Effective Lesson Planning

Planning ahead to identify a course of action that can effectively help learners reach their goals and objectives is an important first step in effective instruction. Lesson planning communicates to learners what they will learn and how their goals will be assessed, and it helps instructors organize content, materials, time, instructional strategies, and assistance in the classroom.

About Effective Lesson Planning

Planning ahead to identify a course of action that can effectively reach goals and objectives is an important first step in any process, and education is no exception. In education, the planning tool is the lesson plan, which is a detailed description of an instructor's course of instruction for an individual lesson intended to help learners achieve a particular learning objective. Lesson plans communicate to learners what they will learn and how they will be assessed, and they help instructors organize content, materials, time, instructional strategies, and assistance in the classroom. Lesson planning helps English as a second language (ESL), adult basic education (ABE), adult secondary education (ASE), and other instructors create a smooth instructional flow and scaffold instruction for learners.

The Lesson Planning Process

Before the actual delivery of a lesson, instructors engage in a planning process. During this process, they determine the *lesson topic* (if states have implemented content standards, the topic should derive from them). From the topic derive the lesson *objective* or *desired results*–the concepts and ideas that learners are expected to develop and the specific knowledge and skills that learners are expected to acquire and use at the end of the lesson. Objectives are critical to effective instruction, because they help instructors plan the instructional strategies and activities they will use, including the materials and resources to support learning. It is essential that the objective be clear and describe the intended learning

outcome. Objectives can communicate to learners what is expected of them–but only if they are shared with learners in an accessible manner. Instructional objectives must be specific, outcome-based, and measurable, and they must describe learner behavior. Heinich et al. (2001) refer to the **ABCD**'s of writing objectives:

- **A**udience – learners for whom the objective is written (e.g., ESL, ABE, GED);

- **B**ehavior – the verb that describes what the audience will be able to do (e.g., describe, explain, locate, synthesize, argue, communicate);

- **C**ondition – the circumstances under which the audience will perform the behavior (e.g., when a learner obtains medicine from the pharmacy he or she will be able to read the dosage); and

- **D**egree – acceptable performance of the behavior (i.e., how well the learner performs the behavior).

Learner assessment follows from the objectives. Based on the principles of *backward design* developed by Wiggins and McTighe (1998), instructors identify the lesson objective or desired results and then decide what they will accept as evidence of learners' knowledge and skills. The concept of backward design holds that the instructor must begin with the end in mind (i.e., what the student should be able to know, understand, or do) and then map backward from the desired result to the current time and the students' current ability/skill levels to determine the best way to reach the performance goal.

The WIPPEA Model for Lesson Planning

The WIPPEA Model, an acronym that stands for **W**arm-up, **I**ntroduction, **P**resentation, **P**ractice, **E**valuation, **A**pplication, is a lesson plan model that represents a continuous teaching cycle in which each learning concept builds on the previous one, serving as an instructional roadmap for instructors. The WIPPEA lesson plan model is adapted from the work of Hunter (Mastery Teaching, 1982). This six-step cyclical lesson planning approach has learners demonstrate mastery of concepts and content at each step before

the instructor proceeds to the next step. See TEAL Center suggestions in *italics* below for incorporating each of these elements.

Warm-up – Assesses prior knowledge by reviewing previous materials relevant to the current lesson. *Introduce an activity that reviews previously learned content (e.g., for a vocabulary lesson, the warm-up may be a quick matching exercise with words previously learned and their definitions), and also include an activity that focuses on the topic to be taught.*

Introduction – Provides a broad overview of the content and concepts to be taught and focuses the learners' attention on the new lesson. *Introduce the purpose of the lesson by stating and writing the objectives for learners and discussing the lesson content and benefits by relating the objective to learners' own lives. Assess learners' prior knowledge of the new material by asking questions and writing learners' responses on a chalkboard or flip chart.*

Presentation – Teaches the lesson content and concepts. *Create an activity to introduce the concept or skill (e.g., introduce new vocabulary by asking learners to work in groups to identify words related to taking medications) and then introduce information through a variety of modalities using visuals, realia, description, explanation, and written text. Check for learner understanding of the new material and make changes in lesson procedures if necessary.*

Practice – Models the skills and provides opportunities for guided practice. *Introduce a variety of activities that allow learners to work in groups, in pairs, or independently to practice the skills, concepts, and information presented. Integrate technology into activities as available.*

