

Preface

Do you remember your first teaching assignment—the first day you entered your new classroom and thought about the students who would soon be there? For me, it was a combination of pride and anxiety. I was proud that I had finally attained what I had prepared for over the last several years. I was also extremely anxious about the first day with my students. What would they be like? Would they like me? And most important, how could I best teach them? Sure, I had been in classrooms before. I had planned and taught lessons. But this was different. This was no short-term assignment with someone to guide me along the way. I was on my own. I had signed the contract, and I was expected to be a professional.

The first few days of my teaching assignment, I was overwhelmed with information about school rules and regulations, extracurricular assignments, curriculum requirements, and schedules. A kindly colleague offered the advice to “always have something for them to do.” So I studied all the curriculum guides and teachers’ manuals (I had never seen them before!). I made sure I had enough worksheets. I decorated my classroom with bulletin boards and attractive displays. I worked from dawn to midnight for weeks to get ready for the first day. When it arrived, I was exhausted. Somehow my students and I survived that day—I’m sure I learned more than they did. What I learned was that I needed a plan. If I was going to be any good at all at this teaching thing (and I desperately wanted to be), I was the one who had to make it happen. Certainly I could make sure I always had something for them to do, but I wanted to make sure I always had something for them to learn.

It is interesting the way competence and confidence go hand in hand. After several years, I felt more competent and at ease—but I was still very much a beginning teacher. As I came to know more about how learning happens, I tried different instructional designs. I put several objectives into the same lesson; I tailored lessons for different students; I let students take the lead, not only in what they learned but in how they learned. There were successes, but there were also disappointments. Not everything worked. But my teaching evolved and my students progressed.

Looking back over my early teaching years, I wish I had had more guidance. I read professional journals and learned a great deal about theory and philosophy, what to do and what not to do. But there was very little on how to actually do it. I wish there had been some models I could have used rather than trying to reinvent the wheel; it would have made teaching easier. I did not realize it then, but this is where the ideas for *Powerful Lesson Planning* models took root.

Over the years, I have played many roles in education—classroom teacher, reading specialist, administrator, university professor, and consultant. As I listen to and talk with classroom teachers from kindergarten through high school and in graduate programs and school districts throughout the country, I am taken back to my early experiences as a classroom teacher. I listen as teachers express their concerns and frustrations as well as their joys and desires about teaching. In very candid moments, when expressions of doubt sometimes surface, teachers question their practices. Many realize that the approaches they have used for many years no longer work as well as they once did. Their students have changed—and they have changed. Many are willing to try new approaches but simply don't know how to go about it. So, for lack of information, they go on doing what they've always done. As one veteran teacher said, "This year we're supposed to differentiate. We had a big meeting where we heard why it's a good idea. But no one told us how to do it. We're left on our own."

Not surprisingly, even experienced teachers who are familiar with basic instructional design may find it difficult to implement more complex instructional approaches. The planning procedures for different approaches involve asking different questions and making different decisions. Experienced teachers, regardless of content area or grade level, need models as they plan more complex instructional designs. Models provide a focus and common language for discussion and understanding.

Learning to plan effective lessons is part of the preparatory coursework in teacher education programs. Preclinical and student teaching experiences provide opportunities for the preservice teacher to observe and discuss lesson plans with experienced practitioners. Initially, preservice and beginning teachers focus on a very basic form of lesson planning that includes defining the learning standards to be achieved, selecting the activities to facilitate learning to meet the standard, and developing an appropriate assessment of student learning. At this stage, practicing more complex planning for diverse classrooms is not the norm (Tomlinson et al., 1997). Unless basic instructional design is understood and practiced, there can be little understanding of how to plan more complex instructional designs. With proficiency in basic instructional design, the beginning teacher is ready to expand and refine his or her teaching. Without this proficiency, the beginning teacher is likely to be confused and bewildered when trying to design something more complex.

Approximately 40 percent of teachers in the United States plan to retire by 2010. The National Center for Education Statistics (2005) predicts that the demand for teachers will continue and increase over the next five years as large numbers of teachers retire and student enrollments increase. Many students will be taught by novice teachers, many of whom will come to teaching through alternative paths.

Individuals who have content expertise do not always have the pedagogical expertise to design effective instruction. Their effectiveness depends on their ability to analyze content information, skills, and processes in terms of how to teach. An Instructional Design Planning Guide provides a tool for these teachers to connect content to instruction. An instructional plan sets the stage for teaching and learning. It is the blueprint for instruction.

