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### Organizing and Planning Instruction

One of the most critical responsibilities of an educator is to successfully organize and plan instruction. “Perhaps the real earmark of expertise in teaching lies in understanding how to blend two different domains of knowledge—knowledge of what to teach and knowledge of how to teach—in a way that compromises neither domain” (Gunter, Estes, & Schwab, 2003, p. 341). While it is one of many facets of expertise in teaching, the ability to organize and plan instruction effectively is paramount.

To do so, one must first consider the curriculum of the school. The teacher should determine the specific skills, concepts, and objectives that are inherent to each particular lesson. Next, one must consider the instruction that is most appropriate for each lesson. The teacher must decide the various methods and strategies that will most effectively address the skills, concepts, and objectives of the curriculum. Finally, one must consider the various skills, abilities, needs, and learning styles of the individual students within the class. The teacher must discover and assess student needs continuously to provide the most effective educational experience possible.

Providing students with activities that have no organization or planning is similar to providing them with an incomplete jigsaw puzzle. Although it may be fun while it lasts, the experience will be incomplete (Gunter et al., 2003, p. 39). After a teacher has effectively organized a lesson, engaged in proven and successful instructional methods, and planned learning activities that suit the needs of the students, the learning experience is full and the puzzle is complete.

A framework for instruction has been created based on the need for teachers to examine the curriculum, various methods of instruction, and assessment of student needs and learning.

First, two lists of questions provide focus on these three areas of instruction. One list is for use in the planning stage of instruction (Appendix A) and the second is to guide reflection after instruction occurs (Appendix B). From those lists, two diagrams were created to provide visual reminders of the various steps of planning and organizing instruction for both planning and reflection (Figures 1 and 2). Using the questions with the visual organizers allows the teacher to effectively organize and plan for instruction by addressing the content of the curriculum, the various methods for instruction, and the needs of the students.

Research shows that effective “teachers [devise] explicit instruction and guided practice activities for learners that match their skill levels” (King-Sears, 2005, p. 401). Such explicit instruction requires the teacher to engage in careful and determined organization and planning of instruction. Further, developing the types of activities that correspond to student skill levels and challenge them to reach a higher level also requires such dedicated organization and planning. One method of effectively organizing and planning instruction is the development of a framework based on the knowledge of what is to be taught, how it should be taught, and the needs of the students in the classroom.

References

Gunter, M. A., Estes, T. H., & Schwab, J. (2003). *Instruction: A models approach* (4th ed.).

Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

King-Sears, M. E. (2005). Scheduling for reading and writing small-group instruction using learning center designs. *Reading & Writing Quarterly*, 21, 401-405. Retrieved April 16, 2007, from ProQuest database.

Appendix A

**Organizing and Planning Before Instruction*****Curriculum***

What skills or objectives are included in the lesson?

What are the most important concepts in the lesson?

Which concepts, if any, are being introduced?

Which concepts, if any, have the students previously encountered (review or reinforcement)?

Which concepts, if any, have students mastered?

Can these concepts/skills be applied throughout the curriculum?

***Instruction***

What materials are needed to deliver the lesson effectively?

What method(s) of delivery best suit the skills or objectives of the lesson?

What method(s) of delivery best suit the skills or abilities of the students?

How can I address the visual / tactile-kinesthetic / auditory needs of learners in the classroom?

To ensure that all students are engaged in learning, what multi-modal or multi-sensory strategies can I employ to suit the lesson?

How can I engage the students before instruction and build their anticipation of the lesson?

How can I develop a greater understanding of students' prior knowledge to ensure that the lesson is appropriate and engaging?

If the lesson covers concepts that students have mastered, how can I allow them to demonstrate that mastery?

How can I connect this learning to the students' previous learning?

How can I connect this learning to other content areas? How can this be integrated throughout the curriculum?

How can I offer cooperative learning opportunities in this lesson?

How can I enable students to interact with their peers during this lesson?

***Assessment***

What specific skills or knowledge will the students develop in this lesson?

What skills/concepts will the students need to use to participate in this activity?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of each student? How can both be addressed in this activity?

How will each student best receive the information?

How will student learning be assessed (before, during, and after instruction)?

Appendix B

**Organizing and Planning After Instruction*****Curriculum***

Was the content of the lesson appropriate and effective?

Was the content of the lesson suitable for this time and place?

Would this lesson be more appropriate or effective in a different setting?

***Instruction***

What worked or did not work during instruction?

How could this lesson be more effective in the future?

How did the students respond to the lesson?

Did I use variety of methods to deliver information?

Were students actively engaged in the activity?

Were the students able to make connections between this learning experience and others?

***Assessment***

Were all students actively engaged in the activity?

Were students able to maximize their strengths during this activity?

Were students able to develop their weaknesses in this lesson?

Were students engaged in cooperative learning during this activity?

Were students able to interact with each other during the lesson?

Were students able to apply their new skills/knowledge from this lesson into an independent activity?



Figure Captions

*Figure 1.* Organizing and planning before instruction.

*Figure 2.* Organizing and planning after instruction.



