

LESSON & UNIT PLANNING

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Unit Planning

As interns gradually take over core content areas during the student teaching, they are expected to develop units – i.e., coherent collections of lessons – so that they can help students acquire the skills of learning and develop deeper understandings. These units may last for a few days or a few weeks.

In designing and developing units of study, the intern is required to use Wiggins and McTighe’s “backward design” approach. According to Wiggins and McTighe, “backward design” is an approach to unit design that “begins with the end in mind.” Rather than starting with the time-honored practices of selecting favorite activities and resources, the unit designer first identifies the desired results (goals, understandings and objectives/skills) and then the strategies (assessments) for determining that the desired results have been achieved. Finally, the unit designer identifies the learning experiences (instructional activities, resources, etc.) for achieving the desired results.

Unit Format

Units of study must be developed for each core content area as students assume responsibility for the same. A template of the format to be used can be found on p. 57.

The essential unit components are as follows:

Stage 1: The Desired Results

Designing a unit begins by identifying the end – the desired results. The key elements of this stage include the following:

- **Established goals:** What are the goals... i.e., the standards/benchmarks this unit will address?
- **Understandings:** What are the big ideas and what specific understandings re desired?
- **Essential questions:** What provocative questions will foster inquiry and understanding?
- **“Students will know...” and “students will be able to...”** What key knowledge and skills will students acquire as a result of the unit?

Stage 2: Assessment Evidence

Once the desired results have been identified, the next stage of the unit is to identify how to determine that students have achieved those results. There are two categories of assessments common to units. They are:

- **Performance tasks:** The unit designer needs to identify one or more authentic performance tasks through which students will demonstrate the desired understandings. (A performance task is one wherein students are asked to use all of the knowledge and expertise they have acquired in the unit to produce a complex product.)

Related questions:

- Through what authentic performance tasks will students demonstrate the desired understandings?
- By what criteria will performances of understanding be judged?

- **Other Evidence:** The designer also needs to identify other evidence (e.g., tests, quizzes, journal writing, one-minute summaries, etc.) through which students will be able to demonstrate achievement of the desired results.

Related Questions:

- Through what other evidence will students demonstrate achievement of the desired results?
- How will students reflect upon and self-assess their learning?

Stage 3: Learning Plan

What learning experiences and instruction will be used to enable students to achieve the desired results? The unit designer must now identify what he or she and the students must do in order to achieve the desired results. This stage requires that the designer be mindful of who the students are (prior experiences, strengths and needs, etc.) and make choices based not solely on what has been done before, but rather on what will be best – here and now – for the students who will be working to achieve the desired results.

Wiggins and McTighe provide a very useful framework for guiding the selection and development of the learning experiences and instructional activities. As decisions are made about learning experiences and activities, unit designers need to ask if the strategies, activities and planned experiences, including the assessments strategies identified in Stage 2...

W = Help the students know **Where** the unit is going and **What** is expected. Help the teacher know **Where** the students are coming from (prior knowledge, interests)

H = **Hook** all students and **Hold** their interest.

E = **Equip** students, help them **Experience** the key ideas and **Explore** the issues.

R = Provide opportunities to **Rethink** and **Revise** their understandings and work.

E = Allow students to **Evaluate** their work and its implications.

T = **Tailor** the unit design to the different needs, interests and abilities of your learners.

O = Be **Organized** to maximize initial; and sustained engagement as well as effective learning

The performance task(s) and formative assessments must be included in the activities and experiences of Stage 3. These particular experiences and activities inform the teacher of student understanding and provide information which can and should be used to make adjustments both within the current lesson and in the lesson or lessons which follow.

A preliminary draft of each unit plan must be shared with the cooperating teacher no less than two days in advance of initial implementation. A unit plan is a living, malleable document – one subject to revisions as assessment strategies reveal the level and quality of students' understanding. With this in mind, please note that subsequent changes need to be reviewed with the cooperating teacher in

advance of implementation. Also, please note that it is anticipated that the *units developed during the internship will, with one exception, be of draft quality; i.e., they may not be as detailed or refined as that which will be designated as the “portfolio quality unit.”*

Portfolio Quality Unit: One unit is to be designated as the “portfolio quality” unit and should be kept in a separate section of the notebook. It will receive extra scrutiny by the university supervisor for two purposes. The first is to provide general feedback which may be applicable to the development of other units. The second purpose is to provide specific feedback to help the intern in developing a unit suitable for inclusion in his or her professional portfolio.

