



Just for the ASKing!

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Just for the ASKing! is a monthly column that addresses the needs of instructional leaders, particularly building level administrators. Each month, this column provides information, insights, and suggestions that help administrators as they strive to be instructional leaders in schools. This month's focus is on lesson plans for principals.

Lesson Plans for Principals



Bruce facilitating the Leading the Learning workshop.

As a principal, I knew that my most important responsibility was to be the instructional leader of the school. Even though I knew that, the urgent sometimes replaced the important and our once-a-month faculty meetings occasionally lacked an instructional focus. I reverted to announcements, reminders and administrivia. These were not my proudest moments.

In order to create a culture for learning, it is important for all of us to keep teaching and learning as the focal point of staff meetings. It would have been wonderful to have had a readily available resource to use in planning lessons that engaged staff in professional conversations and provided strategies or ideas they could use in their instructional programs. My goal this month is to provide you such a resource so that you have a few lesson plans readily available for faculty meetings.

When planning instructionally-focused faculty meetings, keep the following considerations in mind:

- Explicitly model the standards-based (SBE) planning process. Start by determining what you want the faculty to know or be able to do. Then decide what the evidence will be to prove that the skills or knowledge are being used by the teaching staff. After that develop a plan for presenting the key ideas to the staff. When you model the SBE planning process, you reinforce that this is the planning method staff should use.
- One-shot presentations on an isolated topic do not have a long-term impact. When you design a lesson for the faculty, do not plan just for the meeting; also plan follow-up activities. Provide additional resources that help faculty members implement strategies, remind staff members in newsletters or e-mails, and engage in one-on-one dialogues with teachers.
- Base decisions about areas of focus on an analysis of patterns and trends in standardized and locally generated student achievement data and/or an analysis of students work. An alternative approach is to use data you gather in classroom observations, walk-throughs, and conversations to identify research-based strategies that would enhance faculty repertoires.
- Ask teachers who have implemented effective and creative instructional or assessment approaches with their students to share their work with the entire staff. Orchestrate opportunities for all members of the administrative staff to be seen as instructional leaders. Faculty need to know that those who supervise and evaluate them are competent teachers. Having others lead faculty meetings also allows you to participate and model being a lifelong learner.

- Adults internalize and use strategies that they experience firsthand. Thus, it is important to plan sessions that enable staff members to participate actively in the learning. Likewise, teachers need to see and hear examples from classrooms similar to their own in order to be able to apply their new learning with their students. In her book, *Leading the Learning*, Paula Rutherford provides 19 different active learning strategies you can use in designing lessons for faculty meetings. When you use these active learning experiences with your staff, you are better able to engage them in learning and, at the same time, have them experience an active learning strategy that they will be able to use with their students.

Four possible lesson plans are presented here to assist you in planning instructionally-focused faculty meetings.

Lesson Plan 1: Growth-Producing Feedback

Back issues of *Just for the ASKing!* provide research-based learning experiences for you and your faculty. The October 2005 issue entitled **Growth-Producing Feedback** provides detailed information about how and why feedback to students can lead to increased student achievement. To structure this lesson:

- Provide copies of the newsletter to all staff members. Ask them to read it and bring it to the faculty meeting.
- At the meeting, make sure staff members understand the definition and power of feedback and how it should be provided for students.
- Provide copies of the tool attached to the newsletter. Have teachers consider a variety of responses that they typically give to students.
- Their conversations should evolve around whether or not the comments provide feedback that help students truly learn.
- By the end of the session, teachers should have a clearer understanding of how to structure feedback so that students can make adjustments that result in improved learning.

Lesson Plan 2: Formative Assessment Data and Multiple Opportunities to Demonstrate Learning

It is important for teachers to use formative assessment data to inform their instructional decisions. Giving students one opportunity to demonstrate their learning is not educationally sound if we truly expect our students to learn. We must provide follow-up opportunities for our students to benefit from their mistakes and thus, truly learn. To structure this lesson:

- Establish that, as a staff, you are already focused on answering the questions: What are students supposed to learn? And how will we know that they have learned it?
- Then have faculty members meet in small groups to discuss the question: How will we respond when students do not learn what they are supposed to learn the first time?
- Identify a facilitator and recorder for each group.
- Have recorders submit the responses from their group discussions.
- Summarize the ideas in either a memo or email them to the entire staff.

