Lesson Planning

What is a lesson plan? What should it look like? What are the components? Lesson plans are the meat and potatoes in your teaching career. They are the essentially the most important thing to get right. Whether you are writing them for your administrator, college supervisor, or for your students, it's important to write them clear, and make them effective. Here are a few resources to help you.

1. What is a Lesson Plan?

A lesson plan is a detailed guide for teaching a lesson. It's a step-by-step guide that outlines the teacher's objectives for what the students will accomplish that day. Creating a lesson plan involves setting goals, developing activities, and determining the materials that will be used. Here you will learn the benefits, components, and how to write one effectively.
2. **Top 8 Components of a Well-Written Lesson Plan**

Each lesson plan should contain eight components. These components are: Objectives and Goals, Anticipatory Set, Direct Instruction, Guided Practice, Closure, Independent Practice, Required Materials and Equipment, and Assessment and Follow-Up. Here you will learn about each of these essential components.

Whether you're working on your teaching credential or being reviewed by an administrator or evaluator, you will often need to write out a lesson plan during your teaching career.

Make sure it includes the eight essential components of a strong, effective lesson plan and you'll be on your way to achieving every teacher's goal: measurable student learning.

1. **Objectives and Goals**

   The lesson's objectives must be clearly defined and in lined with district and/or state educational standards.

2. **Anticipatory Set**

   Before you dig into the meat of your lesson's instruction, set the stage for your students by tapping into their prior knowledge and giving the objectives a context.

3. **Direct Instruction**

   When writing your lesson plan, this is the section where you explicitly delineate how you will present the lesson's concepts to your students.

4. **Guided Practice**

   Under your supervision, the students are given a chance to practice and apply the skills you taught them through direct instruction.

5. **Closure**

   In the Closure section, outline how you will wrap up the lesson by giving the lesson concepts further meaning for your students.

6. **Independent Practice**

   Through homework assignments or other independent assignments, your students will demonstrate whether or not they absorbed the lesson's learning goals.

7. **Required Materials and Equipment**
Here, you determine what supplies are required to help your students achieve the stated lesson objectives.

8. Assessment and Follow-Up

The lesson doesn't end after your students complete a worksheet. The assessment section is one of the most important parts of all.

3. Blank 8-Step Lesson Plan Template

Here you will find a printable blank 8-step lesson plan template. This template can be used for essentially any lesson plan.

8-Step Lesson Plan Template

Your Name
Date
Grade Level:
Subject:

Objectives and Goals:

Anticipatory Set (approximate time):

Direct Instruction (approximate time):

Guided Practice (approximate time):

Closure (approximate time):

Independent Practice:

Required Materials and Equipment:

Assessment and Follow-Up:
What does a great lesson plan look like? Better yet, what does an effective lesson plan look like from an outsiders perspective? When delivering an effective lesson plan there are numerous characteristics that the lesson must contain. Here you will learn six tips that will help you create the perfect lesson plan.

Teacher Mercedes stated: “In my classroom, I am constantly amazed by how a thoroughly planned lesson can often fall flat, while sometimes when I’m ‘flying by the seat of my pants,’ I can stumble upon magical teaching moments that really speak to and excite my students.

But, what exactly do the best lesson plans look like? What do they feel like to the students and to us? More concisely, what characteristics must a lesson plan contain in order to reach maximum effectiveness?

The following ingredients are essential to delivering effective lessons. You can even use this as a checklist when you plan your days. This basic formula makes sense whether you are teaching kindergarten, middle school, or even junior college.

State the Lesson Objective - Make sure that you know exactly why you are teaching this lesson. Does it correspond to a state or district academic standard? What do you need the students to know after the lesson is completed? After you're perfectly clear on the goal of the lesson, explain it in "kid-friendly" terms so that the kids will know where they're headed as well.

Teach and Model Behavior Expectations - Set out on a successful path by explaining and modeling how the students should behave as they participate in the lesson. For example, if the kids are using materials for the lesson, show the kids how to use them properly and tell them the consequences for misuse of the materials. Don't forget to follow through!

