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# **Module 8 : Lesson planning**

## **Lesson planning**

As a teacher, lesson planning is extremely important because it helps you understand where you are going, and makes it easy to show the administration you are following the curriculum.

For the latter reason, lesson plans have become more formal in recent years, and it is now more important than ever to understand what goes into a lesson plan, as well as how your lesson plans further your objectives.

To further this end, this module will review all the components of a strong lesson plan, as well as how you can prepare your lessons in a way that will be most effective and beneficial to your students.

### **Lesson planning**

#### **8.1 Standards and objectives**

#### **8.2 Following a curriculum**

#### **8.3 Varying instruction**

#### **8.4 Teaching strategies**

#### **8.5 Meaningful assessments**

### **8.1 Standards and objectives**

Every time you create a lesson plan, you need to create an objective, and make sure it is aligned with a standard. We will first take time to discuss standards, since they should be the basis for all your lesson plans.

#### **8.1.1 Standards**

Standards are a set of skills students need to have by the time they leave your classroom. These standards are not set by the teacher, but rather accessed by the teacher for use in their lesson plans. Depending on where you are teaching, the skills the standards require are going to be different. For the



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sake of this module, we will focus on the general idea of standards, and how they inform instruction. Let's first look at the general skills that standards usually focus on.

**Reading literature:** Reading literature standards cover all the skills required to effectively read a piece of literature, including poetry, short stories, novels, and plays. These standards typically focus on literary analysis skills, since reading comprehension skills are covered in the next standard.

**Reading for information:** Reading for information standards cover reading comprehension skills that a student would need to read a piece of nonfiction like an article, a biography, or an academic journal.

**Writing:** Writing standards cover all skills involved in writing, including narrative writing, expository writing, persuasive writing, and informative writing. Many of the standards within this category will likely focus on a student's ability to make a claim, support his or her claim, and explain him or herself thoroughly.

**Speaking and listening:** Speaking and listening standards focus on the skills students will need to present new ideas and obtain information from spoken sources. These standards are especially important during student presentations, class discussions, and Socratic seminars.

**Language:** Language standards focus on skills that students need to develop their understanding of language. As a TESOL teacher, these standards will be extremely important, but they are also relevant to mainstream classes. These standards focus on diction, grammar, usage, and other aspects of understanding a lesson.

### 8.1.2 Objectives

Once you have a clear understanding of the standards you need to hit within a unit, it is time to think about the learning objectives you are going to create. Whereas standards tell you what your students need to achieve by the end of a unit or the end of the school year, lesson objectives detail where you want your students to be at the end of a lesson.

It is your job as a teacher to make sure the lesson objectives you have throughout a unit work toward helping your students master the skills outlined in the standards. Here are some tips for writing effective lesson objectives.

- The first question you need to ask yourself is, "what do I want my students to be able to do by the end of the lesson?" These objectives should be focused on skills, rather than content, and cover the skills the students are going to develop through the unit.
- Once you have written lesson plans for your entire unit, you should review your learning objectives to make sure they all build toward meeting the standards for the unit.



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- Lesson plans need to be clear and measurable. At the end of a lesson, you should be able to look back on the lesson and identify how many of your students met the objective with accuracy.

### Types of objectives

There are a few types of objectives you can frame your lesson plans around, so let's review each kind.

1. Cognitive objectives: Cognitive objectives refer to students enriching their knowledge, demonstrating their knowledge, and practicing skills related to the knowledge they are enriching. In cognitive objectives, students are expected to comprehend, apply, and synthesize their knowledge.
2. Psychomotor objectives: Psychomotor objectives are less common in a mainstream classroom as they apply to dexterity and physical coordination. These types of objectives are more common in early education, and education for students who struggle with coordination and dexterity (disabled students or students who have suffered an injury).
3. Attitudinal objectives: These objectives are rare as lesson objectives, and are more purposeful when used as classroom objectives. Attitudinal objectives require students to behave in a certain way, which is more likely a concern for the classroom all year round, rather than a concern for a specific lesson.

There are rules and guidelines that govern your creation of lesson objectives, and while they vary depending on where you are teaching, we will cover some of the universal ideas. Remember that lesson objectives are the backbone of your entire lesson.

