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

Following is a guide to unit and lesson planning; it is based on approaches to unit and lesson planning introduced in TE 401 and used more extensively in TE 402. Note that teachers rarely plan in a linear fashion by completing one step before starting another. The questions are designed to help interns and CTs consider the range of questions that need to be addressed, and may be worked on in any order. Following the series of planning questions is a reproducible sample outline for developing a plan for a single lesson. This same form can be used to plan a series of lessons that could **launch** or introduce an idea or concept. The second lesson may provide children with a chance to conduct an **exploration** of that idea or concept with particular materials. The final activity (or culminating project) may offer students an opportunity for **reflection** on what they have learned.

Figuring out the "big picture" and worthwhile goals

- Based on consultation with the CT, standards documents, and district objectives, etc., what will be the main idea for the unit, and the learning objectives?
- What do I know about this content and what do I need to learn in order to teach it?
- What are the "big ideas" that I want students to learn? What are key skills and strategies needed to learn these big ideas (e.g., reading, writing, oral language skills and strategies)?
- How are these big ideas connected to each other (draw a concept map)?
- How does this content connect with students? What do different students already know about this? How does it enter their lives? What is their proficiency in using skills and strategies (e.g., reading, writing, oral language skills and strategies) needed to learn the content? How can I find out?
- Based on the above, how can I tailor the objectives and main ideas for the unit to match my teaching situation?
- What central problem or question will connect all the lessons in this unit? What is the desired student response to this question?
- Why is the selected content important for students to learn?
- What resources (books, audiovisuals, magazines, museums, computer programs, web sites, etc.) are available to support my teaching and students' learning? How good are they?

Instructional Plan

- 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)?
- Which activities are likely to have the most impact on my students' understanding and provide necessary support throughout the learning process?
- How do the activities I am considering match up to the unit objectives? Do I address each objective in multiple lessons/activities to give students adequate time and support to really understand?

- 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

- What, specifically, do I want students to learn from this lesson that will contribute to the students' understanding of the unit's main ideas and objectives?
- Is the lesson developmentally appropriate?
- How can I help students see the links between this activity and other lessons? Does the activity clearly link to previous and future activities?
- What will be easy or hard for students? How will I accommodate and provide support for individual differences? (See sections below on "Providing Academic, Social, and Language Support for *All* Learners" and "Putting it Together" and companion document "Designing Lessons for Diverse Learners."
- 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 materials are needed and when will I prepare and organize 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.)?

Developing Performance Assessment(s)

- How will I assess student learning throughout the unit and in some kind of culminating activity (pre and post tests, projects, assignments)? How will students demonstrate their learning?
- Does my assessment match the objectives and central problem or question? How will I document and analyze the students' responses to these assessment strategies?
- How will they show that they have acquired the knowledge and/or skills I am trying to teach?

- How will I know that the students have achieved the desired learning outcomes?
- What evidence will I accept that students have learned?

Reflecting while teaching

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

Reflecting after teaching a unit

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

Providing Academic, Social and Language Support for *All* Learners
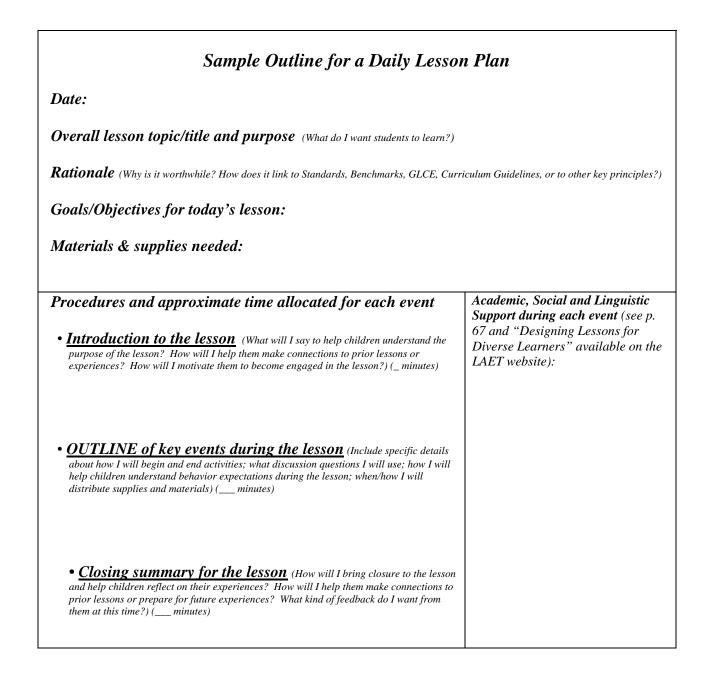
- Before you can make decisions about adapting curriculum and teaching methods, you need to have a basic understanding of the nature of specific disabilities, learning styles and knowledge of your students' cultural and linguistic backgrounds. Be sure you take time to get to know each learner well enough to become aware of his/her particular needs, and be sure to let your CT 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 providing particular types of support.
- You need to determine what tasks, skills, background knowledge are necessary for the completion of the lesson: psychomotor, cognitive, affective, cultural, and linguistic.
- There are different areas where various types of support 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, different learning styles and/or different cultural or linguistic backgrounds.

