

Lesson Planning

INTASC Standard #7: Planning for Instruction

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After reading this chapter, you should be able to:

- 13-1** Explain when lessons should be used for instruction.
- 13-2** Describe the attributes of lessons.
- 13-3** Define and give examples of lesson models.
- 13-4** Define and give examples of the seven lesson plan components.
- 13-5** Describe key considerations for writing lesson plans.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

13-1 WHEN TO USE LESSONS

- 13-1a** Primary Differences between Lessons and Activities
- 13-1b** Purposes of Lessons

13-2 ATTRIBUTES OF LESSONS

- 13-2a** Lesson Example
- 13-2b** What Makes It a Lesson?

13-3 LESSON MODELS

- 13-3a** Selecting a Model to Use
- 13-3b** Responding to Skill Diversity
- 13-3c** Responding to Cultural Diversity

13-4 GENERIC COMPONENTS OF A LESSON PLAN

- 13-4a** Component 1: Preplanning Tasks
- 13-4b** Component 2: Lesson Setup
- 13-4c** Component 3: Lesson Opening
- 13-4d** Component 4: Lesson Body
- 13-4e** Component 5: Extended Practice
- 13-4f** Component 6: Closing
- 13-4g** Component 7: Evaluation

13-5 WRITING THE LESSON PLAN

- 13-5a** The Sequence for Writing a Lesson Plan
- 13-5b** Editing a Plan
- 13-5c** Useful Plans



Introduction

In the first three parts of this book, you learned about what to teach and how to teach and about the context for teaching and learning. Now it is time to put together the information you have learned and write your plan. In this chapter and in

Chapter 14, you will examine two basic types of plans—lessons and activities—and how to figure out when to write which type of plan. In this chapter, lessons will be defined, and the generic components of lesson plans will be described.

13-1 When to Use Lessons

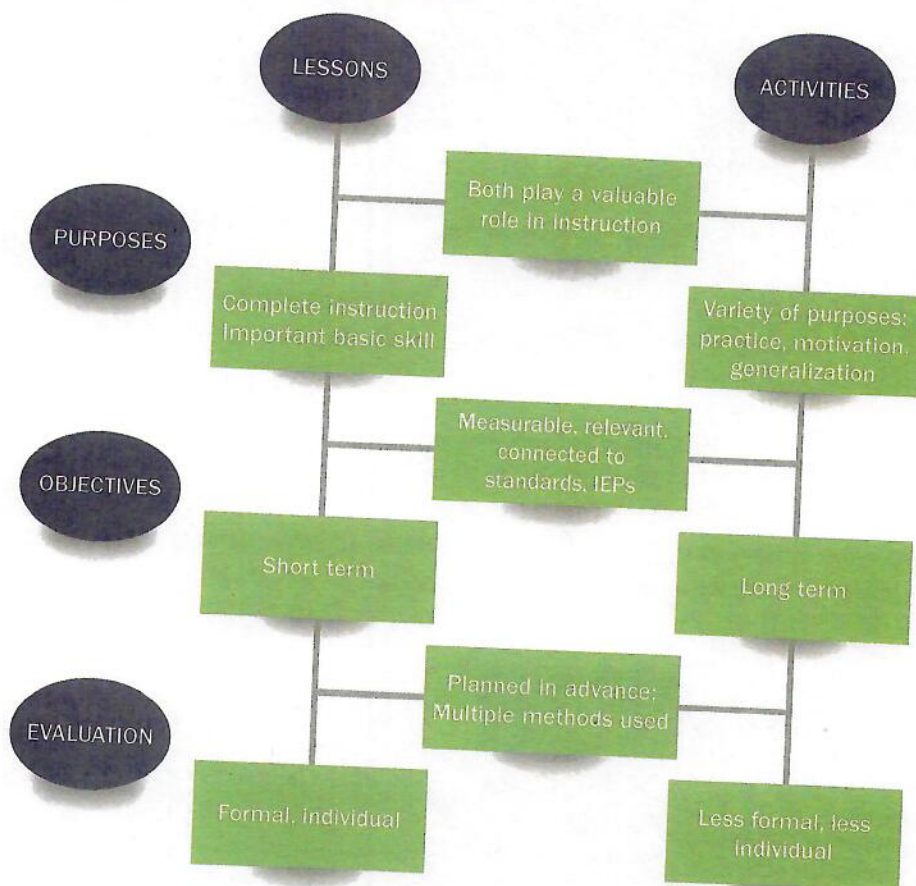
Before you write a teaching plan, you must decide whether to write a lesson plan or an activity plan. It is important to distinguish between lessons and activities because they have different purposes and different structures. You'll need to think carefully about your goals for instruction and decide when to use lessons and when to use activities. When teachers have no clear distinction between activities

and lessons, we have noticed a common problem—forgetting to teach! Being aware of the differences between the two will help teachers make good instructional decisions.

