 3 Levels Teaching Structure. The “three eyes” symbolize the instructor’s continuous monitoring of instructional structure (Foundation), learning amplification (Strengtheners), and student engagement (Engagement).

Effective teaching requires instructors to observe and adjust their focus across all three levels in real time. This metacognitive skill enables responsive teaching and supports sustained improvement in instructional quality.

## Dynamic Movement Across Levels

A defining feature of the 3-Levels Teaching Structure is **dynamic movement**. Teaching is not linear or static; it involves continuous adjustment based on student understanding, engagement, and instructional goals.

This dynamic process is illustrated in **Figure 8**.



*Figure 8. The 3 Levels Teaching Dynamic*

This figure illustrates continuous vertical movement between the three levels and horizontal movement within each level. Effective teaching depends on shifting instructional focus at the right moment to maximise learning impact.

Vertical movement refers to shifting focus between the Foundation, Strengtheners, and Engagement levels. Horizontal movement refers to adjusting strategies within a single level, such as varying feedback approaches or engagement techniques.

This process is analogous to driving a car. Understanding how gears work is essential, but mastery comes from knowing **when to shift gears** to optimise performance. Similarly, expert teaching emerges from knowing when to shift instructional focus to meet learners’ needs.

Through deliberate practice and metacognitive awareness, educators develop fluency in navigating the 3-Levels Teaching Structure, resulting in **highly efficient, responsive, and impactful teaching**.

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# Automaticity

Automaticity in teaching refers to the ability to execute teaching strategies and techniques effortlessly and without conscious thought. When teachers develop automaticity in their practice, they can:

- Focus more attention on student learning rather than on managing instruction
- Respond more quickly and effectively to student needs
- Implement multiple strategies simultaneously
- Maintain better classroom flow and engagement

Developing automaticity in teaching requires:

1. **Deliberate practice:** Repeatedly practicing specific teaching techniques until they become automatic
2. **Reflection:** Regularly analysing and reflecting on teaching practices
3. **Feedback:** Receiving and acting on feedback from students, colleagues, and supervisors
4. **Continuous learning:** Staying updated with current research and best practices

The HOST framework supports the development of automaticity by providing a clear structure that teachers can practice and internalise over time.