

Successful teachers are invariably good planners and thinkers. In my career as a teacher and teacher

1. The objective of the lesson does not specify what the student will actually do that can be observed.
2. The lesson assessment is disconnected from the behavior indicated in the objective.
3. The materials specified in the lesson are extraneous to the actual described learning activities.
4. The instruction in which the teacher will engage is not efficient for the level of intended student learning.

- The student activities described in the lesson plan do not contribute in a direct and effective way to the lesson objective.

A lesson plan that contains one or more of these mistakes needs rethinking and revision. Below is a rationale and guide to help you develop effective lesson plans and avoid the five common mistakes.

- **FIRST, YOU MUST KNOW HOW TO PLAN**

The purpose of a lesson plan is really quite simple; it is to communicate. But, you might ask, communicate to whom? The answer to this question, on a practical basis, is YOU! The lesson plans you develop are to guide you in helping your students achieve intended learning outcomes. Whether a lesson plan fits a particular format is not as relevant as whether or not it actually describes what you want, and what you have determined is the best means to an end. If you write a lesson plan that can be interpreted or implemented in many different ways, it is probably not a very good plan. This leads one to conclude that a key principle in creating a lesson plan is specificity. It is sort of like saying, "almost any series of connecting roads will take you from Key West Florida to Anchorage Alaska, eventually." There is however, one and only one set of connecting roads that represents the shortest and best route. Best means that, for example getting to Anchorage by using an unreliable car is a different problem than getting there using a brand new car. What process one uses to get to a destination depends on available resources and time.

So, if you agree that the purpose of a lesson plan is to communicate, then, in order to accomplish that purpose, the plan must contain a set of elements that are descriptive of the process. Let's look at what those elements should be.

- **THE LESSON PLAN**

1. Preliminary Information - The development of a lesson plan begins somewhere, and a good place to start is with a list or description of general information about the plan. This information sets the boundaries or limits of the plan. Here is a good list of these information items: (a) the grade level of the students for whom the plan is intended; (b) the specific subject matter (mathematics, reading, language arts, science, social studies, etc.); (c) if appropriate, the name of the unit of which the lesson is a part; and (d) the name of the

teacher.

2. The parts each part of a lesson plan should fulfill some purpose in communicating the specific content, the objective, the learning prerequisites, what will happen, the sequence of student and teacher activities, the materials required, and the actual assessment procedures. Taken together, these parts constitute an end (the objective), the means (what will happen and the student and teacher activities), and an input (information about students and necessary resources). At the conclusion of a lesson, the assessment tells the teacher how well students actually attained the objective.

In a diagram, the process looks something like this:

Input =====>process=====>output

- Let's look at each part separately. Input: This part refers to the physical materials, other resources, and information that will be required by the process. What are these inputs? First of all, if you have thought about what the lesson is supposed to accomplish, the inputs are much easier to describe. In general categories, inputs consist of:

1. Information about the students for whom the lesson is intended. This information includes, but is not limited to the age and grade level of the students, and what they already know about what you want them to learn.
2. Information about the amount of time you estimate it will take to implement the lesson.
3. Descriptions of the materials that will be required by the lesson, and at some point, the actual possession of the materials.
4. Information about how you will acquire the physical materials required.
5. Information about how to obtain any special permissions and schedules required. For example if your lesson plan will require a field trip, you must know how to organize it. If your lesson will require a guest speaker (fire chief, lawyer, police officer, etc.) you must know how to make arrangements for having that person be at the right place at the right time

- **Process**

this is the actual plan. If you have done the preliminary work (thinking, describing the inputs), creating the plan is relatively easy. There are a number of questions you must answer in the creating the plan:

1. What are the inputs? This means you have the information (content description, student characteristics, list of materials, prerequisites, time estimates, etc.) necessary to begin the plan.
2. What is the output? This means a description of what the students are supposed to learn.
3. What do I do? This means a description of the instructional activities you will use.
4. What do the students do? This means a description of what the students will do during the lesson.

5. *How will the learning be measured? This means a description of the assessment procedure at the end of the lesson.*

As an example, here is a template that has been used successfully to teach students to write lesson plans:

- Lesson Plan Format:

Teacher _____
Subject _____
Grade Level _____
Date _____

1. *Content: Indicate what you intend to teach, and identify which forms of knowledge (concept, academic rule, skill, law and law-like principles and/or value knowledge) will be included in the lesson.*

2. *Prerequisites: Indicate what the student must already know or be able to do in order to be successful with this lesson. (You would want to list one or two specific behaviors necessary to begin this lesson).*

3. *Instructional Objective: Indicate what is to be learned - must be a complete objective.*

4. *Instructional Procedures: Description of what you will do in teaching the lesson, and, as appropriate, includes a description of how you will introduce the lesson to the students, what actual instructional techniques you will use, and how you will bring closure to the lesson. Include what specific things students will actually do during the lesson.*

5. *Materials and Equipment: List all materials and equipment to be used by both the teacher and learner and how they will be used..*

6. *Assessment/Evaluation: Describe how you will determine the extent to which students have attained the instructional objective. Be sure this part is directly connected to the behavior called for in the instructional objective.*

7. *Follow-up Activities: Indicate how other activities/materials will be used to reinforce and extend this lesson. Include homework, assignments, and projects.*

8. *Self-Assessment (to be completed after the lesson is presented): Address the major components of the lesson plan, focusing on both the strengths, and areas of needed improvement. A good idea is to analyze the difference between what you wanted (the objective) and what was attained (the results of the assessment).*

Of course, there is an immense difference between being able to plan and actually being able to carry out the plan. However, if you have thought carefully about where you are going before you begin writing your plan, the chances of your success, as well as the success of your students, are much greater.