Putting It Together: Essential Questions for Academic, Social and Linguistic Support

Based on the items above, a teacher who is thinking about providing academic, social and linguistic support can use the questions below to address these issues:

- *What are the <u>academic demands</u> of this lesson?* What components of this lesson need to be adapted while still maintaining high expectations? How will I know whether each student is able to meet the lesson objective?
  - o What do I want the students to learn and be able to demonstrate upon completion of this lesson?
  - o What are the tasks/skills/background knowledge needed for the completion of this lesson?
  - o What are the student's strengths and weaknesses? What are the student's preferred learning styles and ways of communicating?
  - o What tasks/skills/background knowledge will be challenging for the student?
  - o How can the student make use of his/her strengths?
  - o What scaffolding and explicit instruction is needed (e.g., Think Sheets to help organize ideas; Editing and Revising guides; visual organizers to help children understand where they are in the process of completing the task)?
  - o When and how can I make supports optional (e.g., when are they no longer needed) so control of activities is transferred to the learner?

- *What are the <u>social demands</u> of this lesson (e.g., cooperation, listening, sharing, following directions)?* How can I help each learner meet these demands?
  - o Do I have major routines in place that help learners know what is expected?
  - o Have I provided modeling, thinking aloud, and rubrics that help learners understand the particular task to be done and how it is to be done?
  - o Have I provided language (helper words) and modeled when/how to use them (e.g., who, what, when; sentence starters)?
  - o Have I provided visual cues (e.g., lists of expected behaviors) as reminders to all students and to reduce demands on those with memory processing problems?

- *What are the <u>linguistic demands</u> of this lesson?* How can I help each learner meet these demands?
  - o Does my lesson employ multiple strategies, lots of student input, and a range of learning options (e.g., listening, speaking, reading and writing)?
  - o Do all students have multiple opportunities to speak, make mistakes, and rely on the success of communication to develop their linguistic capacities?
  - o Am I careful to avoid the use of slang, idioms and phrasal verbs (e.g., get over, get by, get through, get around) that are confusing to those whose first language is not English?
  - o Do I use ample non-verbal cues (e.g., gestures, pictures, concrete objects) to assist in comprehension?

- o Am I aware of each student's cultural preferences and traditions for communicating (e.g., eye contact; language routines; what to be called; humor)?
- o Are objects in my classroom labeled in multiple languages to acknowledge the first language of each learner?
- o Since all language acquisition is literacy development, do students whose first language is not English have opportunities to use their first language?

Sample Outline for a Daily Lesson Plan

Date:

Overall lesson topic/title and purpose *(What do I want students to learn?)*

Rationale *(Why is it worthwhile? How does it link to Standards, Benchmarks, GLCE, Curriculum Guidelines, or to other key principles?)*

Goals/Objectives for today's lesson:

Materials & supplies needed:

Procedures and approximate time allocated for each event	*Academic, Social and Linguistic Support during each event* *(see p. 67 and "Designing Lessons for Diverse Learners" available on the LAET website):*
• ***Introduction to the lesson*** *(What will I say to help children understand the purpose of the lesson? How will I help them make connections to prior lessons or experiences? How will I motivate them to become engaged in the lesson?) (_ minutes)*	
• ***OUTLINE of key events during the lesson*** *(Include specific details about how I will begin and end activities; what discussion questions I will use; how I will help children understand behavior expectations during the lesson; when/how I will distribute supplies and materials) (___ minutes)*	
• ***Closing summary for the lesson*** *(How will I bring closure to the lesson and help children reflect on their experiences? How will I help them make connections to prior lessons or prepare for future experiences? What kind of feedback do I want from them at this time?) (___ minutes)*	

• _**Transition to next learning activity**_	
**Assessment** (How will I gauge the students' learning as I implement the lesson plan and once the lesson is completed? Specifically, what will I look for? How will I use what I am learning to inform my next steps?)	_**Academic, Social, and Linguistic Support during assessment**_