- Learning objectives should be focused on observable activities: In order to identify whether your students have achieved the objective you set out for them, the objective needs to be observable, or something you can measure through observation. This idea will help keep your objectives specific and attainable.
- Learning objectives should be focused on student activities: Many teachers make the mistake of thinking lesson objectives should focus on what they hope to accomplish during the lesson. This puts the focus on teaching rather than learning, and does not ensure the students understand the material, but instead ensures the teacher is delivering the material. Teaching may occur, but learning may not. Your lesson objectives should always be about what the students are going to accomplish.
- Learning objectives should be focused on student outcomes: Another mistake a lot of teachers make is creating a learning objective that simply describes what the students are going to do during the lesson. This is not the purpose of an objective, and only measures whether or not the students have complied with the teacher's directions. As a student, I can comply with everything my teacher asks without reaching the true objective of improving a skill or extending knowledge. There should be an outcome tied to each lesson objective.

### Good lesson objectives:

- Students will be able to make a judgment about the strength of a speaker's argument



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- Students will be able to determine which text best portrays the culture of the 1930's

### **Bad lesson objectives:**

- Students will be able to write an essay
- Students will be able to hear about World War II

## **8.2 Following a curriculum**

Depending on where you end up teaching, you may have a say in the creation of the curriculum, but it is more likely you will not. Gone are the years when a curriculum was just an amorphous general idea, and here to stay is a culture where schools have an extremely detailed and prescribed curriculum for each of their teachers to follow. To understand how to follow a curriculum, we first need to look closer at the components involved.

### **8.2.1 Curricular components**

- **Standards:** As we discussed earlier in this module, all planning should start with the standards you want your students to achieve during the curriculum.
- **Essential questions:** Whereas the standards are focused on what the students are going to be able to achieve or work on during a unit, the essential question is the thematic question the students should be exploring throughout the unit. For example, you may decide you want your students to work on a standard that focuses on using two informational texts to draw conclusions. You may want to design a unit that covers World War II, and ends with a discussion on the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. You can have an essential question that asks something like “should there be rules in times of war?” Then, your students could explore two non-fiction texts to draw conclusions about America’s decision to drop atomic bombs to inform their understanding of the essential question.
- **Assessments:** As we discussed before, the summative assessment for the unit should assess how well the students fulfilled the standards and objectives of the unit. However, a detailed curriculum will also include formative assessments that help your students build skills and scaffold on their way to the summative assessment.
- **Model lessons:** A thorough curriculum will provide you with exemplar lesson plans you can either use, modify, or look to for guidance on how you should be framing your lessons.
- **Exemplar texts:** Your curriculum will likely detail the texts you can use for each unit. These will be texts that are vetted to make sure they fit the unit thematically and fit within the appropriate reading level for students in your class.
- **Secondary material:** Your curriculum should also offer you secondary sources that fit within your units. In an American English unit plan, there are typically suggestions of art and music to go along with the literature that needs to be covered.



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### 8.2.2 Teaching to the curriculum

Although a lot of school systems have adopted standard curriculums that do not budge very much, research shows the best model for curriculum is a plan that is fluid. In this section, we will discuss the way curriculum should be used and followed in the classroom, even if many schools are not necessarily listening to the research.

**The best way to use Curriculum is in a cycle, where the plan is in the hand of the teacher (or group of teachers), and within the reach of their revisions. The ideal curriculum cycle hinges on three parts:**

1. Planning: The curriculum plan is initially created based on what the teachers and administrators generally accept as the needs of the students. The units are designed to address the skills that are layered in the standards while working thematically through a focus. Everything from the “Curricular components” section above is created, and the plan is distributed to, and reviewed by, the teaching staff.
2. Implementation: Members of the teaching staff design their own lesson plans to work within the structure of each unit in the curriculum plan. They make sure that their lesson objectives clearly address the skills outlined in the standards of the unit, and each activity prepares the students for the summative assessment. Ideally, teachers of the same curriculum have periodic time to meet.
3. Reflection: After the implementation of the curriculum, teachers meet with each other to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the plan. The teachers use data they collected from the formative and summative assessments, not just anecdotal evidence, to inform their discussions. Teachers share the different strategies they used during each unit to identify if the struggles their students had were because of unique instruction, or were in line with the rest of the teachers who had different students.
4. Revision: This is the most important part many schools are not giving their teachers freedom to use. Teachers use what they found in their reflection to inform revisions to the curriculum. If there are difficulties the students had, or skills they did not attain, the teachers rewrite unit plans to ensure these problems are addressed. Without the revision process, the reflection process is not effective. Next year, the teachers go through the same process, and make sure their planning and instruction is constantly improving.