Use Active Student Engagement Strategies - Don't let the students sit there bored while you "do" your lesson.

As I recently heard at a conference, the person who does the work, does the learning. Get your students engaged with hands-on activities that enhance your lesson's objective. Use whiteboards, small group discussion, or call randomly on students by pulling cards or sticks. Keep the students on their toes with their minds moving and you'll be many steps closer to meeting and exceeding your lesson's goal.

Scan Peripheral Students and Move Around the Room - While the students apply their new skills, don't just sit back and take it easy. Now's the time to scan the room, move around, and make sure everyone's doing what their supposed to be doing. You'll may be able to limit your special attention to "those" kids who always need to be reminded to stay on task. You know who I'm talking about! Answer questions, give gentle reminders, and make sure the lesson's going how you envisioned it would.
Give Specific Compliments for Positive Behavior - Be obvious and specific in your compliments when you see a student following directions or going the extra mile. Make sure the other students understand why you are pleased and they will increase their efforts to meet your expectations.

Question Students to Develop Critical Thinking Skills - Ask Why, How, If, and What Else questions to strengthen student comprehension of the issues or skills at hand. Use Bloom's Taxonomy as a basis for your questioning and watch your students meet the objectives you set out at the beginning of the lesson.

Use the preceding points as a checklist to make sure you are planning your lessons in the most effective way possible. After the lesson, take a few minutes to consider what worked and what didn't. This type of reflection is invaluable in helping you develop as an educator. So many teachers forget to do this. But, if you make it a habit as much as possible, you'll avoid making the same mistakes next time and you'll know what you can do better in the future!

This information is based on the work of several experienced teachers who know what it takes to help students learn to their fullest potentials. Special thanks to Mary Ann Harper for allowing me to adapt this piece and offer it to my audience.

5. What is a Thematic Unit?

A Thematic unit is the organization of a curriculum around a central theme. In other words it's a series of lessons that integrate subjects across the curriculum, such as math, reading, social studies, science, language arts, etc. that all tie into the main theme of the unit. Each activity should have a main focus toward the thematic idea. A thematic unit is much broader than just choosing a topic. Here you will learn why you should use them, the key components, and tips for creating them.

They cover a wide range such as Australia, mammals, or the solar system. Many teachers choose a different thematic unit for their classroom each week, while others plan their teaching themes for two to nine weeks.

Why Use Thematic Units

- It increases students interest
- Helps students understand connections
- Expands assessment strategies
- Keeps students engaged
- compacts the curriculum
- Saves teachers time because it incorporates all subjects
- Draws on connections from the real world and life experiences

Key Components of a Thematic Unit

- Theme - Select the theme of the unit based on Common core standards, student interests or student experience.
• Grade Level - Select the appropriate grade level.
• Objectives - Identify the specific objectives that you would like to master during the course of the unit.
• Materials - Determine the materials you will use throughout the unit.
• Activities - Develop the activities that you will use for your thematic unit. Make sure you cover activities across the curriculum.
• Discussion Questions - Create a variety of discussion questions to help students think about the theme of the unit.
• Literature Selections - Select a variety of books that correlate with the activities and central theme of the unit.
• Assessment - Evaluate student progress throughout the unit. Measure student growth through rubrics or other means of assessment.

Tips for Creating Thematic Units

• Find an engaging theme - Themes can be planned around books, benchmarks, skills students need to develop, or just from student interest. Find a theme that will motivate and captivate students interest. Units are typically longer than a week, so it's important to find a theme that will keep the students engaged.
• Create fun activities - The activities you choose are the heart of the unit. These activities need to cross the curriculum and keep students interest. Learning centers are a great way for students to get hands-on experience while learning important skills.
• Evaluate Students Learning - While finding a central theme, and creating engaging cross-curriculum activities are important, so is evaluating what the students have learned. Portfolio-based assessment is a great way to see students progress throughout a period of time. For example, a habitat portfolio can be created to document the progress the students made throughout the unit of habitats.