

Engaging All Learners:

The Process of Lesson Planning and Standards

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THE PROCESS OF LESSON PLANNING AND STANDARDS

When preparing to engage all learners within our schools, a major aspect is lesson planning. The lesson plan is the road map from the standards and is designed to meet the standard. In the lesson planning process, the general education and special education teachers become actively involved in the planning and implementation of instruction and assessment. What better place than the lesson plan to prepare to engage all learners.

Before lesson planning begins the nation and states have been busy developing guidelines for curricula selection for school districts. From the curricula educators begin to develop their units and resulting lessons. Let's back up and take a look at national and state preparation for curricula development.

Traditionally, educators within school districts were free to select what was to be taught and what materials were to be used. Across the nation attention was drawn to the diversity in the skills students were taught. It was felt that our students were capable of learning more. Nationally, the skills students were learning were addressed. States began to develop standards for school districts to follow when developing curricula. These standards were further broken into small steps or benchmarks and

indicators were inserted into the benchmarks to establish a measuring point for educators. Figure 1 provides an overview of the relationship of the standards to lesson planning.

Lesson plans are established, students are taught and assessment is implemented. Assessment is used ongoing when teaching and re-teaching a skill. Assessment further evaluates the lesson, measures teachers' instruction, students' progress, schools' and districts progress, and eventually the states' progress in education.

Collaboration in Lesson Planning

Most often, the special education teacher becomes actively involved in the lesson planning process only when the general education teacher is in the last stage of planning: developing a daily lesson plan. However, it is more beneficial to the student with special needs if the special education teacher becomes involved in the first phase of planning: the yearly lesson plan. A year's worth of learning outcomes as set forth in daily plans might be attainable for students without disabilities but difficult for a students with special-needs. It's a losing battle to try to keep a student in a general education class where the skills being taught are instructionally too advanced.

A balance must be maintained between skills taught and those that are reasonably attainable.

Many students with special needs and those at risk can achieve success during general lesson plan activities when intervention points are identified and appropriate accommodations or modifications are provided. This process depends on careful, well-planned collaboration between general and special education teachers. As teachers work together, they should follow several guidelines:

1. Realize that interventions to the general class lesson plan may be necessary.
2. Be specific in listing what will occur during each component of the lesson plan. Include an objective, strategies, resources, and evaluation.
3. Allow time for both teachers to review the lesson plan and develop appropriate interventions.
4. Be flexible when an adaptation or intervention does not work.
5. Be prepared to develop an alternate intervention.
6. Realize that when an intervention is made to the lesson plan, the plan is still valid and not "watered down."

Components of a Lesson Plan

All lesson plans have several essential parts, although various authors may give these parts different names.

1. The *purpose* states instructional objectives, including what students should learn from the lesson based on the stated standard/benchmark.

2. The *sequence of lesson* strategies or learning experiences describes the work-study activities that will occur during the lesson.

3. The *learning process* lists learning materials, media or technology needed to teach the lesson.

4. The *evaluation* describes the activities designed to measure the lesson process. Evaluation is also an ongoing process.

Instructional Objectives

The objective or learning outcomes, based on the standard/benchmarks of the lesson, is a statement of specific learner outcomes that should result from the lesson. Objectives should be clearly stated, express the intended behavior outcome, and identify how the behavior outcome will be measured and focused on the student. Objectives should be carefully written in the domain level appropriate for the student. These levels include knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis,

synthesis, and evaluation. Objectives should be shared with learners so that they will be aware of the purpose of the lesson. Explain to the learner how objectives spring from established standards and benchmarks. For younger students, the teacher may need to paraphrase the objective or provide a visual representation of the desired outcome to help them understand the objective. It may be helpful to show graphically how today's objective continues yesterday's objective and will tie into tomorrow's objective. This provides a connection for students, who may not readily see the logical sequence of the skills being taught.

After a teacher selects an appropriate objective, he or she moves ahead to the next steps: (a) making a list of all subobjectives, (b) analyzing the subobjectives by task (putting them into sequential order from simple to complex), (c) listing the necessary prerequisite skills students must have before they can master the objective; and (d) deciding the point of entry for students with special-needs or those at-risk.

Instructional objectives are useful in the following situations

- Planning lessons based on the benchmarks.
- Selecting learning aids and appropriate technology.

- Determining appropriate assignments for individual students.
- Selecting and constructing classroom tests.
- Determining classroom embedded assessment measures.
- Determining when to gather evaluation data.
- Summarizing and reporting evaluation results.
- Helping learners determine where they are and where they need to go as they strive to become independent learners.

Refer to Table 1 for suggestions about adapting the objective component of lesson plans.

Strategies

After the objectives have carefully been selected, written, displayed, and explained, the educator begins the second phase of lesson planning: developing strategies or learning experiences. The teacher must determine the instructional makeup of the lesson as well as the sequence the lesson should follow. While developing this section, the teacher should remember the stated objectives and carefully build strategies carefully around the objectives. Unfortunately, it is common to find excellent objectives and excellent strategies that do not match. Such an instructional mismatch can mean that a student will not be able to reach the objectives.