13-1a Primary Differences between Lessons and Activities

Lessons and activities have things in common as well as clear differences. Look at Figure 13.1 to see these.

Figure 13.1 Lessons vs. Activities



Lessons are different from activities in several ways. One way to distinguish between the two is to look at their *purposes*. The purpose of a lesson is to provide instruction on important skills or knowledge so that students can individually and independently demonstrate the skill or knowledge. By *individually*, we mean by themselves rather than with a partner or group; by *independently*, we mean without help (i.e., without prompts or corrections from the teacher).

Activities, on the other hand, may have a variety of purposes—introduction of topics; learner motivation; additional experience; elaboration of information; review of information; or additional opportunities for processing, practice, integration, and generalization of skills and knowledge. Notice that lessons provide instruction rather than simply introducing or providing experience with a topic, as an activity might. Notice also that lessons provide complete instruction rather than just review or practice of previously taught skills/knowledge, as activities may do.

Another way to distinguish between lessons and activities is to look at their *objectives*. A lesson has a specific, measurable, short-term objective, and the teacher's intention is that each student will meet that objective by the end of the lesson. Activities are meant to help students progress toward long-term objectives or goals.

Because of the differences in objectives, the type of *evaluation* needed for lessons and activities differs. Teachers follow lessons with formal evaluations of whether each student can independently meet the objective. When evaluations are used following activities, they are often less formal and less individual, or they are meant to monitor progress toward the long-term objective.

The following sections provide further information and examples to help clarify the key differences between, and elements of, lessons and activities. Use Teacher Checklist 13.1 to help you decide when to write a lesson plan and when to write an activity plan.

TEACHER CHECKLIST 13.1: DECIDING WHICH PLAN TO WRITE

Yes No

- ☐ ☐ Is my purpose to provide instruction on *important* skills or knowledge?
- ☐ ☐ Do I want my students to reach a *short-term* objective?

- ☐ ☐ Do I need to be *teaching* rather than simply introducing or providing an experience with a topic?
- ☐ ☐ Do I need to provide *complete* instruction rather than just have students review or practice previously taught skills/knowledge?
- ☐ ☐ Do I want to evaluate whether students can *individually* and *independently* demonstrate the skill or knowledge?

If your answer to **all** of these questions is **yes**, then write a *lesson plan*.

If your answer to **any** of these questions is **no**, then write an *activity plan* (see Chapter 14).

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13-1b Purposes of Lessons

Teachers use lessons to help students attain a specific short-term objective. A lesson typically has a clear beginning and ending, and it will last a few hours at the most. Lessons are followed by an evaluation of each student's learning in relation to the stated objective(s). Series of lessons that lead to the attainment of long-term objectives or goals are often combined, along with activities, into a unit of instruction. Remember that lessons may be developed for individuals or small groups of students as well as for the whole class.

Lessons can be used to teach specific skills and information directly or to give students the opportunity to discover information on their own or with their peers. The type of content that can be taught through lessons is extremely diverse. Teachers typically use lessons to teach academic content; to develop study skills, social skills, and problem-solving skills; and to promote critical thinking. Example 13.1 shows the wide variety of skills and knowledge that teachers can address in lessons.

EXAMPLE 13.1: LESSON OBJECTIVES

- When teased in a role-playing situation, students will talk through each of the five problem-solving steps.
- On a list of 25 sentences, students will circle the complete subject in all sentences.

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- Given a list of 10 assignments, students will accurately transfer all of them to an assignment calendar.
- Given five two-step multiplication and division word problems, students will write or draw a description of the problem-solving process they used to find the answer.

13-2 Attributes of Lessons

As previously stated, the purpose of a lesson is to provide complete instruction on important skills or knowledge, and the objective is for each student to meet a specific, measurable, short-term objective by the end of the lesson. Looking closely at an example of a lesson reveals essential lesson attributes.

13-2a Lesson Example

In this sample lesson, an instructor wants to teach students to spell the plural form of certain nouns ending in *y*, and her intention is that the students can individually and independently do so by the end of the lesson. The measurable objective is that students will write the plural form of 10 listed nouns ending in *y* preceded by a consonant, for example, *berry* to *berries*. The teacher instructs the students by thoroughly explaining the spelling rule, showing multiple examples, providing practice, and giving feedback. Alternatively, the teacher may begin by showing examples and then leading the students to discover the spelling rule or pattern. Following the lesson, the instructor evaluates by giving a test as described in the objective.

