



Education Support

Why Having a Plan B is So Much More Important Than Having an Amazing Plan A

By Shikha Dhawan

I decided that from that point forward, I must always have a Plan B. It is far from foolish and overly cautious to assume that the Plan A may not work.

Remember that there are so many other people who might be going for the same Plan A as you are. More importantly, remember that the world is filled with so many over-qualified, intelligent, and hard-working individuals.

The more options you have in life, the less stuck and miserable you will feel.

We feel trapped when we find ourselves stuck in one mode of living, unable to move or get out of that mode. It makes us feel worthless and miserable. At this point, we will do anything to get out of that situation and sometimes even commit to doing dumb things in the process.

If you have a Plan B or even a Plan C on which you can fall back, you won't feel trapped. In fact, the more options you have, the better you will feel about your outlook on life. YOU will likely be positive and optimistic about the future and where your life is taking you.

There are many ways to live life. One is to be stubborn about everything; it is your way or the highway, as they say. The other way (the better way, in my opinion) is to have options for everything: your career, your home, your wardrobe, your whatever.

Keep yourself free, not encumbered by the limited thinking of only one option: Plan A.

Strategies for Teachers: The Power of Preparation and Planning

By Derrick Meador

Preparation and planning are a critical component of effective teaching. Lack thereof will lead to failure. If anything, every teacher should be over prepared. Good teachers are almost in a continuous state of preparation and planning. They are always thinking about the next lesson. The impact of preparation and planning is tremendous on student learning. A common misnomer is that teachers only work from 8:00 – 3:00, but when the time for preparing and planning is accounted for, the time increases significantly.

Make the Time to Plan

Teachers get a planning period at school, but that time is rarely used for “planning”. Instead, it is often utilized to contact parents, conduct a conference, catch up on emails, or grade papers. True planning and preparation occur outside of school hours. Many teachers arrive early, stay late, and spend part of their weekends working to ensure that they are adequately prepared. They explore options, tinker with changes, and research fresh ideas in hopes that they can create the optimal learning environment.

Teaching is not something you can do effectively on the fly. It requires a healthy blend of content knowledge, instructional strategies, and classroom management tactics. Preparation and planning play a critical role in the development of these things. It also takes some experimentation and even a little luck. It is important to note that even well-planned lessons can quickly fall apart. Some of the best-conceived ideas will end up being massive failures when put into practice. When this happens, teachers have to go back to the drawing board and reorganize their approach and plan of attack.

The bottom line is that preparation and planning do matter. It can never be viewed as a waste of time. Instead, it should be viewed as an investment. This is an investment that will pay off in the long run.

Six Ways Proper Preparation and Planning Will Pay Off

- **Make you a better teacher:** A significant part of planning and preparation is conducting research. Studying educational theory and examining best practices helps define and shape your own teaching philosophy. Studying the content that you teach in depth will also help you grow and improve.
- **Boost student performance and achievement:** As a teacher, you should have the content that you teach mastered. You should understand what you are teaching, why you are teaching it, and you should create a plan for how to present it to your students every single day. This ultimately benefits your students. It is your job as a teacher to not only present the information but to present in a way that resonates with the students and makes it important enough for them to want to learn it. This comes through planning, preparation, and experience.
- **Make the day go by faster:** Downtime is a teacher’s worst enemy. Many teachers use the term “free time”. This is simple code for I did not take the time to plan enough. Teachers should prepare and plan enough material to last the entire

class period or school day. Every second of every day should matter. When you plan enough students to remain engaged, the day goes by quicker, and ultimately student learning is maximized.

- Minimize classroom discipline issues: Boredom is the number one cause of acting out. Teachers who develop and present engaging lessons on a daily basis rarely have classroom discipline issues. Students enjoy going to these classes because learning is fun. These types of lessons do not just happen. Instead, they are created through careful planning and preparation.
- Make you confident in what you do: Confidence is an important characteristic for a teacher to possess. If for nothing else, portraying confidence will help your students buy what you are selling. As a teacher, you never want to ask yourself if you could have done more to reach a student or group of students. You might not like how a particular lesson goes, but you should take pride in knowing that it was not because you lacked preparation and planning.
- Help earn the respect of your peers and administrators: Teachers know which teachers are putting in the necessary time to be an effective teacher and which teachers are not. Investing extra time in your classroom will not go unnoticed by those around you. They may not always agree with how you run your classroom, but they will have a natural respect for you when they see how hard you work at your craft.

Strategies for More Efficient Planning

The first three years of teaching are the most difficult. Spend lots of extra time planning and preparing during those first few years as you are learning the nuances of teaching and sequential years will become easier.

Keep all lesson plans, activities, tests, quizzes, worksheets, etc. in a binder. Make notes throughout the binder according to what worked, what did not, and how you might want to change things.

