

How to Write a Concept-Based Lesson Plan

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Many teachers ask how to write a lesson plan that starts with a concept and progresses as a means of permitting the students to take control of their own learning. Therefore, let's look at the following steps:

Math

- The easiest way to define a concept is to give the example of a seesaw, or teeter-totter, to help students learn that the “concept” of the word “equation” is to make both sides equal. Therefore, if we were to teach a mathematics lesson on equations, we might start our lesson discussing ways our students perceive what happens when a seesaw is not equal.
- To make sure all students, ranging from the most advanced to the least capable are able to see the concept in practice, let's use a basic equation to demonstrate:

- $3 + 1 = 3 + 1$ (ask students to explain what they see) –

They should answer that both sides of the equal sign are the same.

- Move to a little more difficult transition:

$3 + 1 = 1 + 3$ (then ask if this fits the concept of an equation) the goal here is to help them realize that even if the numbers are in reverse order, the total is the same.

- Move to a more abstract format:

$3 + 1 = 2 + 2$ (Why?) How does this fit into the concept we are learning? Listen for students to explain their answers because their words helps the teacher assess their understanding of the original concept which is defining an equation. At this step, we can have the students point out that even though each side have different numbers, their “Total” results in making the equation equal on both sides.

- Have students practice making equations to determine what it is and what it is not – for example: is $7 - 2 = 6 - 1$? How about $7 + 2 = 8 + 1$?

- There may be some students who still don't get the concept of equation and for those students; I use manipulatives like

beans or stones. I make one side of the equation and then I may put two pencils to form an equal sign and ask the students to tell me how they come to the understanding of making each side equal.

Science

Concept Label: Fruit

Concept characteristics: The part of any plant that contains the seeds.

If the concept label is “Fruit,” we need to help our students come up with the concept characteristics that distinguish between a fruit and a non-fruit before we can go on to define the rest of the lesson.

Concept formation for “fruit”

Place a picture of a cut open apple, tomato, and squash on the board. Then, place a picture of a cut open potato, celery, carrot beside them.

Have the students come to the conclusion that the items on the left all have seeds but, the items on the right do not have seeds.

Without telling them the answer get them to discuss why one would

be called fruit and one would not be called a fruit.

The teacher can then move into ways fruit reproduce etc.

English

How to help students differentiate between a compound word versus a 2-syllable word.

Concept label: Compound word

Concept characteristics: Any word whose *meaning* is a combination of the *meaning* of the root words of which it is composed.

Example:

Non-example

nightgown

carpet

oversee

begun

doorknob

understood

I love humor so I might put the word "*night*" on the board and ask

the students to define it. Then, I would put gown on the board and define that word. Usually, the students will all come to the same conclusion on the word “*night*”; however, they will differ on the word “gown.” The girls may say a piece of formal clothing to wear when you go out.

After a definition has been determined, combine both words and see if they come to the conclusion that they are now creating a different picture than when we started out in the previous examples. Next, move to the next column and do the same with “car”, “pet”, and see how many giggles you get! Humor is a great way of getting students to emotionally mark an often *difficult concept* because when they see what it is not, they can then work backward when they need to define compound words on their own.

These lessons should not take more than 10 minutes to complete. This time will be well spent when you find yourself not having to explain the same concepts, or ideas, because some of the students did not attain the information when first taught.

Assessment

How will you assess learning has taken place? By giving students opportunities to determine what the concept “is” and what it “is not” will be the teacher’s best opportunity to determine if learning has taken place.

How to plan for assessment

Start at the end and determine what information you will be requiring your students to know by the end of your lesson. Once defined, work backward and teach specifically what you want your students to know. There should not be any secrets involved in learning! We all have hated to take courses from professors who made us guess what they were expecting from us. Therefore, permit your students to have a clear idea of what you expect from them.

Here’s how to provide help after you have provided your initial concept instruction:

Ask the student to tell you what he/she understood when you taught

the lesson and use that information as the basis for your assistance. If a child says, “I just don’t understand how to do this math problem” – you won’t know where to start unless the child gives you a starting point. By getting the child to clarify his/her needs, you are permitting him/her to use their own thinking process and problem solving abilities to formulate their questions and concerns. The teaching/learning opportunity then becomes “child-based” and not “teacher-based.” The result of this interaction will take the responsibility from the teacher’s shoulders and place it on the shoulders of the child. This interchange can start all the way back to preschool. The earlier this begins in a child’s life, the better the child will start to define his/her needs and problem-solve their own issues.

Summary

Planning for concept formation provides the basis for learning, problem-solving and interpersonal responsibility. If the teacher helps his/her students attain a difficult concept, less teacher time will be expended in future learning opportunities. This will permit deeper learning of higher concepts to take place. When students do

the work to figure out their own problems, their self-esteem goes up and the responsibility for learning moves from the teacher's shoulders to the students shoulders. Less classroom behavior problems also results because the students are actively engaged in their own learning.

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