



Effective Grammar School Teaching & Leadership with Lori Jill Keeler

Lesson 7: More Effective Lesson Planning

Outline:

More Effective Lesson Planning

Introduction

- How do we use lesson planning for the best student learning?
- We should move from abstract curriculum design to daily lessons with clear learning objectives.
- Without clear learning goals, classroom activities are without direction.
- “A clear objective, articulated by a teacher in terms of student mastery, is the indispensable anchor of good daily lesson planning.”
- **Control tower analogy:** A clear objective is like a control tower that guides the planning for the path, the approach, and landing (for a lesson).
 - This is a thinking skill employed before the lesson is given, yet it is responsible for how the lesson looks and sounds. The quality of a teacher’s thinking before a lesson accounts for much of what we see and don’t see in the classroom.



Coverage Thinking

- When the teacher is thinking about coverage, she is thinking in terms of her part in the lesson (but perhaps not the student’s part).
- What are the dangers of this kind of thinking alone?
- Covering material is important but not enough.
- The teacher’s part in the lesson: present, describe, explain, demonstrate, cover, or identify information, procedures, or processes. But these should not be the objectives of the lesson.
- **Example:** Read chapter one of Charlotte’s Web is “covering” chapter one, but it doesn’t tell us what the student should know, understand, or be able to do after reading it.
- When we confuse covering objectives with learning, we focus on getting through everything without thinking about student learning. This leads to thinking that when completing the coverage agenda, the lesson is done. When



planning is done for coverage alone, we tend to do minimal or superficial checking for understanding and less intellectual exploration and integration with other learning.

Activity Thinking

- This is important too - students need to be actively engaged - but it is not enough.
- A teacher thinking in terms of activities is more concerned with what students are doing than what they are learning. Activities could include: answering questions, researching, watching a film, building a model, solving problems, conducting an experiment, reading, etc.
- This is a problem only when the focus rests on the activity alone, without examination of the activity in light of an important outcome. Without such a focus, it is possible that an activity is not teaching what should be taught, or teaching without the students learning anything of value.
- **Example** from basketball coach John Wooden: “Never mistake activity for achievement.” Some fun activities have little or no educational value (busywork).

The 4 M's of Lesson Plan Objectives

- **Manageable:** Your objective should be able to be done in the time allotted.
- **Measurable:** A written objective measurable ideally by the end of a class period. Example: Exit tickets, writing on the white board. This disciplines you to think through key assumptions.
- **Made first:** Lesson plans are made first with the objective guiding the learning activities.
- **Most important:** An objective contains what is most important. For example: In a literature book, what is the most important thing for students to know and do?

Involvement Thinking

- **Get all students engaged** in the learning experience.
- **Make learning inviting and accessible to all students.** If this becomes the dominant concern without being considered in light of a particular outcome, we become out of balance. Example: Doing lots of word searches that don't really help students to spell better.
- All of the concerns and decisions about student engagement must be in relation to a particular learning outcome for the lesson.

Mastery Objective Thinking

- The focus is on student learning.
- Incorporate lots of checks for student understanding throughout the lesson.
- Learning objectives start with the learner as the subject, then comes the all-important verb.



- It has to be an action verb that can be observed or measured.
- Example: The student will compare and contrast monotheism and polytheism by naming one similarity and at least three distinct differences and their implications for believers' practical living.
- Focus on objectives that cause the student to be able to develop the ability to think. Thinking skills can be taught along with academic content, but it will take purpose and intentionality.

Thinking Skill Objectives

- Name the skill (e.g., compare and contrasting skill).
- Deal explicitly with how to do it (model).
- Highlights steps.
- Give tips and coaching pointers.
- Have students practice with feedback.
- Evaluate how students are doing with the thinking skill.

Specific Learning Targets for Students

- **Illustration** from Alice in Wonderland: "Would you tell me please which way I ought to go from here?" That depends on where you want to get to," said the cat. "I don't much care where," said Alice. "Then it doesn't matter which way you go," said the cat.
- Failure to plan is a plan to fail.
- Avoid aimless wandering. Without a clear objective, we can find ourselves without the material we need and little or no integration of subjects, resulting in poor, reduced learning and frustration, and a waste of time, effort, and money.
- The first thing students need to learn is **what** they are going to be learning. Students should be able to see on the whiteboard what they are going to learn on a given day. Then they can self-assess: Did I get it or do I need more work?