13-2b What Makes It a Lesson?

This example is a lesson because the teacher provides *complete instruction* on an *important basic skill*, spends time *teaching*, and intends to *evaluate* the students to see if they have met the *short-term objective* following the lesson. Each italicized term defines an essential attribute of a lesson.

- *Complete instruction.* Complete instruction means that teaching needs to happen in order for the students to reach the objective; the students need formal instruction before they can use or apply the knowledge or skill. Sometimes,

this will be the very first instruction on the skill/knowledge that the students receive. The topic may be brand new to them. It's also possible that the students have some familiarity with the topic; they may have had a previous introduction, and the teacher will use strategies in the lesson to connect the new learning to prior knowledge and experience. Sometimes, a lesson is being retaught. The students may have had prior lessons, but the teacher has discovered that there are major misunderstandings, confusions, and errors, and it's clear that the students need more than reminding, more than review and practice. This repeated instruction is thorough instruction, as though this skill or information is being presented for the first time.

- *Important basic skill.* Important basic skills include academic skills, thinking skills, study skills, social skills, vocational skills, and so on. They are considered basic because they are either important for real-life functioning or they are necessary prerequisites for other important skills. (One could possibly make a case that the skill in the previous spelling lesson example is not important in an age of computers with spell-check capabilities.)
- *Teaching.* Teaching can take many forms: It can be highly teacher-directed; it can incorporate peers; and it can emphasize discovery. However, teaching means that the teacher does more than organize and provide activities or give directions, hoping that students learn something. If no teaching is necessary, you do not have a lesson. Instead, you have either an activity or a time-filler.
- *Evaluate.* When writing a lesson objective, a standard is established against which a student's learning is evaluated. Teachers also decide the method of evaluating learning at that time. They can use many ways to evaluate—not only written tests. If it is unnecessary to evaluate each student's learning, you are not providing instruction on an important basic skill (in other words, you are not teaching a lesson). If your intention is to provide an "experience," you may have an activity, not a lesson. If your intention is to ask students to demonstrate their knowledge or skill with the help of peers or a teacher, you have an ongoing practice activity, not a completed lesson.

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- ✓ Did I use outline or bulleted format?
- ✓ Did I use variety of font sizes and appearances so main points stand out? (upper and lower case, bold, underline, color)

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sentences.” Instead, you’d plan the explanation by listing the key ideas you need to get across to your students. Spontaneous explanations and examples are often ambiguous or incomplete. You will not want to write every single word you will say to the students either. Something in between is preferable. Look at Example 13.4 for an example of appropriate level of detail.

EXAMPLE 13.4: APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF DETAIL

TOPIC SENTENCES

- Usually (but not always) the first sentence
- Describe main idea
- Tell what paragraph is about

It is impossible to make a rule that determines how much detail to include in your plan. It is safe to say, however, that any explanation that may be complex or have the potential to be confusing should be put in writing to help ensure it is complete, accurate, and clear. For example, if you are going to teach your students how to write topic sentences, you would not simply write, “Explain topic

Summary

Putting together a daily lesson is the end result of a complex planning process. This process begins when the teacher determines the overall curriculum to be taught. The curriculum is based on an analysis of student needs; on district, state, or national standards; on generalizations or big ideas from the subject area; and on a student’s individualized education program (IEP). Once the curriculum for the year or for a particular unit is identified, the teacher divides the content into individual lessons and writes specific lesson objectives, making sure each lesson clearly fits with the goals of the overall curriculum. The teacher then selects a lesson

model—direct instruction, informal presentation, structured discovery—that will work best to help students reach the objective of a specific lesson. Teachers write lesson plans for topics in all subject areas. Variations in lesson plans result from the specific characteristics of the model of instruction being used in the lesson. Regardless of the lesson model, however, seven important components should be included in all lesson plans. The content within each component will vary. There are many examples of lesson plans for you to examine in the Teaching Plans in the Appendix.

Key Terms & Definitions

Connection analysis: A preplanning task that includes identifying the *generalization* or *big idea*, *state standard*, *common core state standard*, or *IEP goal* that you will address in your lesson.

Content analysis: A preplanning task that can include one or more of the following: *subject matter outline/organizer*, *a task analysis*, *a concept analysis*, *a principle statement*, definitions of *key terms*

or *vocabulary*, and a list of *prerequisite skills and knowledge*.

Editing tasks: Tasks that are especially useful for examining teaching plans to make sure they will be effective—that is, will result in student learning—include double-checking for needed critical management skills and universal and selected instructional interventions and evaluating congruence.