Lesson Planning for Integrated Learning

An Outline for Teachers

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A process outline to assist teachers to go beyond linear, sequential lesson planning in order to foster greater learning in their integrated learning students. Some of what follows implies that those in your classrooms are the students and some implies that you, the teacher, are the student. We find it fun being the student again.

Lesson-Planning View

Some learners perceive their "world" as a whole, where all things are interconnected and dependent upon each other. These "integrated" students face major challenges in coping with our dominant educational, social, and economic systems, which tend to present information in a linear fashion without the necessity of integration into meaningful context. Integrated students are at-risk of failing as they attempt to grasp information in ways that do not match their experience. Among large populations of at-risk students are many from Native American and similar cultures who do not regard their world as a sum of parts but as a blend of all that they experience.

This lesson plan does include some traditional, linear approaches to delivering information (checklists, rules, analysis, problem solving and organization). In addition to the traditional, linear delivery of information, this lesson plan also includes some of the following strategies, designed to appeal to at-risk students as they learn academic/life skills:

Integration of technology
Story telling/anecdotal information
Non-competitive group and teamwork
Performance-based assessment and rubrics
Visual presentations and practice through technology and other means
Project-based assignments that integrate family and community
Activities appealing to multiple intelligences (Gardner)
Application of Scientific Method to formulate and solve a problem.

Predominant Approach

Most of what a teacher will find to help in developing lesson plans is based on the concepts that there are three questions that lesson plans must address. (See askeric.com) Those are 1) Where are students going? 2) How are they going to get there? 3) How will you know? These questions and the associated processes work quite well for linear, sequential lesson plans. Research indicates that about 30% of students are linear, sequential in their learning process.

Therefore a linear, sequential lesson should work relatively well for 30% of learners and less well so for the other 70%. The Integratelearning site provides ideas and lesson plans designed for those students who are not linear, sequential learners.

The Integrated Model Approach

The Integrate Learning model does not ignore standards; rather it is a different way of approaching standards and thus the education of students. As teachers, we have no choice as to whether we will implement standards, but we do have choice as to how we implement them. What follows is a way to satisfy those checking on the standards while keeping, even enhancing, the interest of your students.

As you might expect, what follows is not a linear model for developing a lesson plan. Integrated learners are mostly turned off by teacher-centered classrooms, linear lessons, sequential approaches, and following someone else's lead. Integrated learners want to assume some of the responsibility for their own education. The three questions that lesson plans generally address still apply, but the approach is somewhat different. The model for this teaching/learning strategy is the home rather than the traditional school.

The first question is "Where are students going?"

In the linear format, the teacher determines where students are going, based on textbooks and required standards. There is little student input, therefore little student interest.

In the Integrated Learning format, the lesson and direction is derived from a combination of teacher input and student input, usually originating from a discussion (teacher-student, student-student, class-teacher) or a "teachable moment" that comes up. The direction and content of the lesson are not known ahead of time. They are developed as the lesson progresses. The lesson moves along because of continued student interest and student questions. The teacher no longer provides the answers. Rather the teacher asks questions and helps students find and utilize resources. Sometimes the teacher knows where the students are going and sometimes the teacher may be less sure. The process is organic, going in the direction(s) of student interest and excitement. Students learn best when they are excited about the learning process.

Model: As parents we have certain goals and expectations for our children. In general, we want them to become self-sufficient, contributing members of adult society, able to feel good about themselves and get along with others. Those are our standards.

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The second questions is "How are they going to get there?"

In the linear process the teacher determines the process, the activities, the materials, the textbooks and workbooks. In a good lesson plan, the teacher has anticipated pretty much every possibility and is ready for it with activities, resources, and projects. The teacher is the source of pretty much all information and activity.

In the Integrated Learning model, the lessons are generated by discussion between student(s) and teacher, sometimes between students. The teacher's task is to help maintain interest and excitement and to help direct students toward resources. The teacher also is intimately aware of the required standards, so s/he can occasionally bend the direction of projects in a way to increase the quantity or depth of the standards covered. The process is not quite "student driven," but is largely that. The teacher's role is more of a "coach" than a source of knowledge or direction. S/he encourages students toward success rather than leading them there. The hope is that students will surpass the teacher.

Model: In the home the specific "lessons" are derived from our discussions with our children, our observations of them and their interaction with others. They, along with us, determine what "lesson" they are ready for and how it will be developed. We are the guides sometimes. They are the learners. Sometimes we may push them in a certain direction. Other times they may pull us to "teach" them in a certain direction. Sometimes we don't know how to help them to do what they want, so we can encourage them to find other resources (school, relatives, Boy/Girl Scouts, clubs, mentors, etc).

