
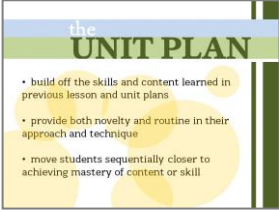







Plan for Success: Planning That Ensures Academic Achievement


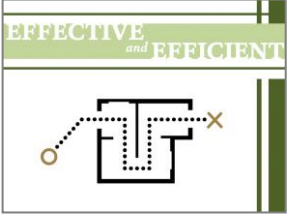

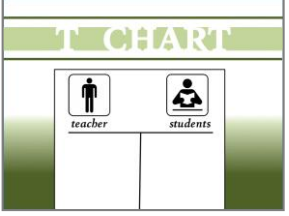
Objective: The following leader notes and corresponding PowerPoint are provided by the Curriculum and Instruction Department to school leaders as a support in training faculty members on timely and important subjects. Please feel free to use as is, or revise to best fit the needs of your faculty/staff.

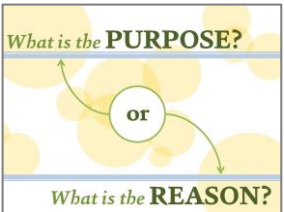
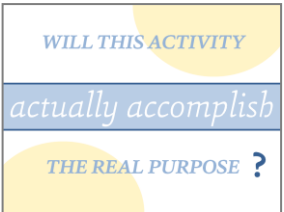

<p>1</p> 	<p>ASK: If you walked into a classroom, what would you see as evidence the teacher was prepared and had a plan?</p> <p>Why is planning important?</p>
<p>2</p> 	<p>There is nothing wrong with having an adventure but the term <i>adventure</i> can be defined as an undertaking involving uncertainty and risk. That's really not what we're looking for in a classroom.</p> <p>Roald Amundsen was a Norwegian explorer. He led the Antarctic expedition to discover the South Pole in December 1911 and he was the first expedition leader to reach the North Pole in 1926. He disappeared in June 1928 while taking part in a rescue mission. He was, in fact, attempting to save an expedition who went off course due to poor planning.</p> <p>His life was full of exploration. All of it involved a great deal of planning and, even with that, far too much adventure for his liking. Remembered as one of the greatest explorers who ever lived, he was willing to plan, risk, succeed (sometimes fail), plan again, risk again, and . . . to be truthful, he succeeded a lot more than he failed . . . but that is because he PLANNED.</p>
<p>3</p> 	<p>I know you've heard many old sayings like these referring to the importance of planning.</p> <p>ASK: What keeps people, in general, from planning adequately? (You may want to list a few things people might plan for – grocery shopping, a vacation, a career, etc.) What are some of the consequences for lack of planning for these things?</p>
<p>4</p> 	<p>TURN AND TALK: Let's think about teachers, specifically. What keeps teachers from planning adequately for learning?</p>
<p>5</p> 	<p>Doug Lemov in <i>Teach Like a Champion</i> suggests that he, as a new teacher, had two fatal flaws in his planning methodology. First, he engaged simply in "activity planning" with no specific learning goals in mind. His objective was merely to determine what he would "do" in class. What would be "keeping them busy." There is a big difference in planning when you ask yourself, "What will my students understand today" rather than, "What will my students do today?"</p> <p>His second fatal flaw was that he procrastinated and didn't plan, often until the night before. If a teacher isn't able to plan, or at least outline, an entire unit it leads to planning lessons singly rather than as part of a greater whole.</p>

<p>6</p> 	<p>We've heard the phrases "begin with the end in mind" and "backward design" in the educational arena for quite a few years now.</p> <p>ASK: Would someone be willing to summarize this idea for us?</p> <p>[Allow time for someone to briefly explain. Ensure that there is some mention of the idea that all learning activities involved in a lesson are designed/organized/chosen in order to achieve a specific instructional outcome.]</p> <p>The idea is that if we know where we are going, it's much easier to get there because we then can create a plan. Of course, each lesson plan should begin with a focus on the OUTCOME or learning goal -- on what students will be able to do at the END -- but let's scale up a bit and talk about unit planning. According to Lemov, unit planning is essential. This is where you create a series of lessons that build on each previous lesson and prepare students for each following lesson. Unit planning, when using the "begin with the end in mind" philosophy creates a cohesive structure for content delivery.</p>
<p>7</p> 	<p>In addition to identifying what students should know and be able to do at the end of a unit there are a couple other things you want to remember when unit planning. Remember, unit plans are built of a series of different lesson plans, much in the same way that effective lesson plans use different learning activities to build student learning. So, the best unit plans build off the skills and content learned in previous lesson plans, provide both routine and novelty in their approach and technique, and move students sequentially closer to achieving mastery of a content or skill standard.</p> <p>Think to yourself for a moment:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do my lessons build on each other in terms of both content and skills? • How do I provide a little novelty in my instruction? Once in a while – and at least once a unit – do I engage students with a refreshing and different activity? • Is there enough routine to provide safety and security – but not so much that my lessons are boring and predictable – to students? • Do all my lessons work together, as part of an obviously larger whole, to lead students toward the understanding of a big idea or core standard?
<p>8</p> 	<p>When you have completed your unit planning, you are ready for the daily lesson plan. Again, we need to know where we are going by identifying our learning goal. There are four things we can do to make our learning goals more effective.</p>
<p>9</p> 	<p>First, we need to make our learning goals manageable. One of the biggest blunders teachers make is mistaking a "standard" for a daily "objective" or "learning goal". Think about the following learning goal for a lesson.</p>