### 8.3 Varying instruction

If there is one thing educational theorists agree on nowadays, it is the best way to reach the most students is by varying and differentiating your instruction. We will begin by first discussing one of the basic ideas behind the efficacy of varied instruction, the idea of multiple intelligences.



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#### **8.3.1 Gardner's multiple intelligences**

A Harvard professor named Howard Gardner penned the theory that there are multiple types of intelligence, each valuable in its own way. If you buy into this theory, which many do, this means the students in your class all have specific strengths and weaknesses you can access through varied instruction. Here are Gardner's multiple intelligences:

- Visual-spatial: People who are intelligent in this area are very good at understanding their environment and reasoning spatially. They respond to activities that allow them to problem solve, organize, or create with their hands.
- Bodily-kinesthetic: People who are intelligent in this area are very controlled with their body, and are prone to athletic and/or dexterous tasks. They respond to activities that require them to move, act, and learn with their hands.
- Musical: People who are intelligent in this area are usually natural musicians who understand sound and rhythm more than most. They respond to rhythmic activities and anything that involves music or creating sound.
- Interpersonal: People who are intelligent in this area have an easy time connecting with people and love to help others. They respond to anything that involves working in a group, participating in a discussion, or activities that require them to make connections with people around them.
- Intrapersonal: People who are intelligent in this area are in tune with themselves, are good at setting goals, and keeping themselves on track to accomplish them. They respond to independent and self-driven learning because it allows them to take control of their own progress.
- Linguistic: People who are intelligent in this area are very good with words. They understand language and how to use it to their advantage. They respond to activities that require them to read, use words creatively, and/or solve word puzzles.
- Logical-mathematical: People who are intelligent in this area are very good at reasoning and calculating things. They respond to activities that require them to work logically, reason things out, and solve puzzles.

#### **8.3.2 How to differentiate**

Here is where you find a point of contention in the educational community. Differentiation is a buzzword politicians and administrators love to throw around without actually helping teachers understand what it is. Teachers often fear differentiation because they are afraid of the amount of work the idea brings with it. Differentiation does not have to be scary, however. Here are some simple steps you can take to differentiate your instruction and appeal to students of different abilities and learning types.



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- Get to know your students: There is no way to vary instruction to your students if you do not find out information about them. There are a few different ways you can research your students' learning styles. The first is to ask the students. This strategy works better with older students, and often yields the most honest results. The second way is by giving your students benchmark assessments early in the year. This strategy can give you a lot of information, but it can also be skewed by apathy, distractions, poor testing abilities, etc. The third way is through observations during classroom activities. You may have guessed the best course of action is not one of these strategies alone, but rather a combination of all of them. As a teacher, use everything at your disposal to better understand what works best for your students.
- Be prepared with a toolkit of teaching strategies: Now that you have a good understanding of each of your students, and how they learn best, you need to be able to access your vast repertoire of teaching strategies in order to facilitate your students' needs. These teaching strategies should be very diverse, covering a wide array of teaching styles, including:
  - Direct instruction: People like to discount this old school, traditional method of teaching, but it works in the classroom as long as it is not the only strategy that you are using.
  - Cooperative learning: Cooperative learning is a very trendy teaching style because it allows students to take responsibility for their learning, and is conducive to a student-centered learning environment.
  - Inquiry-based learning: According to many experts, this is one of the most rigorous forms of teaching because it requires students to create their own questions or hypotheses, research, experiment, or explore these questions or hypotheses, then draw conclusions based on their findings. The skills involved in this process are complex, and if you are able to help your students get used to successfully going through this process, you will see huge results.
  - Information-processing strategies: These types of lessons ask students to practice and deepen their core skills in order to become better writers, readers, and thinkers. Students are getting the practice they need in the skills that are most important.
- Identify which strategies will work best for your students: You know what your students need in order to succeed and you have a toolkit full of teaching strategies. Now, it is time to put it together and match teaching strategies with your students' needs.
- Vary your instruction: Here is the part where many teachers and administrators slip up. People often think varied or differentiated instruction means you always have your students doing group work and working independently. Sometimes, direct, teacher-centered instruction, is appropriate. The point of varied and differentiated instruction is balancing different types of instruction throughout your curriculum. When appropriate, use direct-instruction, and when appropriate, use cooperative learning. The point is to use all types of instruction to appeal to every different kind of student, and to make the most impact you can.
- Assess and adjust: As we discussed in "following a curriculum," you need to assess your students, reflect on your teaching, then adjust your teaching strategies to better serve your students. Teaching is a growing experience, and you need to constantly question and adjust strategies to become more effective.