Every idea does not have to be original. There is no need to reinvent the wheel. The Internet is the greatest teaching resource ever made. There are lots of excellent ideas from other teachers floating around that you can steal and utilize in your classroom.

Work in a distraction-free environment. You will get a lot more accomplished when there are no other teachers, students, or family members around to distract you.

Read the chapters, complete homework/practice problems, take tests/quizzes before assigning them to students. It will take some time to do this upfront, but reviewing and experiencing the material before your students do will ultimately protect your credibility.

When conducting an activity, have all the materials laid out before the students arrive. Practice the activity to ensure that each works correctly. Establish specific procedures and guidelines for students to follow.

Plan days to weeks in advance if possible. Do not wait until the last minute to try to throw something together. Doing so limits your effectiveness.

8 Worst Lesson Planning Mistakes You Can Make

By Claudia Pesce

To every teacher, the lesson plan is as essential as the course materials, maybe even more so.

Think of the coursebook as the vehicle, the tool you will use to take your class on this journey that is learning to speak another language. The lesson plan is the road map that helps you set a course from Point A to Point B, the first being little or no knowledge of a specific language point, the second being learning said language point - reaching a learning goal.

But like any road trip, things can go wrong. And if you embark on a road trip with the wrong map...well, you're just setting yourself up for trouble. Here are some of the mistakes in lesson planning that will make you veer off course.

8 Biggest Lesson Planning Mistakes

Planning Before Getting to Know Your Class

Would you plan a road trip with a group of friends without knowing what they want to see or what their interests are? Chances are they have their own goals/expectations for the trip. You will surely have the course syllabus for the semester/year ahead of time, but that is simply a list of what your students should learn to reach a specific level. Lesson planning (what you'll do for each individual lesson) should begin after you've obtained more information about your students' goals, expectations and interests.

Not Having a Clear Goal

Consider a single lesson you will teach. What do you want your students to accomplish by the end of the lesson? Learn the Simple Past? Or better yet, learn to talk about events that happened in the past? Once you have a clear goal in mind, everything else will fall into place, including the activities you will choose to reach this goal.

Having No Lesson Structure

Your course syllabus is your big picture of the entire journey; each individual lesson plan is what you'll be doing at each individual stop and what you'll be doing to get them one step closer to the main goal. It's simply not good enough to spend 45 minutes at each stop; you have to have a plan - with a solid structure. For a great example of what this structure should look like check out this article.

Failing to Include Variety

When you go on a road trip you want to see the natural landscape, but also enjoy some of the things each city or town has to offer. Variety is key. Make sure to include lots of different types of activities in your lesson plan: video, music, crafts, games, group

work or pair work, etc... but make sure you include activities or tasks that serve your purpose: reaching the goal.

Using the Same Lesson Plans

The coursebook and the class syllabus may be the same as last year's, but are your students the same? Each class, each group of students is different. The lesson plans you used in previous years may not be the best for this particular group of learners. Moreover, consider the new things you might need to change/add - there are always new apps, music artists, movies and interests that crop up every year. If you're happy with your previous lesson plans or have some that really worked, by all means use them, but don't forget to make the necessary tweaks so that they better suit a particular group of students.

Planning Technology for Technology's Sake

Everyone is using technology in the classroom, so you'd better add some computer/Internet activities, right? Wrong! Yes, there are amazing things you can do with your class, but technology should be used in the classroom only if it helps you reach your learning goal. For example, say your goal is for students to practice asking for and giving directions, and you want to use a particular piece of realia, like a map, but you don't have any real ones. You can always use online maps (virtual realia) and for that you could definitely use a computer.

Planning to Cover Materials and not Teach Students

If your goal is to finish your assignment, well, let me be honest with you...that's not a very good goal. Yes, you have a syllabus. Yes, you have an overall class plan you need to meet. But top of mind should be what your students must learn.

No Plan B

You've planned an awesome lesson, a multimedia lesson with video and audio so your class can have some good listening comprehension exercises. But the moment you connect your computer you realize you have no Internet connection. Well, stuff happens and when it comes to using technology in the classroom, you have to be prepared in case something does not go according to plan. Should you ditch your entire plan and just have them play games for the rest of the class? You should always have a Plan B, another route that will take you to the same lesson goal. If your goal is to practice listening comprehension, you should have another listening comprehension exercise that will easily replace the one you planned on doing in the computer, maybe a CD or a reading out loud.

Planning is important, above all, because it gives students a sense of structure.

They get the impression that on this road trip, you're in the driver's seat, and you know where you're taking them. They will know that you're taking them where they need to go. You can simply drive them there. Or you can give them one heck of a ride. Which would you choose?