<p>10</p> 	<p>“Students will appreciate Shakespearean drama.” Can you reach that in one lesson? It’s really not very manageable, is it? As a unit goal – perhaps because many lessons dealing with more specific, more concrete, more manageable objectives can lead students in the direction of appreciating Shakespeare.</p>
<p>11</p> 	<p>Read quote from <i>Teach Like a Champion</i>:</p> <p>P 61, last paragraph: <i>Although I have a master’s degree...and so they eschewed it as their objective.</i></p>
<p>12</p> 	<p>As crazy as the learning goal “appreciate Shakespeare” seems, it’s not really atypical. Let’s take a look at some of possible instructional objectives for a couple of other courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students will understand Africa’s unique environments. • Students will understand the importance of genetics. • Students will analyze informational texts. <p>These would be pretty difficult learning goals for a single lesson. Make sure your lesson has a specific, concrete, and manageable objective. And also ensure that you have planned the lesson’s learning goal to lead toward the bigger picture learning goal or objective you have for your unit.</p>
<p>13</p> 	<p>How will you know if students have achieved your daily learning goal? If the learning goal isn’t manageable, you can forget it. It’s impossible. But if it is manageable, then the next step is to plan a way to measure whether or not you’ve achieved it. Learning, and learning goals, need to be broken up into measurable pieces. Then, and only then, can we keep track of the learning that’s going on so we know how much farther we’ve got to go.</p> <p>Really, we all already know this: we check for understanding - that is, we measure progress TODAY, (and often many times in one lesson) so we can plan for tomorrow (or later in the lesson) and adjust instruction if we need to. As teachers, our ultimate goal is that students reach our learning goal – we have to check often to see if and how well they are doing that.</p>
<p>14</p> 	<p>Objectives are determined BEFORE learning activities can be planned. All too often we find wonderful activities and then plan our learning goals around them. This is backwards; even if the result is an enjoyable classroom activity in which learning takes place, we want our learning activities to be driven by our planned objectives, and not the other way around.</p> <p>Oftentimes we simply try to make our activity “fit” a learning objective rather than making the learning objective “first.”</p> <p>ASK: How many of you see “make it fit” lessons? Give examples.</p>