Lesson Plans

Interns are expected to prepare lesson plans for *all* core content areas.* Once students take over a core content area, the units they design and develop will include the daily learning experiences and instructional activities. The capsule descriptions included in the unit should be expanded and incorporated into the daily lesson plans.

Early in the internship, the intern may teach individual lessons in isolation rather than a series of lessons making up a unit. It is assumed that these individual lessons will be connected to a larger whole – i.e., to a unit designed by the cooperating teacher. With that in mind, when an intern creates a single lesson, he or she is advised to consult with the cooperating teacher to ascertain not only the standard/benchmark to be addressed, but how the lesson fits into the larger whole (i.e., what are the desired results of the unit and how should this lesson move the students toward achieving that goal).

A rough draft of lessons must be presented to the cooperating teacher at least two (2) days in advance of the plan’s scheduled implementation. A final draft of the lesson – if changes to the rough draft were suggested or required – must be made available to the cooperating teacher at the beginning of the day on which the plan is scheduled to be implemented.

In developing a lesson plan, the intern is responsible for planning original learning experiences; i.e., the intern should not merely implement a plan developed by his or her cooperating teacher. Instead, interns should develop their own plans based on curricular guidelines and expectations, as well as state standards and benchmark. Whenever and wherever possible, lesson plans should be creative and innovative, and reflect the incorporation of the “best practices” considered in the professional courses.

Format

The daily lesson plan is, essentially, an extension of the unit and an expansion of the learning activities and assessments identified for the unit.

**The exceptions to this requirement include but are not limited to the following: Instructional activities such as daily oral language (elementary) or warm up activities (elementary and secondary) do not require a lesson plan. However, interns are expected to keep a log of the skills or strategies addressed each day.*

All lesson plans should include the following components:

- **Standard(s)/Benchmark(s):** Simply stated, what is or are the standard(s)/benchmark(s) for this particular lesson?

- **Learning Experiences:**

Opening: How will you pique students' interest? How will you make connections or help students make connections to previous learning or experiences? (This is a good place for inserting essential questions as a "hook" to engage students.)

Learning Activities: What activities will you and the students do to achieve the desired results? How will you differentiate learning activities to address the diversity of strengths and needs among the students?

Closure: How will you and the students pull the lesson together?

- **Assessment:** How will you know whether or not the students are achieving/have achieved the desired results? What strategies will you use to monitor progress? (Questioning? Follow up probes? One minute essays or summaries?) How will you know that students have achieved the goal or made progress towards it?
- **Reflections:** Each intern should keep in mind that units and lesson plans are dynamic documents. They are subject to change as you reflect on what worked, what did not work, and why, and what needs to be done differently next time... which may be the very next lesson which is taught. You should be prepared to make adjustments in future lessons based on the results of your assessments, on what your observations and reflections have revealed, and on the feedback from your cooperating teacher and/or university supervisor.

DAILY LESSON PLAN TEMPLATE

Name: _____ **Date:** _____ **Grade Level:** _____

Unit Topic: _____ **Lesson Focus:** _____

Standard/Benchmark:

Motivation/Accessing Prior Knowledge (The Hook):

Learning Activities/Assessments*

Closure

Reflections:

**Extrapolated from the learning activities and assessments identified in the unit plan and expanded for this lesson.*

UNIT TEMPLATE

Unit Title:

Content Area/Grade Level(s):

Implementation Time Frame:

Stage 1 – Desired Results	
Established Goals:	
Enduring Understandings	Essential Questions
<i>Students will be able to...</i>	
Stage 2 – Assessment Evidence	
Performance Task(s):	Other Evidence
Stage 3 – Learning Plan	
Date	Learning Activities:

“PORTFOLIO” UNIT FEEDBACK FORM

Intern: _____

Semester: _____

Supervisor: _____

Components	Comments/Suggestions	Status*		
		No evidence	In progress	Completed
Establish Goals/ Standards				
Understandings				
Essential Questions				
Objectives				
Performance Tasks				
Other Evidence				
Learning/Lesson Plans				
Examples of student work				
Materials & Resources				
Summary Reflection				

Additional comments can be attached or written on the reverse side.

This form is to be kept in the front of the unit section of the internship notebook. A copy must be submitted to the Director of School and Field Services at the end of the internship.