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### 8.4 Teaching strategies

Going through all the existing teaching strategies would take an entire course, so we are going to focus on a few effective strategies that appeal to students with different learning styles.

1. Jigsaw: A jigsaw is a great cooperative learning strategy because it gives students the opportunity to take control of their learning, and is a natural scaffold. In a jigsaw, group your students to interact with new knowledge and give them a short time to focus on a specific topic. Each group has a different topic, so at the end of this short period of time, you rearrange the groups and students become experts on their original topic. For example, you can split your class of 25 into 5 groups of 5, and have each group research a different European country. Then, you go to each group and give each member a number from 1-5, and have the students rearrange based on those numbers. Now, you have 5 groups, each containing one student who has researched each European country. Now, the students teach each other.

2. Think-pair-share: This is a very versatile strategy because it can be used for a 5-minute initiation or for a class-long activity. Put simply, you give your students something to think about, then ask them to get into pairs, then ask them to share what they came up with. This can be done as formally or informally as you would like, and it works with different types of content.

3. Fishbowl: This is a modified Socratic seminar that asks students to participate in a discussion and evaluate each other's performance during the discussion. Essentially, students are structured into two circles, one inside the other. Inside the circle, students are given a topic, question, or idea to discuss. In the outer circle, students are paying attention to the inner circle, and evaluating the strength of their discussion. The most effective fishbowls ask the students in the outer circle to focus on specific parts of the discussion. Teachers can either ask each outer student to focus on one inner student, or ask each outer student to focus on one skill, idea, or form of discussion.

1. Testing a hypothesis: As we mentioned in the previous section, asking students to pose hypotheses, test their hypotheses, then draw conclusions is accessing very high levels of thinking. This does not have to be a strategy that only works in science classes. In an English class, you might ask students to read a piece from an author, then create a hypothesis that guesses what another piece by that author is going to focus on. This will require the students to understand the piece at a high level, and use that understanding to make predictions about a related text.

### 8.5 Meaningful assessments

We discussed assessments in the previous module, so we will not discuss them ad nauseam here. To ensure your assessments are authentic and meaningful, make sure they align with the standards you are trying to meet, and the objectives you have set for your students to help them reach those standards. To make an assessment truly meaningful, it needs to be reflective of something students





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might see in a career they end up in, and should also give students multiple ways to display their knowledge. Here is an example of the different types of assessments you can create:

- Writing: Your writing assessments do not have to be traditional essays (although do not discount these classics). You can find different ways to be creative with your writing assignments. You can have your students create storybooks, poems, journals, etc.
- Performance: Having your students create a presentation, a performance, or something that requires them to stand up in front of the class and create something informative and entertaining is a great way to find out how much your students know. These types of activities are creative, entertaining, and allow students to have fun with their learning.
- Art: Students can display their understanding of a concept by creating something artistic. Whether you ask your students to create an illustration, draw or build a diagram, or create a visual project, you should allow your students to access their creativity in order to display their understanding of the material.
- Teaching: Asking your students to teach material to a class is a great way to judge whether they know it or not. As you know, or will soon find out, you cannot effectively teach something unless you understand it inside and out.

[Link to Exam](#)