Evaluation – Assesses each learner's attainment of the objective. *Include oral, aural, written, or applied performance assessments. For example, ask students to fill in the blanks on a cloze activity using the four medicine warning labels that were discussed in class. For lower level learners, provide a word bank at the bottom of the worksheet. Omit the word bank for more advanced students.*

Application – Provides activities that help learners apply their learning to new situations or contexts beyond the lesson and connect it to their own lives. *Choose activities that learners can relate to or have expressed concern about. For example, have learners read the label of a medication they or a family mem-*

ber may use at home to make certain they understand the meaning of the words on the label. Gather feedback from learners in follow-up classes and help them assess what additional support, if any, they may require.

The following graphic integrates the WIPPEA process with backward design in a lesson planning wheel. In this cyclical approach, teachers assess prior knowledge, provide a broad overview of the content/concepts to be taught, introduce vocabulary, teach content/concepts, check comprehension, combine the content and vocabulary through guided practice, evaluate student performance, and provide an application activity. Instructional strategies vary depending on the lesson content and skill areas, and the needs of the learners.

Figure 1. Planning Wheel
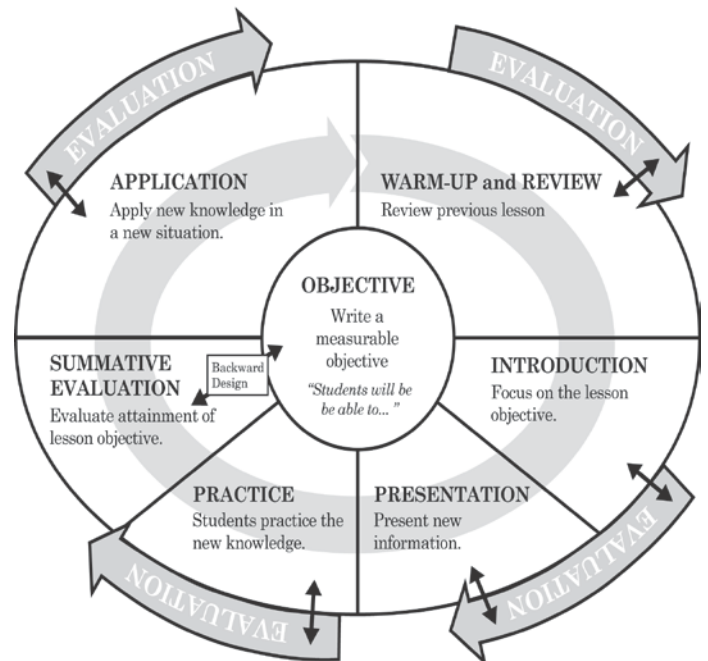
Planning for differentiated instruction requires various learner profiles to inform the process; see the TEAL Center fact sheet, No. 5. Students demonstrate mastery of concepts/ content in each step before the teacher proceeds to the next step.

The relationship of the objective to the evaluation keeps the lesson focused and drives instruction. By keeping the end in mind (backward design) and creat-

ing the evaluation activity at the beginning of the lesson, the teacher has a clear destination for the lesson and a roadmap to get there. Instructors can then select materials and activities that will best prepare students to successfully complete the evaluation activity in the lesson. The process is repeated for each learning objective. Lesson planning is an ongoing process in which instruction flows from one objective to the next. This cyclical process is repeated for each learning objective.

How Does Lesson Planning Benefit Learners and Instructors?

Instructors and learners benefit from thoughtful lesson planning. It provides a framework for instruction, and it guides implementation of standards-based education. Lesson planning establishes a road map for instructors of what has been taught and what needs to be taught. It allows them to focus on one objective at a time and communicate to learners what they will learn in each lesson. Because lessons incorporate ongoing assessments that determine how well learners understand concepts and skills, instructors are able to make mid-course changes in instructional procedures or provide additional support to learners. Additionally, the practice and application components of the lesson help learners use the new skills and knowledge in educational and other settings, thus promoting generalization and relevance.

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About the TEAL Center: The Teaching Excellence in Adult Literacy (TEAL) Center is a project of the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Vocational and Adult Education (OVAE), designed to improve the quality of teaching in adult education in the content areas.