

Lesson Planning

A lesson plan is the teacher's road map of what students need to learn and how it will be done effectively during the class time. Before a teacher plans his/her lesson, the first thing needed is to identify the learning objectives for the class meeting. Then, a teacher can design appropriate learning activities and develop strategies to obtain feedback on student learning.

Importance of Lesson Planning

Lesson planning is a vital component of the teaching-learning process. Proper classroom planning will keep teachers organized and on track while teaching, thus allowing them to teach more, help students reach objectives more easily and manage less. The better prepared the teacher is, the more likely she/he will be able to handle whatever unexpectedly happens in the lesson.

To have some hints on the importance of lesson plans on the teaching process, consider these reasons:

Student learning is correlated to teacher planning

Research has shown that student learning is correlated to teacher planning. One major explanation is that when a plan is ready, teachers can focus on its implementation. When teachers do not have to think so much about what they need to do next, they are able to focus on other parts of the lesson. This is especially important in foreign language teaching where a teacher not only has to concentrate on the content being taught that learner needs but also on the use of the second language as well. This concept relates to the idea of cognitive capacity

and cognitive load. In short, when a plan is prepared the teachers cognitive load is less and they can pay more attention to other aspects of the learning process.

Maintain Focus

A lesson plan helps a teacher maintain focus. With a classroom full of children, with their short attention spans and their natural desire to disrupt anything and everything, it is very easy for a lesson to be sidetracked or derailed completely, and the best way for you, as the teacher, to steer the lesson back on course is if you happened to have brought your map along with you.

Track Progress and Problems

Lesson planning lets teacher track progress and problems. If students are not learning a particular point, the teacher knows which lesson plan to amend, which helps him/her to learn from his/her own mistakes and missteps. If students' learn something really well, the teacher look at that lesson and figure out what about it really worked. One can start to learn to be a better teacher overall and for each particular class, and one does not have to do it via memory.

Sense of Accomplishment

A lesson plan for a lesson that went really well is like a personal award certificate. And since lesson planning helps you keep track of what works and what doesn't work, your lesson plans will get better and better, feeding into and renewing that sense of success and accomplishment. These kinds of small accomplishments can increase

teacher's motivation, productivity, and work engagement and satisfaction.

Powerful Motivators

So many teachers struggle with motivation – with not having real feedback from the kids or the tests, it is incredibly hard for us to know how we are doing – but creating lesson plans and then assessing how the lesson went – not just the doing, but the documentation – are surprisingly powerful motivators.

Clarity

Lesson plans help the teacher to be clear about what you want to teach. Teachers need to make wise decisions about the strategies and methods they will employ to help students move systematically toward learner goals.

Unpredictable Events

Lesson plans may also include a room for unpredictable events. This helps teachers to be ready to cope with whatever happens. Proper lesson planning gives the teacher opportunity to anticipate potential problems that may arise in class so that they can be prepared with some possible solutions or other options for the lesson.

Coherent Framework

Lesson plans provides a coherent framework for smooth efficient teaching and gives overall shape.

Organized

It helps the teacher to be more organized. Lesson Plan gives a sense of direction in relation to the syllabus. Lesson plans may also play the role of a reminder for teachers when they get distracted.

Commitment

It suggests a level of professionalism and real commitment.

In addition to the above reasons, it is worthwhile mentioning that lesson plans will have positive impact on both the teacher and the learner.

For the teacher

- They don't have to think on their feet. They don't lose face in front of their learners. They help the teacher to be more confident when delivering the lesson.
- They are clear on the procedure to follow.
- They build on previous teaching and prepare for coming lessons. They provide a useful basis for future planning.
- They help the teacher to plan lessons, which cater for different students.
- They act as a proof that the teacher has taken a considerable amount of effort in his/her teaching.

For the learner

They realize that the teacher cares for their learning.

They attend a structured lesson: easier to assimilate

They appreciate their teacher's work as a model of well-organized work to imitate.

Strategies For Lesson Planning

A successful lesson plan addresses and integrates these three key components:

- Objectives for student learning
- Teaching/learning activities

- Strategies to check student understanding

Specifying concrete objectives for student learning will help to determine the kinds of teaching and learning activities can be in class, while those activities will define how you will check whether the learning objectives have been accomplished.

Steps for Preparing a Lesson Plan

(1) Outline learning objectives

The first step is to determine what the teacher wants students to learn and be able to do at the end of class. To help you specify your objectives for student learning, answer the following questions:

- What is the topic of the lesson?
- What do I want students to learn?
- What do I want them to understand and be able to do at the end of class?
- What do I want them to take away from this particular lesson?

This step prepares a teacher for managing class time and accomplishing the learning objectives.

(2) Develop the introduction

The next step is to design the specific activities you will use to get students to understand and apply what they have learned. Because you will have a diverse body of students with different academic and personal experiences, they may already be familiar with the topic. That is why you might start with a question or activity to gauge students'

knowledge of the subject or possibly, their preconceived notions about it. This additional information can help shape your introduction, learning activities, etc. When you have an idea of the students' familiarity with the topic, you will also have a sense of what to focus on.

Develop a creative introduction to the topic to stimulate interest and encourage thinking. You can use a variety of approaches to engage students (e.g., personal anecdote, historical event, thought-provoking dilemma, real-world example, short video clip, practical application, probing question, etc.). Consider the following questions when planning your introduction:

- How will I check whether students know anything about the topic or have any preconceived notions about it?
- What are some commonly held ideas (or possibly misconceptions) about this topic that students might be familiar with or might espouse?
- What will I do to introduce the topic?

