Backward Design Lesson Planning

How do I decide and write the lesson instruction? (plan learning experiences and instruction)

CREDE

Introduction

- Now that Backward Design has required you to have a clear and measurable action verb in your lesson objective that is “matched” to an appropriate assessment, you can now choose instructional strategies that provide your students with multiple opportunities to reach that lesson objective.

- This is important because clearly knowing what you want your students to do and how to gather evidence for it, allows you to distinguish between lesson activities that get you to your objective and the ones that don’t. That makes you a powerful teacher where everything you do in the classroom is with purpose!

Revisiting “Gary the English Teacher”

- Remember Gary, the English teacher in the previous sections who showed a video of a modern day version of Romeo and Juliet to teach his students? Was the lesson activity of showing a video appropriate? The answer depends on which action verb he was trying to reach (remember he didn’t know the lesson objective until after the lesson was completed).

- In the last section, assessment, we chose the lesson objective, “Students will interpret a scene from Romeo and Juliet” If the action of interpretation requires students to speak and write open responses, then does a video where they watch passively help students do that?

- No!…UNLESS… Gary showed one particular scene from the video and asked his students to watch and take notes so that they could debate their interpretation of that scene. Then the video would be appropriate in helping students “interpret” the scene! Instead, Gary gave his students no specific directions during the video and gave them a closed response multiple-choice test to measure learning. Lesson activity wasted because he didn’t know why he was showing the video! : ( 
Choosing a lesson activity is easy once you know the action verb(s) that you need students to demonstrate in the lesson. However, note that if you change the action verb, then you might need to change the assessment and lesson activity!

- If the students need to “write” an open response in your lesson objective, then the activity you choose should involve writing such as journal writing.
- If the students need to “speak” a closed response in your lesson objective, then the activity should provide opportunities for the student to speak such as playing a game of Jeopardy.
- If the students need to “do” an open response in your lesson objective, then the activity should be hands-on such as painting a picture of their favorite animal.
- If the students need to do more than one behavior, then the instructional activity should involve combinations of writing, speaking, or doing such as projects and presentations.

Actually, the real challenge is knowing whether the lesson activity is any good in terms of engaging and motivating students. We can use the assessments to measure the learning, which is essential, but we also should know the criteria by which we might design and evaluate a good lesson activity.

One set of criteria that serves as an excellent foundation for creating and evaluating engaging and effective lessons is known as CREDE. This acronym stands for the “Center for Research on Education, Diversity, and Excellence” and represents a set of 7 researched-based lesson strategies that UH Manoa and UC Berkeley have found to be effective for teaching culturally and linguistically diverse students. In fact, much of the research has been done examining the teaching practices in Native Hawaiian communities.

CREDE has partnered with Kamehameha schools, Kamaile Academy, Wai‘anae High School, Early Childhood programs, and even the country of Greenland to implement the 7 teaching strategies into their classrooms.

One thing that you will find about these 7 strategies is that they are found in many different types of instructional pedagogy (ways of teaching) and that effective teachers already use them in their classrooms.

When developing or evaluating a lesson activity, ask yourself the following questions:

- Does the lesson activity challenge students’ thinking?
- Does the lesson activity allow students to talk in either a small or group discussion?
- Does the lesson activity provide choices for the students?
- Does the lesson activity allow students (and possibly the teacher) to collaborate?
- Does the lesson activity involve the teacher or the students modeling how to do the activity?
- Does the lesson activity involve aspects that are meaningful to the students?
- Does the lesson activity introduce new content language in the activity?
Use this mnemonic to help remind you of these seven aspects of CREDE when developing your lesson activities:

- Do I “TeaCh and Model Meaningful Language” in my lesson activity?

  - Where the TeaCh part represents four of the seven CREDE aspects.
    - T = Think and Talk
    - C = Choose and Collaborate
  - The other three strategies are Model, Meaning, and Language

- Note – to help you remember and incorporate the seven strategies above, we use simplified terms than what CREDE uses (check out the CREDE website to see their terms).

- CREDE works because it forces your lesson activity to be student-centered (students do the action) rather than being teacher-centered (teacher does the action). Student-centered approaches are supported by learning theorists such as Lev Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory, which essentially states that learning is an active process that occurs through interactive and guided conversations between a learner and an expert. The more the learner gets to interact, converse, and be guided by experts, the more that learning occurs!

- However, developing your lesson activity using CREDE to be student-centered, simply makes it more fun and engaging for students because they get to do the action! So, when you are thinking of exciting lesson activities for your educational classes and other situations, please keep in mind the seven aspects of CREDE as a way to ensure that your lesson is engaging for all students!!

**Writing Lesson Instruction**

- Writing out lesson instruction is the aspect of lesson planning that is considered the most tedious and time-consuming, but there are several advantages to being as detailed as you can be:
  - It helps prepares you for the lesson. Writing out the instructional steps forces you to consider whether the steps are logical and whether you left anything out!
  - It helps guides you during the lesson. Sometimes, you can’t remember what comes next in the lesson, and having written steps in front of you really helps!
  - It helps you reflect after the lesson. Being able to make changes to the instruction immediately after the lesson improves the lesson each time you teach it!
  - It helps you remember what you did when you teach the lesson the following year. One seasoned teacher told me about lesson planning “If you don’t write the lesson down, then you won’t remember it next time, and you have to figure out the lesson all over again!”

- Writing out instructional steps usually involves the following:
  - Instruction is step-by-step and follows a logical order.
    - Each basic action deserves a step, so avoid paragraphs.
- Instruction contains **enough detail** that another teacher could do the activity.

- Instruction should address **“how” to do something** rather than “what” to do (especially if the lesson activity is new or not clear)
  - For example, if the instruction states “The teacher sets up the science experiment and has students complete the activity” then another teacher would have no idea of “how” to do that unless s/he has a bit more instruction!

- Instruction should **clarify the person doing the action** – the teacher or students?

- Click here for an example of well-written instructional steps.

Let us examine the last step used in Backward Design— [Accommodating lesson instruction for all learners](#)