<p>15</p> 	<p>Our learning goals need to focus on what is most important, most essential. What do you think of this objective: Student's will construct a poster to celebrate Martin Luther King Jr. Day? How important is this? Well, of course we understand Martin Luther King Junior and his contributions are actually VERY important, the question is, however, is making a poster about the holiday really important? This learning goal is unclear; it makes creating a poster and celebrating MLK day more important than knowing the contributions and impact Martin Luther King had on our society? If our objectives are clear it is much easier to select the best instructional strategy to use to reach our learning goal. In addition, when learning goals are clear to students, they better recognize the value of the lesson or activity. Most students – when faced with an objective like this one – intuitively know that making a poster isn't "important" and they may actually feel this justifies lackluster participation on their part. An important learning objective – especially when it is manageable and measureable – conveys a strong message about the importance of what you are teaching to students.</p>
<p>16</p> 	<p>Let's take just a second to review and internalize these four "Ms" of planning that we've talked about. Turn to your neighbors and review the four ideas briefly. Then each of you can take a second to choose one areas you'll focus on this week as you plan. Share with your neighbor which area you would choose, and why.</p>
<p>17</p> 	<p>Everyone has heard that you should post your learning objective in your room. Why is that . . . more importantly, who is this for? The biggest beneficiary of a posted learning goal is really the student. Yes, it is great for a visitor (like your principal) to know what you are doing and why, but when students know what they are doing and why, learning makes sense. Too often we visit a classroom and ask a student what they are doing or what they are learning and they say, "Chapter 8" or "this worksheet". Articulating what students are expected to learn helps them create a mental schema for what they are learning and enables them to put each mastered concept or skill into a larger model encompassing or including many mastered concepts and skills. It makes learning make sense.</p> <p>Many people believe that posting a core standard is the same thing as posting a learning goal. Not true. Core standards are simply too big to accomplish in one lesson and, in fact, most teachers are working on learning that leads to the achievement of multiple core standards in each lesson. So, your posted learning goal should be for the daily lesson.</p>
<p>18</p> 	<p>Because the learning goal is also for students (and visitors), make sure the language you use, particularly when posting it, is simple. I know that we have become accustomed to long statements like: In our study of [blank] students will [another blank] and demonstrate understanding through [yet another blank] and we use what we can call "content jargon" or terms that only we, as teachers, may be familiar with.</p>
<p>19</p> 	<p>You may have noticed I am using "learning goal" rather than "learning objective" most of the time. Substituting "goal" for "objective" makes it more accessible and makes more sense to students. Everyone has goals: physical fitness goals, relationship goals, financial goals so a having a learning goal just seem natural. If we post our "objectives" as learning goals – in simple terms – will help our students know what they are supposed to learn and will help them make connections between where they have been and where they are going.</p>

<p>20</p> 	<p>You can go a step further by making the posted learning goal part of the classroom conversation rather than just posted or referred to once at the beginning of the lesson. Many teachers have students write the learning goal down; verbatim or in their own words. Teachers can also refer to it when visitors enter or, and this is really a good idea, when they transition from one learning activity to another (<i>each of which</i> moves students closer to the learning objective.) Once the learning goal is posted, and in language students can relate to, you'll likely find ways to make use of it and again, the more students know about what they are expected to learn and why it is important, the better they will learn.</p>
<p>21</p> 	<p>Enough about how to write learning goals and why you should post them. Let's return to selecting activities and instructional strategies. Here is a suggestion that may seem obvious to a lot of you . . . there's more than one way to skin a cat, they say, and the same is true of lessons. There are usually any number of activities that we can use to teach a concept or accomplish an learning goal. Students generally benefit the most when we use the most direct method. That is, that we don't waste time getting our students there. Remember when we talked about how "Time Counts"? Time does count and if there is one way that is the simplest, the most logical, and the most effective to accomplish a goal, use it! It may not be the flashiest, or make the most use of new technologies, or even be your favorite, but if it is the most direct, use it anyway.</p> <p>This doesn't mean that a Socratic Seminar, or somewhat lengthy classroom debate or discussion, or an engaging activity shouldn't be used. It just means that we should be willing to throw out "time wasting" activities that duplicate, draw out, or even detour learning objectives <i>even if</i> we love those activities.</p> <p>Doug Lemov calls this "Shortest Path" in his book "Teach Like a Champion" and Todd Whitaker referred to it when he asks us to consider PURPOSE as opposed to REASON for doing things. With all the demands for our class time we need to focus – more than ever – on being effective and efficient when we are with students.</p>
<p>22</p> 	<p>There is another element to lesson planning that is often overlooked. Perhaps we have it in the back of our minds, but maybe we should think about moving it forward . . .</p> <p>Most lesson plans focus on what the teacher does: what you say or model, when you'll hand things out, even where you'll be in the room. But how many of you plan what the <i>students</i> will be doing? What will they <i>actually, physically be doing</i> while you outline the causes of the Civil War, or review the steps of mitosis, or diagram a sentence on the board?</p> <p>Will they be taking notes? If so, on what? Will they be listening with the intent to summarize after? Will they be trying to find a mistake you tell them to watch for? What will their task be during each of <i>your</i> tasks?</p> <p>Planning what students will do while you do your "teacher thing" is critical. It helps us plan lessons that keep student engagement in mind, to see through their eyes. We may notice that although <i>we</i> are changing activities in a lesson <i>they</i>, the students, may not be. They need a change of pace and activity as much (or more) than <i>we</i> do.</p>
<p>23</p> 	<p>One way to do this is with a simple t-chart. Put your activities on one side and theirs on the other. It's easy and it's a great habit to get into and once you have, it will run through the back of your mind as you plan your lessons. Using a t-chart is a great habit to get into!</p>