Lesson Plan 3: Framing the Learning

The December 2005 issue of *Just for the ASKing!* newsletter entitled **Framing the Learning** provides a ready-made lesson plan that can lead to lively discussions and simultaneously reinforce excellent planning practices among the members of the staff. This issue provides readers with specific steps to take to set the stage for learning. To structure this lesson:

- Provide copies of the newsletter to staff members.
- Ask staff members to read the article with a focus on clearly defining the term **Framing the Learning** and determining the six specific steps a teacher should take in order to ensure that students are fully prepared to learn new content.
- Have staff members engage in conversations about the definition and bring personal meaning to each of the six steps through their exchange of ideas.

- Have each teacher make a two-column chart with the headings **On Target** and **Still Working On It** at the top of each column and then record each of the six steps in framing the learning under one of the two headings.
- The **Still Working On It** column provides targeted goals for teachers as they plan future lessons and units.
- Open the next faculty meeting by having teachers share the component of **Framing the Learning** they tried in their classrooms and how it impacted learning.

Lesson Plan 4: Top Ten Questions to Ask Myself as I Design Lessons

Throughout Paula Rutherford's books, a recurring theme is the importance of good planning. The first page of each chapter of *Instruction for All Students* begins with a page entitled **Top Ten Questions to Ask Myself as I Design Lessons** (see the end of this newsletter for the attachment) The questions not only reinforce the importance of the standards-based planning process, but they also stimulate teachers to think proactively about the variables they should consider when planning. The questions include topics such as pre-assessment, task analysis, student processing, checking for understanding, helping students make real world connections, and meeting the needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms. To structure this lesson:

- Provide teachers with copies of the ten questions at a faculty meeting.
- Have staff members engage in conversations in which they discuss how they "bring life" to each of the ten questions.
- Ask teachers to select one question to focus on during the next month and come to the next faculty meeting ready to share with colleagues what they and their students accomplished through this focus.

Principals are often selected from the ranks of the teaching staff to lead the school because they are considered master teachers. Although the job of the principal has become exceedingly complex, a good principal always remembers that the primary purpose of the school is teaching and learning and assumes the role of master teacher as frequently as possible.

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TOP TEN QUESTIONS

to ask myself as I design lessons

1. What should **students know and be able to do** as a result of this lesson? How are these objectives related to national, state, and/or district standards?
2. How will **students demonstrate what they know and what they can do**? What will be the **assessment criteria** and what form will it take?
3. How will I find out what students already know (**pre-assessment**), and how will I help them access what they know and have experienced both inside and outside the classroom? How will I help them **build on prior experiences, deal with misconceptions**, and reframe their thinking when appropriate?
4. How will new knowledge, concepts, and skills be introduced? Given the **diversity of my students** and the **task analysis**, what are my **best options for sources and presentation modes**?
5. How will I **facilitate student processing (meaning making)** of new information or processes? What key questions, activities, and assignments (in class or homework) will promote understanding, retention, and transfer?
6. What shall I use as **formative assessments** or **checks for understanding** during the lesson? How can I use the **data** from those assessments to **inform my teaching decisions**?
7. What do I need to do to **scaffold instruction** so that the learning experiences are productive for all students? What are the multiple ways students can access information and then process and demonstrate their learning?
8. How will I **Frame the Learning** so that students know the objectives, the rationale for the objectives and activities, the directions and procedures, as well as the assessment criteria at the beginning of the learning process?
9. How will I build in opportunities for students to make **real-world connections** and to learn and use the **rigorous and complex thinking skills** they need to succeed in the classroom and the world beyond?
10. What adjustments need to be made in the **learning environment** so that we can work and learn efficiently during this study?