Benefits of Clear Learning Targets

- Clear learning targets each day result in benefits for students and teachers.
- Benefits for Teachers:
 - You are able to plan and implement more effective instruction.
 - You can describe exactly what students will learn, how well they will learn it, and what they will do to demonstrate they are learning.
 - Use your knowledge of what the average student should be able to do to plan for the entire class.
 - Establish "look fors" or evidence that show you if they have applied what you wanted them to learn.
- Benefits for Students
 - They are **better able to compare** where they are to where they need to be; they can set specific goals and strategies.
 - They **can assess and adjust** what they are doing to get there.



- This is helpful for the principal too.
- **Raises achievement:** they provoke meaningful learning that raises student achievement (the purpose of effective instruction).
- The quality of both teaching and learning is enhanced when teachers and students aim for and reach specific and challenging learning targets. “To reach a destination, you need to know exactly where you’re headed, and manage your progress along the way.”
- Where you’re headed in a lesson makes all the difference.
- Classroom team: think of the teacher as one half of the team and the students as the other half.
- They provide timely feedback to **feed student learning**.
- Therefore, we give quality of content and quality of instruction.
- “When students know where they are headed, they are more involved in learning, take more interest in their learning, and take more pride, dig deeper, and persist in learning.”
- It is not a learning target unless both the teacher and the students are aiming for it.
- Don’t keep the learning targets a secret—clearly publish and articulate them.
- Clear learning targets will improve the **quality of the student’s questions**; students will begin to ask questions related to pursuing their own learning.

Designing Learning Targets

- **Define the essential content for the lesson:** What did students learn previously, what should I build on, enrich or expand, what should they practice? See the forest of learning, not just the individual trees: not just facts, but concepts and principles.
- **Define the thinking skills** or processes necessary for the lesson. Compare Bloom’s taxonomy: knowledge leading to evaluation.
- **Design a strong performance of understanding** using formative assessments. Formative assessments help us:
 - See whether or not the student truly able to master the content
 - Embody the learning target
 - Promote mastery of the essential content
 - Develop students’ proficiency and specific reasoning skills
 - Provide compelling evidence of student learning
 - Prepare students for elevated degree of challenge that will face them in tomorrow’s lesson
- State the learning target using student-friendly language, which students can understand.
- Think about an actual target.
- How will you describe mastery so you that they will know whether or not they got it and so you will know where they are on the way to mastery?



- **Ways of describing a lack of mastery:** no understanding at all, no proficiency, minimal understanding, misunderstanding, serious misconceptions, gaps in understanding, basic proficiency, proficiency, mastery of the learning target.

Starter Prompts

- We are learning to...
- We will show that we can do this by...
- To know how well we are learning this, we will look for...
- You will know you can do this when you are able to say...
- It is important for us to learn this (or be able to do this) because...

Give Nutritious Feedback

- **A mirror and a magnet:** A mirror provides an accurate picture of where the student needs to go; a magnet pulls the student forward with mastery goals rather than just performance goals. “Great job” is not nutritious feedback because it won’t pull him forward to greater learning.
- Good feedback compares with the student did with the learning target.
- Good feedback describes what the student did well and where he is in relationship to the criteria.
- Good feedback suggests a specific next step strategy that the student should use to improve or learn more.
- Good feedback arrives when the student has the opportunity to use it.
- Good feedback is delivered in the right amount and in student-friendly language.

Developing Self-Assessing Students

- Where am I going?
- Where am I now?
- How can I close the gap between where I am now and where I want to go?
- Students who use this process “learn how to learn.” It all starts with students who understand where they are going—their learning target.

Two Questions Students Should Be Able to Answer in A Given Lesson:

- What am I learning?
- How will know when I have learned it?

Two Questions Teachers Should Be Able to Answer in A Given Lesson:

- What is important for my student to learn and be able to do in this lesson?
- How will I know that they have been able to learn it?

Conclusion



- While it takes time to plan for specific learning targets, the return is well worth it as students will become self-assessing and grow in knowledge, skill, and understanding.