The third questions is "How will you know?"

In the linear, sequential process the teacher administers an exam of one sort or another to determine the level of understanding for the specific objectives covered. The results will be numerical and can be charted and graphed.

In the Integrated Learning Model, such linear tests (usually pencil and paper) can be a part of the evaluation process, but much more important will be the results of the projects. Students can demonstrated what they have learned and the depth of that learning, written, orally or kinesthetically. Often in this model the teacher simply asks the students to prepare a presentation of some sort that demonstrates what they have learned in the project. With a set of rubrics, the teacher can then easily determine what was learned and to what depth in order to be able to chart progress against required standards.

Model: In the home we rarely would give a pencil and paper or a standardized test to know if our children have learned what we want them to know. Nonetheless we do know if they have learned. We observe their behavior,

projects they do, their interactions with others, their attitudes and actions. We can evaluate pretty well how they have progressed along the "standards" we have set as personal and family goals.

Lesson-Plan Sequence

LESSON OVERVIEW

This outline should assist teachers in developing lessons that will foster greater learning in integrated learning students. It should also assist in developing greater interest in the learning process in the classroom.

LESSON OBJECTIVES

1. Allow teachers to see that there are legitimate lesson planning approaches other than linear, sequential ones.

2. Provide a comparison of the linear, sequential model with the integrated learning model.

3. Provide a real-life, out-of-school model for the integrated learning approach.

When teachers have completed this project they will have skills in developing lesson plans in ways other than only linear, sequential.

Integration of Other Functional/Academic Skills: Teachers will be able to utilize their skills in parenting and as family members to bring in other ways of approaching the teaching/learning situation in the classroom.

STATE AND NATIONAL STANDARDS ADDRESSED

Following are several websites that provide a lot of food for thought in lesson planning. Anyone can find a plethora of help with lesson planning by putting "lesson plans" or "lesson planning" in a search engine and seeing what comes up.

For general lesson plan processes
http://www.askeric.org/Virtual/Lessons/Guide.shtml
10 steps to consider for lesson planning
http://www.lessonplanspage.com/WriteLessonPlan.htm
For many sample plans
http://www.proteacher.com/020001.shtml
For a Lesson plan format from Disney, following standards
http://www.thirteen.org/edonline/concept2class/month3/implementation.html
For some interdisciplinary lesson plans concerning nature

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http://interactive2.usgs.gov/learningweb/teachers/lesson_plans.htm
For some lesson plan rubric ideas
http://cuip.uchicago.edu/wit/2000/curriculum/homeroommodules/assessEdSites/lessrubric.htm
Ideas and help on doing lesson plans
http://www.adprima.com/lesson.htm
An outline of areas a lesson plan "should" cover
http://www.unl.edu/teaching/lessonplans.html
For lesson plans and strategies for integrated learners
http://integratelearning.org

PREREQUISITES: Be a classroom teacher, having had training and experience in teaching students, evaluating students and developing lesson plans. What is a reasonable expectation for students to succeed?

REQUIRED MATERIALS – List materials so that your have a checklist to follow.

HANDOUTS – List Handouts here and include the hardcopy with your plan. Label handouts clearly for easy access by you or others.

REQUIRED EQUIPMENT/TECHNOLOGY – More and more a requirement!

Computer and Internet access. Ability to utilize one or more search engines.

THE LESSON

Note: Students learn not from what you do, but from what you have them do.

What you say is less likely to be remembered than what they say. Ask questions, give few answers.

This s more of an outline than a detailed set of instructions. Add your own ideas and personality to the lesson.

During this whole project, the role of the instructor is more that of a coach than that of a source of information. Whenever possible, let students do the research, ask the questions, come up with the answers or possibilities, work out their differences, and even go in the wrong direction. The instructor can try to keep up the students' enthusiasm, show them their progress, and encourage them.

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Activity Sequence

Here is an outline of the process:

1) The first task is for the teacher to become thoroughly familiar with the standards that are required for the grade level being taught. That means reading them, studying them, thinking about possibilities concerning the standards, and developing a grid of the standards covered for each student. Remember that there is often some redundancy in standards since subject area committees in isolation develop them. Therefore, some of the standards from math may be duplicated in science, and so forth. Please cross-reference those on your graph so that you will show that you have covered the area rather than having to do it twice.

2) The next task is to determine student interests. This can be done individually or in groups. Usually classroom or individual discussion leads to possibilities. Often areas that can be used for a project turn up in discussions about other projects. Look anywhere. Casual discussion on the playground can lead to projects that will capture student attention and lead to great learning opportunities.

