

5 Steps to Effective Planning

1. Identify the standards.

Whether your classes follow the state standards or advanced course frameworks, it is critical to be able to tie instruction and assessment to a particular standard.

- Look particularly at verbs and nouns. What does it say the students need to understand or be able to do.
- Combine redundant standards to focus instruction.
- Incorporate skills standards with content standards. This process helps make learning activity decisions.
- Formulate standards into questions to help thread them throughout the lesson.
- Write one or two essential questions (per unit) that tie more specific questions to big ideas that can be used across subject areas.

2. Create the assessment.

Effective instruction requires teachers to make assessments that will provide accurate information about student achievement relative to the standards.

- Determine the format that is most appropriate for students to demonstrate learning and the type of feedback that they need.
- Decide whether the unit summative should be over the entire unit or in smaller chunks.
- When using selected response, write 3 to 5 assessment items for each standard to collect the most accurate information about student achievement.
- Diagnostic assessment is the best place to start. Why teach stuff they already know?

3. Determine which strategies will facilitate learning.

Different levels of thinking are more effectively taught using certain strategies.

- Choose 2 to 4 strategies that you will use consistently all year to establish routines.
- Link strategies to skills (i.e., comparison and identifying similarities and differences)
- Which part of the lesson is the activity supposed to support? Acquisition? Utilization? Presentation?
- Make sure strategies support demonstration of knowledge. For example, note-taking is important, but without the summarization piece, we don't know if the student really knows the content.

4. Incorporate formative assessment in learning activities.

Checks for understanding and proficiency of skills are important to both teachers and students if they are to be engaged in the learning process.

- Formative assessment does not stop instruction like summative.
- It is about gathering information to focus instruction. Are the students learning? Are we ready to move forward? Are they ready for a summative assessment?
- Formatives should not be treated like summatives in terms of scoring and factoring into grade calculation.
- Consider technology and activities that might help the timeliness of feedback (i.e., clickers, Plickers, thumbs up, paper notes stuck to the board, VersoApp).

5. Determine which types of feedback learners will need to be successful.

The type of feedback depends on the thinking level of the standard.

- Recall and other low-level activities can benefit from marks indicating correct or incorrect responses.
- TIP: Mark only the correct response and learner confidence will remain healthier (not deflated). This supports them socially and emotionally for a cognitive activity. Consult your educational psychology textbook from your educator training for more information.
- Choose either mark and score or commentary. Research shows that the only achievement gains occur when students receive commentary sans scores. The learner will always focus on the score when it is present.
- Plan time for achievement tracking. Students need to identify, for themselves, which standards they've met on each summative assessment.
- Learners need to self-evaluate and write goals to build ownership of their education. This can be combined with the achievement activity or portfolio reviews.