

Decide what will occur in each episode: Steps 1 & 2

Step 1:

Use the backward design model as a guide to ensure the learning intention/goal, success criteria and the learning experiences and resources are in sync and work together.

If the desired result is for learners to ...	Then you need evidence of the students' ability to ...	Then the learning experiences need to ...
<i>This is the learning intention/goal</i>	<i>This is the success criteria</i>	<i>This is where you decide what needs to be taught/coached, how it is best taught, in light of the learning intention/goal. What sequence of activities best suits the learning intention/goal? How will learning be both engaging and effective, given the learning intention/goal and success criteria?</i>

Wiggins and McTighe's (1998) W.H.E.R.E.T.O framework below provides a further guide to thinking about learning experiences:

W =	How will you help your students to know <i>where</i> they are headed, <i>why</i> they are going there, and <i>what</i> ways they will be evaluated along the way?
H =	How will you <i>hook</i> and <i>hold</i> students' interest and enthusiasm through thought-provoking experiences at the beginning of each instructional episode?
E =	What <i>experiences</i> will you provide to help students make their understanding real and <i>equip</i> all learners for success throughout the course or unit?
R =	How will you cause students to <i>reflect</i> , <i>revisit</i> , <i>revise</i> and <i>rethink</i> ?
E =	How will students <i>express</i> their understandings and <i>engage</i> in meaningful self-evaluation?
T =	How will you <i>tailor</i> (differentiate) your instruction to address the unique strengths and needs of every learner?
O =	How will you <i>organise</i> learning experiences so that students move from teacher-guided and concrete activities to independent applications that emphasise growing conceptual understandings as opposed to superficial coverage?

Plan Learning Experiences and Instruction

How will teachers support learners in coming to an understanding of important ideas and processes? How will they prepare them to autonomously transfer learning? What enabling knowledge and skills will students need in order to perform effectively and achieve desired results? Which activities, sequence, and resources are best suited to accomplish these goals?

Teachers need to plan the most appropriate learning activities to help students *acquire* important knowledge and skills, come to *understand* important ideas and processes, and *transfer* their learning in meaningful ways. When developing a plan for learning, teachers could consider a set of instructional principles, embedded in the acronym W.H.E.R.E.T.O. Each of the W.H.E.R.E.T.O. elements is presented in the form of questions to consider:

W = Where and Why

Where are the students coming from? Where are they headed? How will I help students know what they will be learning? Why is this worth learning? What evidence will show their learning? How will their performance be evaluated?

Learners of all ages are more likely to put forth effort and meet with success when they understand the learning goals and see them as meaningful and personally relevant. The “W” in W.H.E.R.E.T.O. reminds teachers to clearly communicate the goals and help students see their relevance. In addition, learners need to know the performance expectations and assessments through which they will demonstrate their learning so that they have clear learning targets and the basis for monitoring their progress toward them.

H = Hook and Hold

How will I hook and engage the learners? How will I keep them engaged?

There is wisdom in the old adage, “Before you try to teach them, you’ve got to get their attention.” The best teachers have always recognised the value of “hooking” learners through introductory activities that tease the mind and engage the heart in the learning process. Teachers are encouraged to deliberately plan ways of hooking their learners to the topics they teach. Examples of effective hooks include provocative questions, counter-intuitive phenomena, controversial issues, authentic problems and challenges, emotional encounters, and humour. One must be mindful, of course, of not just coming up with interesting introductory activities that have no carry-over value. The intent is to match the hook with the content and the experiences of the learners—by design—as a means of drawing them into a productive learning experience.

E = Explore and Experience, Enable and Equip

How will I equip students to master identified standards and succeed with the transfer performances? What learning experiences will help develop and deepen the understanding of important ideas?

Understanding cannot be simply transferred like a load of freight from one mind to another. Coming to understand requires active intellectual engagement on the part of the learner. Therefore, instead of merely covering the content, effective educators “uncover” the most enduring ideas and processes in

ways that engage students in constructing meaning for themselves. To this end, teachers select an appropriate balance of constructivist learning experiences, structured activities, and direct instruction for helping students acquire the desired knowledge, skill, and understanding. While there is certainly a place for direct instruction and modelling, teaching for understanding asks teachers to also adopt a facilitative role; i.e., to engage learners in making meaning through active inquiry and diverse experience with the content.

R = Reflect, Rethink, Revise

How will I encourage the learners to rethink previous learning? How will I encourage on-going revision and refinement?

Few learners develop a complete understanding of abstract ideas on the first encounter. Over time, learners develop and deepen their understanding by thinking and re-thinking, by examining ideas from different points of view, from examining underlying assumptions, and by receiving feedback and revising. Just as the quality of a piece of writing benefits from the iterative process of drafting and revising, so too do understandings become more mature. The “R” in W.H.E.R.E.T.O. encourages teachers to explicitly include such opportunities.

E = Evaluate Work and Progress

How will I promote students’ self-evaluation and reflection?

Capable and independent learners are distinguished by their capacity to set goals, self-assess their progress, and adjust as needed. Yet one of the most frequently overlooked aspects of the instructional process involves helping students to develop the meta-cognitive skills of self-evaluation, self-regulation, and reflection. The second “E” of W.H.E.R.E.T.O reminds teachers to build in time and expectations for students to regularly self-assess, reflect on the meaning of their learning, and set goals for future performance.

T = Tailor and Personalise the Work

How will I tailor the learning experiences to the nature of the learners I serve? How might I differentiate instruction to respond to the varied needs of students?