3) Focus the project, preferably toward some of the standards that have not yet been covered. However, remember that students will work harder, longer, and more intensely on things they are interested in than on things they are not interested in. I would sacrifice covering a few standards to increase student interest. The Integrated Learning model presumes that many students learn in an integrated manner, combining rather than separating issues or areas. You will go back part way through the project and review the standards covered. You may, at that time, be able to add an element or press in a little different direction to cover more standards.

4) Ask questions. Let the students wander a bit as they formalize a project. Let them find resources that they need. Try not to be the main resource yourself. Resources can be other students, other adults in and outside school, encyclopedias, the Internet, books, tapes, movies and much more. In this process your job becomes one of assisting students to determine possible resources and allowing them to utilize those resources. You are a coach, providing direction and encouragement, but requiring the students to do the work. Sometimes this is done for individual students, but more often you will have students working in groups or teams. You are more concerned that students learn rather than how or from whom. You are preparing students to be able to learn when you are not there.

5) Review the standards lists several times during the project. You need to know the standards. The students don't. If it is possible to add a component to cover additional standards without decreasing the

enthusiasm and momentum of the students, by all means do so. Recognize that any one project cannot cover all the standards required for the year. Some will have to wait for another project.

6) See what standards have not been covered well or at all. When preparing for another project, try to steer interest in that direction. If a significant part of the year has gone by with some are of standards not being covered, you may want to discuss that with the students and see if there is some project that they might like that would be in the area missed. Most classes are relatively well rounded in terms of interests, so it is likely that some students will want to take the lead to work on some project in any given standards area.

7) Evaluations are done in several areas. What standards have been covered and how well? (Use the grid) Have students maintained interest and perseverance toward their goal, their project? Did the project produce a quality product with all students (in the group) participating? Was the product displayed (publicly)? Did socialization increase? Did leaders emerge? Did everyone participate? Was it fun? (If the teacher is having fun, the students might. If the teacher is not having fun, the students won't) Did you, as the teacher, learn some things also? (Teaching is more fun when we are learning. We want to model that learning is a life-long activity.) Additionally, evaluations are not only done at the end of a project. They need to be done continuously throughout the project, asking pretty much the same questions. That way, continuous adjustments can be made during the project to increase interest and learning.

RUBRICS

Integrated assesses performance rather than memorization skills. Rubrics provide ideal ways for students to assess themselves as they process materials and experiences. Good rubrics are written for students, not for teachers. When you adapt criteria for student use, be sensitive to language and use the first person so that the learner becomes responsible for self-assessment.

(You will likely be able to develop additional rubrics. This is a start.)

Student Interest

1. Students want to get to the project. They can't wait!
2. Students will get to the project with little encouragement.
3. Students need coaxing to get to the project.
4. Students say "Do we have to?" and "Boring!"

Teacher Interest

1. This is an area of interest to me. I am anxious to see what develops.
2. I might be interested in this.
3. I am doing this because the kids want to.

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4. I am doing this because I have to.

Standards
1. This project covers a several standards, some well, others somewhat.
2. This project covers some of the standards somewhat.
3. This project is not really related to the standards.
4. Standards?

Cooperation/leadership
1. Students cooperate with each other to develop the project.
2. Some students take the lead in the project, others follow.
3. I have to provide the leadership for this project.
4. Students are just doing what they are told.

Cooperation
1. Students work well with others. Assume a clear role and related responsibilities. Motivate others to do their best.
2. Students work with others. Share some responsibilities and decisions with others.
3. Students work with others, but have difficulty sharing responsibilities and decisions with others.

Perseverance
1. The students want to develop a quality product to display.
2. The students are shy about displaying their product.
3. The student product is only mediocre.
4. The students couldn't complete a product.

Fun
1. This project was fun for students and teacher.
2. This project was fun for students, not for teacher.
3. This project was fun for the teacher, not so much for students.
4. Nobody had fun.

Learning
1. Everyone learned a lot.
2. Students learned a lot, the teacher learned some.
3. The teacher learned some, students not much.
4. Nobody learned much.

Perspective
1. The processes for this project will make the next project easier.
2. The processes for this project will not likely affect the next project.
3. The processes for this project were negative and will likely make the next project more difficult.

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Thinking Skills

1. Completion of the lesson requires students to synthesize information from a variety of sources or think creatively about how to apply information to a local situation
2. Completion of the lesson requires students to think a little about what they are doing, but does not focus on higher-order thinking skills.
3. Completion of the lesson requires students to regurgitate or copy information from one place to another; no higher order thinking skills required

Interactivity

1. Most of the activities are interactive, enriching and expanding the student's imagination.
2. Some interactive activities are present.
3. No interactive activities are present in this project.
4. Interactive? What's that?

Isn't it fun being the student again?

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