

Why Do Interns Write Unit And Lesson Plans?

Interns are expected:

- to write unit plans for every unit that they teach during the year, and to discuss those units with their collaborating teachers and field instructors before they teach them.
- to write lesson plans for every lesson that they teach during the year, and again to discuss those in advance with their CTs, and regularly with their field instructors.

Interns might wonder why they are expected to write unit and lesson plans. In a student's experience with teachers, it is not obvious that a teacher's day in the classroom includes planning. Therefore, it might be difficult for some interns to regard planning as being part of a teacher's work. A given intern might see that her collaborating teacher does not commit much of her plans to writing (or perhaps does not commit as much to writing as she did earlier in her career). Thus, interns may wonder why they are expected to plan thoroughly and extensively—on paper.

Particularly at the beginning of one's teaching career, it is important to plan instruction carefully and to evaluate and reflect upon instruction thoroughly. One major benefit of careful planning and thorough reflection is that it helps to build good teaching habits, and to give the teacher a measure of control over those habits, thus increasing the teacher's capacity to serve her or his students. Writing out plans also helps novices who are not used to thinking of all the details necessary to carrying out a successful lesson be thorough about all aspects that require attention.

During the internship year, an intern's unit and lesson plans also serve to inform the collaborating teacher and the field instructor about the intern's intentions, so that they can better help the intern to act on those intentions—or to reconsider them. Access to interns' thinking about unit and lesson plans is a key way CTs and field instructors identify interns' strengths and problem areas and help interns further develop the knowledge, skills and dispositions they need to meet the Teacher Preparation Program Standards.

Finally, recall that the collaborating teacher is the teacher of record for the class, the one who will be held responsible for it. Therefore, the CT needs and deserves to be informed, in advance and in some detail, what is going to be done with that class, and why. That information can be provided efficiently in unit and lesson plans.

Unit/Lesson Planning Guide: Key Questions to Consider while Planning

Figuring out the “big picture”

1. What do I know about this content and what do I need to learn in order to teach it?
2. What are the “big ideas” that I want students to learn?
3. How are these big ideas connected to each other (draw a concept map)?
4. How does this content connect with students? What do different students already know about this? How does it enter their lives? How can I find out?
5. Based on the above, what will be the objectives and main ideas for the unit? (Consult standard documents , district objectives.)
6. What central problem or question will connect all the lessons in this unit? What is the desired student response to this question?

7. Why is the selected content important for students to learn?
8. What resources (books, audiovisuals, magazines, museums, computer programs, web sites, etc.) are available to support my teaching and students' learning? How good are they?
9. How will I assess student learning throughout the unit and in some kind of culminating activity (pre and post tests, projects, assignments)?
10. Does my assessment match the objectives and central problem or question? How will I document and analyze the students' response to these assessment strategies.

Instructional Plan

11. What are some activities/tasks that I can engage students in that will promote their learning and growth (e.g., conceptual change, in-depth understanding of key concepts, strategic use of skills and strategies)?
12. Which activities are likely to have the most impact on my students' understanding?
13. How do activities that I am considering match to the unit objectives? Do I address each objective in multiple lessons/activities to give students adequate time and support to really understand?
14. What sequence of activities will best support students in undergoing significant change in their knowledge and understanding (Consider a conceptual change instructional model for some subject matter areas: elicit students' ideas to the central question, let students explore their own ideas, provide activities to challenge students to change and expand their initial ideas, explain new ideas, give students multiple chances to apply and use new ideas, engage students in reflecting on their learning and growth.)

Designing daily lesson plans

15. What do I want students to learn from this lesson?
16. Is the lesson developmentally appropriate?
17. How can I help students see the links between this activity and other lessons? Does the activity clearly link to previous and future activities?
18. What will be easy or hard for students? How will I accommodate individual differences? (See section below on "Making Decisions about Adaptations" and "Putting it Together")
19. How will I engage students in learning?
 - How will I start?
 - What teaching strategies will I use?
 - What activities will students engage in? Why?
 - How much time will be devoted to different parts of the lesson?
 - What directions will I need to give, and how should I present them?
 - What questions should I be prepared to ask? How might students respond?
 - How will students represent their learning?

- What classroom management issues do I need to consider and plan for (organization of groups, procedures, transitions, handling student lack of cooperation, etc.)?

Reflecting while teaching

20. What are different students learning or misunderstanding? What evidence do I have?
21. What kind of records should I keep to help me assess student learning throughout the unit/lesson?
22. Where do we go next? What are some of the alternatives and what reasons do I have for choosing a particular course of action?
23. How can I take into account differences among students and promote genuine learning for all?
24. In what ways can I better engage students who are not cooperating? What can I learn about them that will help me?

Reflecting after teaching a unit

25. How can I best analyze my students' learning from this unit?
 26. What did I learn about my students, content, and myself as a teacher?
 27. What went well? What were the surprises?
 28. What would I do differently and why?
- What do I need to learn more about?

Making Decisions About Adaptations

- Before you can make decisions about adapting curriculum, you need to have a basic understanding of the nature of specific disabilities. Let your Collaborating Teacher and/or Field Instructor know if you need more information.
- It is essential that you be clear about your lesson objectives before you begin thinking about adaptations.
- You need to determine what tasks, skills, background knowledge are necessary for the completion of the lesson: psychomotor, cognitive, and affective.
- There are different areas where adaptations can be considered. The teacher can make changes in the way the lesson is taught, the materials that are used, the structure of the classroom, and the way the objectives are demonstrated to meet the needs of students with disabilities.

Putting It Together: Essential Questions for Adaptations

Based on the items above, a teacher who is thinking about making adaptations can follow these steps:

- What do I want the students to learn and be able to demonstrate from this lesson?
- What are the tasks/skills/background knowledge needed for the completion of this lesson?

- What are the student's strengths and weaknesses?
- What tasks/skills/background knowledge will be challenging for the student?
- How can the student make use of his/her strengths?
- What components of the lesson need to be adapted?
- In what ways can these adaptations be made?
- Having decided my plan for making adaptations, will the student be able to meet lesson objective?

Keep in Mind....

It's easy to come up with plans for making adaptations that allow the student to complete the lesson but ignore the objective. Be careful...

There may be lessons where it will be the objective that needs to be adapted. For example, if the objective calls for the student to demonstrate abstract reasoning, a student with a mental impairment may need to meet a more concrete version of the objective.