“One size fits all” teaching is rarely optimal. Learners differ significantly in terms of prior knowledge, skill levels, interests, talents, and preferred ways of learning. Accordingly, the most effective teachers get to know their students and tailor their teaching and learning experiences so as to connect the material with the students. A variety of strategies may be employed to differentiate content (how subject matter is presented), process (how students work), and product (how students demonstrate their learning). The logic of backward design offers a cautionary note here: the content standards and understandings should not be differentiated (except for students with Individual Education Plans). In other words, we differentiate ‘the means’ while keeping ‘the ends’ in mind for all.

O = Organise for Optimal Effectiveness

How will I organise the learning experiences for maximum engagement and effectiveness? What sequence will be optimal given the understanding and transfer goals?

When the primary educational goals involve helping students acquire basic knowledge and skills, teachers may be comfortable “covering” the content by telling and modelling. However, when we include understanding and transfer as desired results, teachers are encouraged to give careful attention to how the content is organised and sequenced. Just as effective story tellers and filmmakers often don’t always begin at the “beginning,” teachers can consider alternatives to sequential content coverage. For example, methods such as the Case Method, Problem or Project-Based Learning, and Socratic Seminars immerse students in challenging situations, even before they may have acquired all of the basics. They actively engage students in trying to make meaning and apply their learning in demanding circumstances without single “correct” answers. It is through such attempts to apply learning in context that one develops expertise and strategic skill.

Step 2:

Plan the teaching strategies to lead the students from dependent learners to independent learners of the new learning.

The Introduction

Decide how the introduction will proceed.

A 'hook' to set the scene for what is to come

This is the most important step because it “hooks” the student’s attention and sets the stage for the rest of the lesson. This is a time to be creative and use a variety of approaches to catch the student’s interest and lay the foundation for the lesson.

Consider using music, video clips, photographs, key word cards on desks, a provocative question on the whiteboard, a prop, a story, a personal anecdote, an analogy, etc., associated with the learning to come, as students enter the room or begin a new lesson.

Keep this component brief but stimulating.

Review of any previous material taught which the new lesson might build upon

This component could include word games, puzzles, mind maps, etc. to review the learning to date. It could also involve a link to future learning in the next lesson.

This component helps students put what they already know about the topic in context.

Lesson purpose, learning intention/goal and success criteria

All students need to know exactly what they will be learning and what they will be held accountable for. Even very young students need to know what to expect from a lesson, what they will be able to do as a result of the lesson, and why it is important.

Clarify the purpose and relevance - relate the learning to the overall syllabus; share with students how the learning fits into the bigger picture of learning; use mind-maps to show students how the lesson fits into the wider course they are studying.

Share and clarify the learning intention/goal.

Explain assessment tasks and expectations; introduce/negotiate success criteria.

A lesson outline

An overview of the lesson prepares the students for the main teaching and learning that will follow and the activities that will be involved.

An outline of timeframes within the lesson helps students to remain focused and to see how the lesson will be paced.

Use modelled, guided and independent teaching strategies

Depending on the lesson location within the learning sequence/unit plan, decide how the learning will be introduced, practised and applied.

This part of the lesson involves the main teaching and learning. During this time:

- Students might work in groups, pairs, individually, or in a mixture of all three, depending on how you have decided is best to meet the learning intentions/goals
- All students should be set work which is of an appropriate level of challenge
- Allow choice over how students carry out tasks
- Learning should be broken down into achievable chunks
- Find plenty of opportunities to develop thinking skills

Decisions about when to use modelled, guided or independent teaching will vary according to the lesson purpose. For example, the purpose of the lesson may be to practise and apply knowledge, skills and understandings that have been previously modelled or where students have had guided support.

Provide ample time for guided support, both from the teacher and by working collaboratively with other students.

During modelled teaching:

- Emphasise and reiterate key points without glossing over ideas or overwhelming students in detail
- Use multiple approaches
- Target potential misunderstandings.

During guided teaching:

- Use multiple opportunities for practice
- Scaffold practice exercises from easy to hard
- Ensure that all students have an opportunity to practise.

During independent teaching:

- Include opportunities to practise and apply learning in 'real' contexts
- Encourage students to make the new learning their own, by applying it or re-stating it
- Ensure that the activity reflects the achievement of the learning intention/goal.

The reflection on learning

Decide how students will reflect on their learning.

This is often a neglected lesson episode. Too often the lesson concludes when the bell sounds and students pack up and leave. Although teachers intend to conclude or 'wrap up' the lesson, lack of time continually impacts on this episode.

A combination of seeing the lesson reflection as important and effective planning to incorporate this episode into every lesson is essential.

A 10-minute plenary generally provides enough time for students to discuss current learning and write a couple of sentences about their learning experiences.

During this time:

- guide student reflection with structured questioning
- encourage students to record their learning or future action.

The following questions could be placed on posters, cards or exit slips used to guide reflection:

What is it about learning to ... that you need more help with?

What did you find challenging with your learning today?

What really made you think about learning to ...?

What helped you when something became difficult about learning to ...?

What helped you when you faced challenges with your learning today?

What new things have you learnt about ...?

What inspired you with your learning today?

What do you need more help with in your learning?

What pleased you most with your learning today?

Students could:

- record their learning and/or future action in a learning log. The learning log may also contain the learning intention/goal, success criteria and the assessment rubric
- place a digital or hard copy work sample in a portfolio. The work is annotated to show progress, achievement and where to next

- record progress and goal-setting against the assessment rubric on a goal-setting chart. Headings may include:
 - What I can do well
 - What I need to learn
 - What I need to do to get there.

NB: Students can be grouped according to their targets/needs during modelled and guided teaching time.

References

Wiggins, G., & McTighe, J. (1998). *Understanding by Design*. Alexandria: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.