<p>24</p> 	<p>After you have created the learning goal for your lesson, you can select the instructional strategies. In his book, <i>What Great Teachers Do Differently</i>, Todd Whitaker suggests a couple of questions that we should ask ourselves when we are planning our instructional strategies and activities for our students. The first question is: What is the PURPOSE of this activity? We must think about WHY we are doing what we are doing. I know that seems obvious, but too often, the question we are really answering is what is the REASON? Here's how Whitaker explains it,</p> <p>Take, for example, the question of why we choose a particular homework assignment. Why assign page 62? Well, the REASON might be that page 62 follows page 61, or that we assigned page 62 last year. Why ask students to solve 25 math problems? The REASON might be that there are 25 problems on the page, or that 25 divides evenly into 100%. But if we ask WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, we may end up heading a more productive direction.</p> <p>Another example might be “trade and grade” – the long-familiar practice of having students swap papers and mark each other’s answers. Why do we do this? Well, the REASON makes sense – it’s convenient for the teacher. But if we follow the model of great teachers and ask WHAT IS THE PURPOSE, we may decide to use class time far differently. (Whitaker, p. 89)</p>
<p>25</p> 	<p>After you decide what your purpose is, you must ask yourself, “Will this activity really accomplish the purpose?” We may be surprised to discover that, sometimes, the activities we had thought of planning might not be the best activities to accomplish the learning goals we have for our students. If we are thoughtful ahead of time – that is, if our learning goals are MADE FIRST – we may decide to use different activities than we had originally thought (or that we used last year!).</p>
<p>26</p> 	<p>Planning also includes thinking about the classrooms physical environment and set up. Almost every teacher has thought about the physical space in the classroom, but few realize how important it might be to consider it as part of planning. Student desks are mobile for a reason....not every learning activity best benefits from the same classroom configuration. Teachers who become skilled lesson planners realize this and alter the physical space of learning when they need to.</p>
<p>27</p> 	<p>Think about it. If the teacher wants students to focus on her, then a pod-like arrangement is not good. Some students are looking over their shoulders, others have their backs to her. And if the teacher wants students to work in small groups for most of the lesson, an arrangement of rows is not ideal. Many of us dread shifting the desks around in the middle of the period, but desks can be arranged so that they benefit the most important part of the lesson in the most effective way.</p>

<p>28</p> 	<p>Consider asking yourself some of the following questions as you plan to “draw the map” for your daily lesson.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With whom will the students interact? (Mostly the teacher, groups, a partner?) • When should students interact? • For how long? • What kinds of interaction will they have? (Quiet and small group, noisy whole group at once, whole group one at a time?) <p>The REAL QUESTION, critical for planning, is: How can the way students are seated help you accomplish your learning objectives?</p> <p>If one seating plan is preferable, find a way to get that plan for that lesson.</p>
<p>29</p> 	<p>Planning walls is important, too. The basic rule of thumb for walls is that they should HELP not HURT. Easier said than done, however. If we’re not careful in planning our walls, the things on them tend to grow and accumulate and then begin to get cluttered. We love to post student work, to put up color, in word, to decorate. But if we plan, walls can be a part of helping us achieve our learning objectives.</p> <p>Here are some general rules of thumb as you plan walls:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid clutter and overstimulation (This is NUMBER 1!) <p>Think about, “Where do you want a students’ attention focused? I would want them to be focused on me not the walls.”</p>
<p>30</p> 	<p>Other things to keep in mind.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post useful tools (charts, graphs, etc.) • Post skills that have been taught. • Post student work – especially exemplars with useful feedback for other students so all students can learn from it.
<p>31</p> 	<p>Earlier we talked about why planning is important and why teachers don’t always do planning. I can’t emphasize enough how important good planning is.</p> <p>The most prolific inventor in history, Thomas Edison, holding over 1000 patents, has a name recognized by every schoolchild. He is famous for having invented the stock ticker, a mechanical vote recorder, a battery for an electric car, electrical power, recorded music, and even motion pictures. He was a firm believer in planning followed by hard work.</p> <p>What did he do? He took an idea, he worked as a telegraph operator, and by applying his knowledge he created dozens and dozens of techniques, machinery, and tools which contributed to mass communications in an amazing way. Many teachers are just as inventive, when they are thoughtful in their planning.</p> <p>Edison’s words sum it all up, “The object of all work is production or accomplishment and to either of these ends there must be forethought, system, planning, intelligence, and honest purpose, as well as perspiration. Seeming to do is not doing.” If we take the time to thoughtfully plan what we expect students to know and be able to do and how to get them there, we will put Learning First!</p>

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