The strategies section of the lesson plan is developed around three major parts: the introduction, the lesson development, and the summary or closing activity.

Lesson introduction. In the lesson plan introduction, the teacher should state and/or demonstrate what students should learn; use a provocative question, artifact, or hands-on activity to stimulate student interest in the lesson; or link the present lesson to past lessons or student experiences. The teacher should make sure that he or she follows these six steps during the introduction:

1. Review the relationship of the objective or lesson purpose to the standard/benchmark.
2. Review what is to be learned, including the major instructional objective and all subobjectives. Think in terms of preparing the student for the lesson itself, and make sure that instructional objectives are on the students' level and are in sequential order. Also include an assessment of the students' prerequisite skills.
3. Demonstrate what the student should learn. This might include a whole-part-whole method using a lecture outline, organizer, or providing sequential written directions.
4. Use a mind capturer or activator such as a manipulative or hands-on activity to boost interest.

5. Link past lessons to students' current or past experiences, which make the lesson more meaningful for students.

6. Relate the lesson to a future event. Students can see purpose in learning a lesson if it relates personally.

Lesson development. Here the teacher selects activities to achieve the lesson's purpose, describes these activities, and chooses an instructional model around which to organize the lesson. For each of the model's parts, the educator should plan the appropriate adaptation or intervention if needed.

Frequently, by the time he or she is developing a lesson, the teacher may be aware of intervention points for specific students. For other students, however, the need for identifying an intervention point may emerge as the lesson progresses.

As the lesson develops, the teacher should keep several major points in mind:

1. Select strategies for teaching for acquisition, retention, and generalization.

2. Be sure that all activities are based on the appropriate objective level.

3. Sequence all activities.

4. Identify any necessary intervention points during the lesson for students experiencing difficulty.

5. Plan for an adapted learning environment.

Lesson summary. Here the major points of the lesson are summarized and the lesson's events tied together. The teacher may choose to have students describe what they have learned by performing one of several activities, such as question, discussion, demonstration, or presentation of a project. Table 2 presents the strategy component of the lesson plan and suggested interventions to consider for each stage.

Materials, Resources, Technology

In the resources section of the lesson plan, the teacher identifies any materials, media, or technology to be used to achieve the lesson's purpose. Such resources may include pages or chapters in a pamphlet, text, or workbook; video or DVD; guest experts; field experience; special settings; art or cooking supplies; audiovisual equipment or technology. Assessing the instructional level of materials, matching perceptual learning styles with media, using a variety of materials or media, are all part of developing resources. Table 3 lists suggested interventions for materials, resources and technology.

Evaluation

Evaluation, the final component of the lesson plan, is designed to measure student outcomes, identify a teacher's need to reorganize lesson plans, and target areas for reteaching.

Evaluation may appear to be the last component in the lesson plan format, but actually it is an ongoing process.

Assessment/evaluation are planned during the initial stages of lesson planning.

During evaluation, the teacher notes ways to assess student learning and the success of the lesson. Teachers can assess students by checking behavioral objectives, using informal questions, administering formal pre- and posttests, or having students develop projects or products. A teacher may choose to have students check their own work by providing them with feedback, a model of a completed activity, or an illustration of the lesson's concept or process. Another method is to have students assess one another's work or self-assess. To determine the lesson's degree of success, a teacher may analyze students' reactions during the lesson, the value of the lesson as a learning experience, or the teacher's own teaching performance. Refer to Table 4 for suggestions about student evaluation and assignments.

Table 4

Engage All Learners Through Assignments

Student assignments are a major component of evaluation.

Assignments are part of the evaluation process as well as an extension of content mastery. Assignments provide the teacher an opportunity to see if the student has mastered the skill and if reteaching will be necessary. A few suggestions for assignments follow:

1. Be sure that student has the correct information on the assignment (page numbers, date due, etc.).
2. Review the assignment and check for questions.
3. The assignment should be geared for the instructional level of each student.
4. Structure each assignment so all students can experience success.
5. Provide immediate feedback on all assignments.
6. If the assignment requires students to look up answers to questions, use an asterisk to distinguish implied fact from literal questions requiring a stated fact.
7. If the assignment is lengthy, provide class time to partially complete it or divide assignment time into two or more days.

8. Allow students the option of dropping one or more low assignment grades per grading period.
9. Establish assignment passes earned for good work and may be "cashed in" when an assignment is forgotten or a low grade is received.
10. Be consistent in placing the assignment for class and/or homework in the same place each day.
11. Provide written and oral directions for assignments.
12. If an assignment requires several steps or stages (i.e., projects), provide a checklist for the students.
13. If the assignment is to be copied from the board, provide a carbon copy for the student who may have difficulty copying.
14. If the assignment is to be copied from the text, allow the student who has difficulty copying or who copied slowly, to copy only the answers.
15. Make copies of the assignment for a week and give the student and the resource teacher a copy.

Conclusion

As teachers prepare lesson plans, they should plan as a team and engage all learners. By working collaboratively in the development and implementation of lesson plans, general and

special education teachers can provide appropriate instruction
for all learners.