

Implementing Teaching Labs

Live Teaching Lab

To be as impactful as possible, teacher training should be as realistic as possible. This can be difficult in a school situation, as we don't have live students with which to practice methods or approaches during group meetings. This would be an interesting exercise, but probably not often practical.

Administrators can use role-plays and analysis of video classrooms, or, even better, live mini-lessons with teachers as the 'class' to make the situations more realistic. Having teachers engage in teaching, even in a short format, will require them to think carefully through the steps of the 'lesson', and the following time for critique and analysis gives valuable feedback to both the teacher and the participants and observers.

First First/Last Five

The opening and closing times of a lesson are often the most impactful, so teachers need to think carefully through having clear and effective beginnings and endings.

For this exercise, teachers will present the first five-eight minutes of an actual or invented lesson to other teachers just as they would to students. (Some assumptions will need to be made, of course, concerning any previous knowledge needed, but since this is a role-play the teacher and the 'students' will simply pretend to have the knowledge and improvise responses accordingly.) The 'class' can vary in size, with some teachers acting as outside observers of the lesson.

Following the presentation, teachers then discuss and apply, offering both 'warm' and 'cool' critique.

This exercise can easily be fit into a monthly or weekly faculty meeting, with one or more lessons being presented.

Twenty-minute Mini-Lesson

A longer version of the above involves teachers preparing and presenting a twenty-minute sample lesson to a class of teachers as students, with discussion to follow. Other teachers can act as observers, assessing the lesson.

For this presentation, teachers prepare actual or hypothetical lesson plans for an entire week. This entails five daily lessons, one lesson for each day, Monday through Friday, one class period per day. (For example, a week's worth of lessons for an 11th-grade humanities course, a course that meets daily in the second period of the school day. Or, a week's worth of 3rd-grade grammar lessons.)

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Lesson Plans should include:

1. A one-page table of the lesson plans for the week. (See example below.)
2. For each of the five lessons, prepare learning targets, a formative assessment, and a brief synopsis of the lesson's activities.
3. Provide a brief description of previous knowledge students have.
4. As an option, teachers could prepare at least one handout that would be distributed to students at some point in the week's lessons. This handout could be a worksheet, guidelines for an assignment or project, etc. The handout may or may not be associated with the lesson to be delivered.
5. Also as an option, teachers could prepare a summative assessment of some form—quiz, writing assignment, etc.—that would be given to students to assess the material from the lessons you planned for the week.

Instructions for lesson delivery:

Teachers select one of the five daily lessons planned and deliver that lesson. Other teachers will role-play the students in the classroom. The presentation should be 20 minutes total.

This is an abridged lesson. Of course an actual lesson fills more than 20 minutes. The point is to display teaching in action—to show how the teacher brings the material and the students together. Teachers should open the lesson as they normally would, launch an activity and carry it through to a point where it gathers momentum, and then 'fast-forward' to demonstrate how they would bring the lesson to a close.

Some of the other teachers act as students, and some as observers. Consider using the observation form below. (See Annotated Teacher Observation Form below for more detail.)

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Bryan Lynch Humane Letters 11

This week's unit: Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*

Students will have previously learned the background of Sun Tzu and the historical situation in China at the time of his writing *The Art of War*.