An instructional plan documents what and how students will learn. The purpose of *Powerful Lesson Planning* is to bring into focus the decisions teachers face as they plan instruction. In this book, teachers are guided through four major instructional designs: basic, integrated, differentiated, and problem-based.

Instructional design is a thinking process that results in a product—the instructional plan. *Powerful Lesson Planning* provides a series of key questions and a step-by-step process for developing instructional plans. The instructional plan emerges as the teacher contemplates key questions and makes decisions related to them. This structured step-by-step process is used as a starting point. Modifications to fit individual circumstances may be made once the process is fully understood. Descriptive information and instructional design tools—key questions, outlines, templates, and examples—are provided to facilitate the planning process.

OVERVIEW OF THE INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN PROCESS

Powerful Lesson Planning provides Instructional Design Planning Guides composed of key questions for planning each of the four instructional designs. Each Instructional Design Planning Guide includes three sections: Section 1: Desired Results—Standards and Performance Descriptors; Section 2: Assessment—Evidence of Learning; and Section 3: Lesson Design. The planning process begins with the teacher focusing on the key questions and making decisions related to what students will learn and how that learning will occur. This process produces the “data” the teacher uses to construct more specific learning plans. While the process of using the Instructional Design Planning Guide and completing the instructional design form is generally the same for each of the four models, the key questions differ, and planning tools are specific to each particular model.

Common to all the instructional designs is the lesson plan that documents the learning standards, assessments, teaching strategies, and learning activities. When teachers practice and perfect their skill in planning a basic lesson, they are able to design more complex approaches to learning.

The chapters in *Powerful Lesson Planning* cover each instructional model: basic, integrated, differentiated, and problem-based. A brief description of each chapter follows.

Chapter 1: Basic Instructional Design

This chapter begins with a discussion of the importance of planning as it relates to expert teaching. The development of intuitive teaching is explained as the result of the teacher’s learning, experience, practice, and reflection.

Chapter 1 describes a basic planning structure for teaching specific learning standards. While learning standards may differ somewhat from state to state, the design process presented in this chapter may be used in any standards-led

system. The planning process is made clear through the use of planning templates, models, illustrations, and graphics.

Preservice and novice teachers can use the basic instructional design model to gain experience in lesson planning. The following are the tools used to develop a basic lesson plan:

1. The Basic Instructional Design Planning Guide, with suggested planning resources, notes, and comments, meant to assist the teacher in responding to important questions related to lesson planning
2. The Basic Instructional Design Preliminary Planning form to be completed by the teacher as a planning worksheet
3. An example of a completed Basic Instructional Design Planning Guide
4. Basic Lesson Plan form
5. Two sample completed lesson plans

Chapter 2: Integrated Instructional Design

Integrating learning standards from various content areas in meaningful ways for students is the focus of Chapter 2. It begins with the rationale and research that support integrated learning. The Integrated Instructional Design Planning Guide is provided to facilitate the planning process. The tools used to develop an Integrated Instructional Design Plan are summarized below:

1. The Integrated Instructional Design Planning Guide, with suggested planning resources, notes, and comments, meant to assist the teacher in responding to the guiding questions and completing the Integrated Instructional Design Plan
2. The Integrated Instructional Planning Questions and Decisions form to be completed by the teacher as a planning worksheet
3. An example of a completed Integrated Instructional Design Plan
4. Curriculum map examples
5. Integrated Instruction: Overview of Learning Standards form
6. Integrated Instruction Plan form

The Integrated Instructional Design Plan includes the development of a curriculum map—an overview of the topics and concepts studied in each of the curriculum areas. These topics are translated into learning standards on the Integrated Instruction Planner: Overview of Learning Standards form under a major learning theme or “big idea.” A teaching overview plan based on the learning standards is developed using the Integrated Instruction Plan form. Specific lesson plans for classroom implementation are developed from this overview.

The instructional design produced in this manner may incorporate many learning standards across the curriculum or focus on a limited number. Planning

templates and models throughout the chapter, along with illustrations and graphics, make the planning process manageable and user-friendly.

Chapter 3: Differentiated Instructional Design

Chapter 3 explains how to accommodate and provide successful learning experiences for students of varying levels of abilities, backgrounds, and learning preferences. It discusses the theory, research, and best practices information associated with differentiation. This chapter enables teachers to understand why it is important to differentiate instruction and how to go about doing so.