(3) Plan the specific learning activities (the main body of the lesson)

Prepare several different ways of explaining the material (real-life examples, analogies, visuals, etc.) to catch the attention of more students and appeal to different learning styles. As you plan your examples and activities, estimate how much time you will spend on each. Build in time for extended explanation or discussion, but also be prepared to move on quickly to different applications or problems, and to identify strategies that check for understanding. These questions would help you design the learning activities you will use:

- What will I do to explain the topic?
- What will I do to illustrate the topic in a different way?
- How can I engage students in the topic?
- What are some relevant real-life examples, analogies, or situations that can help students understand the topic?
- What will students need to do to help them understand the topic better?

(4) Plan to check for understanding

Now that you have explained the topic and illustrated it with different examples, you need to check for student understanding – how will you know that students are learning? Think about specific questions you can ask students in order to check for understanding, write them down, and then paraphrase them so that you are prepared to ask the questions in different ways. Try to predict the answers your questions will generate. Decide on whether you want students to respond orally or in writing. What questions will I ask students to check for understanding? These questions will help you to check the understanding of the students.

- What will I have students do to demonstrate that they are following?
- Going back to my list of learning objectives, what activity can I have students do to check whether each of those has been accomplished?

An important strategy that will also help you with time management is to anticipate students' questions. When planning your lesson, decide what kinds of questions will be productive for discussion and what questions might sidetrack the class. Think about and decide on the

balance between covering content (accomplishing your learning objectives) and ensuring that students understand.

(5) Develop a conclusion and a preview

Go over the material covered in class by summarizing the main points of the lesson. You can do this in a number of ways: you can state the main points yourself ("Today we talked about..."), you can ask a student to help you summarize them, or you can even ask all students to write down on a piece of paper what they think were the main points of the lesson. You can review the students' answers to gauge their understanding of the topic and then explain anything unclear the following class. Conclude the lesson not only by summarizing the main points, but also by previewing the next lesson. How does the topic relate to the one that's coming? This preview will spur students' interest and help them connect the different ideas within a larger context.

(6) Create a realistic timeline

The teachers usually run out of time and not cover all of the many points they had planned to cover. A list of ten learning objectives is not realistic, so narrow down your list to the two or three key concepts, ideas, or skills you want students to learn. Instructors also agree that they often need to adjust their lesson plan during class depending on what the students need. Your list of prioritized learning objectives will help you make decisions on the spot and adjust your lesson plan as needed. Having additional examples or alternative activities will also allow you to be flexible. A realistic timeline will reflect your flexibility and readiness to adapt to the specific classroom environment. Here are some strategies for creating a realistic timeline:

- Estimate how much time each of the activities will take, then plan some extra time for each
- When you prepare your lesson plan, next to each activity indicate how much time you expect it will take
- Plan a few minutes at the end of class to answer any remaining questions and to sum up key points
- Plan an extra activity or discussion question in case you have time left
- Be flexible – be ready to adjust your lesson plan to students' needs and focus on what seems to be more productive rather than sticking to your original plan

Presenting the Lesson Plan

Letting your students know what they will be learning and doing in class will help keep them more engaged and on track. You can share your lesson plan by writing a brief agenda on the board or telling students explicitly what they will be learning and doing in class. You can outline on the board or on a handout the learning objectives for the class. Providing a meaningful organization of the class time can help students not only remember better, but also follow your presentation and understand the rationale behind in-class activities.

Reflecting on Your Lesson Plan

A lesson plan may not work as well as you had expected due to a number of extraneous circumstances. You should not get discouraged – it happens to even the most experienced teachers! Take a few minutes after each class to reflect on what worked well and why, and what you could have done differently. Identifying successful and less successful

organization of class time and activities would make it easier to adjust to the contingencies of the classroom.

Conclusion

To be effective, the lesson plan does not have to be an exhaustive document that describes each and every possible classroom scenario. Nor does it have to anticipate each and every student's response or question. Instead, it should provide you with a general outline of your teaching goals, learning objectives, and means to accomplish them. It is a reminder of what you want to do and how you want to do it. A productive lesson is not one in which everything goes exactly as planned, but one in which both students and instructor learn from each other.

More hints for effective lesson planning

- When planning, think about your students and your teaching context first.
- Prepare more than you may need: It is advisable to have an easily presented, light "reserve" activity ready in case of extra time. . Similarly, it is important to think in advance which component(s) of the lesson may be skipped if you find yourself with too little time to do everything you have planned.
- Keep an eye on your time. Include timing in the plan itself. The smooth running of your lesson depends to some extent on proper timing.
- Think about transitions (from speaking to writing or from a slow task to a more active one).
- Include variety if things are not working the way you have planned.

- Pull the class together at the beginning and at the end.
- End your lessons on a positive note.

Planning enables you to think about your teaching in a systematic way before you enter the classroom. The outcome of your planning is a coherent framework, which contains a logical sequence of tasks to prepare the field for more effective teaching and learning. Plans only express your intentions. Plans are projects, which need to be implemented in a real classroom with real students. Many things may happen which you had not anticipated. In the end you need to adapt your plans in order to respond to your pupils' actual needs.

It is important to bear in mind Jim Scrivener's words:

"Prepare thoroughly. But in class, teach the learners not the plan."