| Monday (this lesson will be presented) | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--|---|---|--|---|
| TSWBAT explain principles from <i>Art of War</i> | TSWBAT explain and apply principles from <i>Art of War</i> | TSWBAT analyze principles from <i>Art of War</i> | TSWBAT synthesize principles from <i>Art of War</i> | TSWBAT evaluate principles from <i>Art of War</i> |
| CFU: Exit Pass (2 minutes): explain the main idea of today's reading to an absent classmate | CFU: Exit Pass: 3-2-1 Card -3 main points -2 new applications -1 question you still have | CFU: Curated discussion | CFU: RAFT, Pair-share | CFU: Writing |
| <p>1. Read Chapter 1: Laying Plans independently (5 minutes); In composition books:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Three key ideas, restated Two applications At least one question <p>2. Triads: agree on top two ideas & one application & one good question (5 minutes) -write each on board under heading</p> <p>3. Full group (8 minutes) -discuss as full group: what are the main ideas? How could you begin to apply them?</p> <p>4. Exit Pass: absent classmate (see above)</p> | <p>1. Read Chapter 2: Waging War aloud (random order and length of reading), discussing as we go: -main ideas -questions -applications</p> <p>2. Exit Pass: 3-2-1 Card (see above)</p> | <p>1. Chapter 5: Organization & Order, read on own.</p> <p>2. After reading, students will work in triads to diagram the main points</p> <p>3. Draw this diagram on large poster paper and post</p> <p>4. Curated discussion to follow</p> | <p>1. Chapter 6: Weak Points and Strong</p> <p>2. RAFT: Rewrite the ten most important paragraphs of Ch. 6 as a handbook of advice to high school students (turn in EOP)</p> <p>3. Pair-share: prepare to discuss your top two pieces of advice</p> | <p>1. Write three paragraphs in which you assess the principles in <i>Art of War</i> from the biblical perspective. What, if anything, is True, Good, and Beautiful? What is your reasoned, biblical response to Sun Tzu?</p> |

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Teacher Observed: _____ Class and Subject _____

Date: _____ Observer: _____ Lesson/Topic: _____

Summary: Observer's general notes and feedback (to be completed following lesson observation):

| Notes, observations, & feedback: WEAKNESSES | LESSON PLANS (prior to observation) | Notes, observations, & feedback: STRENGTHS |
|---|---|--|
| | 1. Objective/Learning Target is designed to teach specific student-learning objective <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> | |
| | 2. Assessment/Checking for Understanding <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> | |
| | 3. Design of Activities: lesson activities are... ...coherent, feasible, appropriate <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> tailored to objective or learning target <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> | |
| | 4. Preparation of materials, resources, handouts <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> | |
| | LESSON DELIVERY--CLARITY | |
| Notes, observations, & feedback: WEAKNESSES | 5. Teacher introduces a clear vision of the objective or learning target. Teacher posts targets for student reference. <i>weak/absent basic proficient</i> | |
| | 6. Teacher opens and closes the lesson with clarity. (Clear on-ramp and off-ramp to lesson) | |

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| Lesson 1 | Lesson 2 | Lesson 3 |
|--|--------------|-------------------|
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| 7. Teacher makes clear what students should be doing, and where they are headed, at each step of the lesson. Students are never lost. | | |
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| LESSON DELIVERY—STRATEGIES | | |
| 8. Checking for Understanding (CFU): Teacher practices <u>frequent</u> and <u>involuntary</u> assessment of all students. | | |
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| 9. Adaptation: Teacher and students act upon the CFU during the lesson. | | |
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| 10. Student Engagement: Students are engaged in meaningful activities; students are required to do most of the thinking. | | |
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| 11. Cohort Engagement: Students meaningfully engage one another. | | |
| <i>weak/absent</i> | <i>basic</i> | <i>proficient</i> |
| 12. Are <u>all</u> students actively engaged? Y/N | | |

Annotated Teacher Observation Form

Teacher Observed: _____ Class and Subject _____

Date: _____ Observer: _____ Lesson/Topic: _____

Summary: Observer's general notes and feedback (to be completed following lesson observation):