The differentiated instructional design model differentiates learning activities but holds learning standards constant. Student needs and task demands are the basis for differentiation. The tools used to develop a Differentiated Instructional Design Plan are summarized below:

1. The Differentiated Instructional Design Planning Guide, with suggested planning resources, notes, and comments, meant to assist the teacher in responding to the guiding questions and completing the Differentiated Instructional Design Plan
2. The Differentiated Instructional Design: Planning Questions and Decisions form to be completed by the teacher
3. An example of a completed Differentiated Instructional Design Plan
4. The Differentiated Activities Planning Matrix

The Differentiated Instructional Design: Planning Questions and Decisions form is used as a planning document. The information produced from this form is used to develop a matrix showing the criteria for student differentiation in relation to the learning standards to be taught. Corresponding instructional activities are then developed for each cell in the matrix. Separate minilessons may be developed from this matrix depending on the needs of the students.

Chapter 4: Problem-Based Learning Instructional Design

Problem-based learning is organized around a real-life problem in which students take the lead in determining how to go about solving the problem and working through to a resolution. The teacher is a facilitator in the process—offering resources, coaching, monitoring, and conducting minilessons. Chapter 4 is an introductory, straightforward explanation of problem-based learning—how it originated, how to develop problem statements, and how to incorporate standards and assessment into problem-based activities. A discussion of the teacher's role in problem-based learning illustrates the planning perspective required in this approach. The chapter covers the importance and use of technology resources and provides sample Web sites.

Problem-based learning appears complex, but teachers may use a variety of planning strategies to make this approach manageable. The thinking

process questions provided in Chapter 4 help teachers sort out and see the total picture, even if the details must be filled in later. It is recommended that this instructional design be undertaken after the teacher has had some experience with integrated and differentiated instructional designs.

The tools used to develop a Problem-Based Instructional Design Plan are summarized below:

1. The Problem-Based Learning Planning Guide, with suggested planning resources, notes, and comments, meant to assist the teacher in responding to the guiding questions and completing the Problem-Based Instructional Design Plan
2. The Problem-Based Learning Instructional Design: Planning Questions and Decisions form to be completed by the teacher as a planning worksheet
3. An example of a completed Problem-Based Learning Planning Guide
4. Problem-Based Learning Standards Overview
5. Problem-Based Learning Assessment Planner

Resources

The Resources section contains a discussion of professional teaching standards, both for beginning teachers and accomplished teachers. It also contains the student evaluation standards and Web sites of professional organizations.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Preservice and novice teachers will find it helpful to become thoroughly familiar with basic lesson design as presented in Chapter 1. A firm grounding in the basics helps to ensure success in using more complex models. After teachers become confident in planning basic instruction, they may mentally review or modify the Basic Instructional Design Planning Guide. It is probably not necessary to write out responses to the key questions once the planning process is well known.

Even experienced teachers benefit from having a structure to guide instructional planning. However, the planning process for these teachers is somewhat different in that their background knowledge enables them to take some shortcuts and make some modifications. Flexibility is built into the planning templates to accommodate a wide range of teaching experience. Experienced teachers may wish to review the Instructional Design Planning Guide to remind themselves of information they already have and tap into their prior knowledge related to instructional planning.

Teachers who have used a single content area approach to planning and teaching and are ready to try integrated, differentiated, or problem-based instructional designs benefit from going through the entire thinking process using the Instructional Design Planning Guides. This facilitates in-depth

understanding and makes subsequent planning more efficient. It is hoped that *Powerful Lesson Planning* will help teachers to revitalize current practices, expand their repertoire of approaches, and improve learning for students.

Powerful Lesson Planning, second edition, contains the same organizational format that made the first edition so popular with teachers. Sections relating to assessment have been expanded to allow more in-depth information as it relates to student learning, and new examples show how lesson planning looks at different grade levels.

This book is for those teachers who are at the beginning of their teaching careers and for those who desire to make better classrooms for students through thoughtful planning. It is what I would have wanted those many years ago when I first stepped into a classroom. This jump-start of a book makes no assumptions of prior knowledge. It covers the basics of lesson planning, integrated instruction, differentiated instruction, and problem-based learning. Specific examples of planning guides for these approaches serve as models for teachers to form and fit their own ideas into new ways of teaching.