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| Notes, observations, & feedback: WEAKNESSES | LESSON PLANS (prior to observation) | Notes, observations, & feedback: STRENGTHS |
|---|---|---|
| <p><i>Strong objectives/learning targets are assessable (though not necessarily measurable), and specific. So, 'define' is strong, and 'think about' is weak. 'Explain' is strong, 'appreciate' is weak. Consider how the teacher will know, and, more importantly, how the student will know when the learning target has been reached.</i></p> <p><i>As mentioned below, effective formative assessments must be <u>involuntary</u> and <u>all-inclusive</u>. Merely calling on students who raise their hands in response to a general question does not give the teacher—or the students—reliable information about whether students are actually learning.</i></p> <p><i>If a teacher is having difficulty figuring out how to assess the learning of an activity, that is likely a sign that either the learning target is unclear (requiring a re-thinking of #1 above) or that the activity, however much it may seem worthy, or is even a teacher or student favorite, may not be appropriate for this lesson.</i></p> | <p>1. Objective/Learning Target is designed to teach specific student-learning objective</p> | <p><i>Daily lesson objectives (learning targets) should be planned before activities. The objectives/learning targets focus on what students learn not on the topic, student activity, or teacher activity. The objective or learning target guides assessment and activity, as they are developed to help students toward achieving the objective/learning target.</i></p> <p><i>“Learning is thinking into one’s own understanding a new idea or truth... the learner must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be acquired.” (John Milton Gregory, The Seven Laws of Teaching)</i></p> |
| | <p>2. Assessment/Checking for Understanding</p> | <p><i>Formative assessments should be planned in advance to check for student understanding of the learning shaped by the objective/learning target.</i></p> <p><i>Formative assessments can range from simple hand signals and white boards to harkness/socratic discussions. These are planned prior to activities.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers should develop the habit of planning frequent formative assessments.</i></p> |

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Teachers should make a habit of sharing the objectives/learning targets with students, so that students will begin to understand that the learning is their work, thus shifting the responsibility for learning to the student. The objective/learning target should not be a mystery that the teacher hides or fails to reveal, but a clear goal for the lesson. This doesn't mean, however, that the teacher may not choose in some lessons to take a more inductive approach in which students come to discover the purpose of the learning during the lesson. But the objective should

3. Design of Activities:
lesson activities are...
...coherent, feasible,
appropriate

...tailored to objective or
learning target

Lesson activities are designed to move students toward the learning target. Every teacher has (or will have over time) file drawers full of effective or favorite activities. Keeping the learning target front and center of thinking about planning will give clarity as to which of those activities is best for students at the time of the lesson.

**4. Preparation of
materials, resources,
handouts**

Has the teacher prepared materials in advance?

LESSON DELIVERY-- CLARITY

**5. Teacher introduces
a clear vision of the
objective or
learning target.
Teacher posts
targets for student
reference.**

Objectives/learning targets should be provide a clear vision to students of what the desired learning is for the lesson. Teachers should share these with students, either by posting them, or having them on student materials.

**6. Teacher opens and
closes the lesson**

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The final few minutes are equally important as the first, as the teacher directs a clear wrap up of the learning and connects it to upcoming lessons. Formative assessment of some kind is common toward the end of the lesson.

closes the lesson with clarity. (Clear on-ramp and off-ramp to lesson.)

Effective classrooms are characterized by students knowing what they are to do each step of the way and doing it with a minimum of talk and effort. In poorly prepared classrooms the questions “what am I supposed to do?” or “what do we do with this?” may be frequently heard.

- 7. Teacher makes clear what students should be doing, and where they are headed, at each step of the lesson. Students are never lost.**

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It is not enough to ask the class, “Are there any questions?” or, “Does everyone understand?”. Teachers must verify that learning is happening and not take students’ word for it. Students themselves may not know if they understand or not.

Formative assessments are ungraded opportunities to assess progress toward the objectives/ learning targets. We want students to focus on learning and not grades, to develop a ‘growth mindset’ and to take more responsibility for their own learning. By building in ungraded practice we reinforce these attitudes and habits.

LESSON DELIVERY— STRATEGIES

8. Checking for Understanding (CFU): Teacher practices frequent and involuntary assessment of all students.

9. Adaptation: Teacher and students act upon the CFU during the lesson.

10. Student Engagement: Students are engaged in

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*Teachers should plan activities that avoid 'batting practice, where a few students are engaged and others merely observing. Also important is to watch the **ratio** of teacher talk to student talk. "...a too talkative teacher is rarely a good teacher" (Gregory)*

Students are engaged in meaningful activities; students are required to do most of the thinking.

11. Cohort Engagement: Students meaningfully engage one another.

12. Are all students actively engaged? Y/N