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The Lesson Plan¹

If you don't know where you are going, any road will take you there.

Lewis Carroll

By: Bob Harrison

When considering the lesson plan you will construct for your training or course segment, your agency or organization may have a format to follow. If so, think of the following list as a guideline to ensure essential issues are addressed.

One common misperception of the lesson plan is that it is synonymous with the course outline. A lesson plan will be grounded in the objectives and goals of the outline, but does not necessarily follow a structure detailing specifics to the third level of detail, etc. In many ways, a lesson plan is your script of the sequence and process one would experience in your class or training setting.

The lesson plan may be formatted precisely, or may look somewhat like a script with narrative. It may include question prompts and envisioned outcomes. It should also include detailed information describing learning activities and other student work to allow a peer to accurately replicate the activity if the occasion should arise. There are on-line resources with lesson plans and lesson planning templates (in addition to the templates in this article series). Most are anchored in K-12 education and are topic-specific.

To plan effectively, the teacher will want to be clear on desired outcomes, existing learning objectives and course or segment goals for the training. Once you have these firmly in your mind, consider the following two outcomes of your training as you prepare create your lesson:

1. The means by which you will assess student learning, and
2. What types of instruction will hook, hold and sustain their interest

You may use a structure that roughly follows the course outline, or may vary from the “front to back” of the outline to describe the individual learning activities and how they link to one another. You may also use the backwards planning template

¹ Adapted from the *Advanced Facilitation Skills for Instructors Student Workbook* by Bob Harrison and Kendall Zoller. CA Commission on POST, 2007.

described in another article in this series to surface all relevant considerations for the training.

Your construction of what you will teach should be understandable to others who might view it, and should follow a logical process. It may include:

- An articulation of the learning objectives for the lesson segment
- Links to other segments of instruction (how does it relate to...?)
- Pre-assessment activities (What do they know, and where are the gaps in needed knowledge or skills?)
- Specific direction regarding the instructor's actions, student actions and activities through the various stages of instruction
- Key questions students should be able to answer at the end of the training (what "essential questions" about the topic should the student know?)
- A listing of resources and equipment necessary to complete activities and instruction
- Time sequencing for particular components of instruction
- Means to assess understanding, both formally and informally
- Reflection activities (the synthesis of what was learned to other training segments and the world beyond the training setting)

In planning, designing and executing training, instructors often see they have more "content" than time available to teach. Inevitably, they must elect what to directly teach, and what might be discretionary. The figure on the following page, as well as the "nested circles" diagram in the Outcome-Based Planning article in this series should help in your consideration of content. It displays the concepts of concepts worth being familiar with, those important to know and do, and the "big ideas" and enduring understandings you are seeking for the learner.

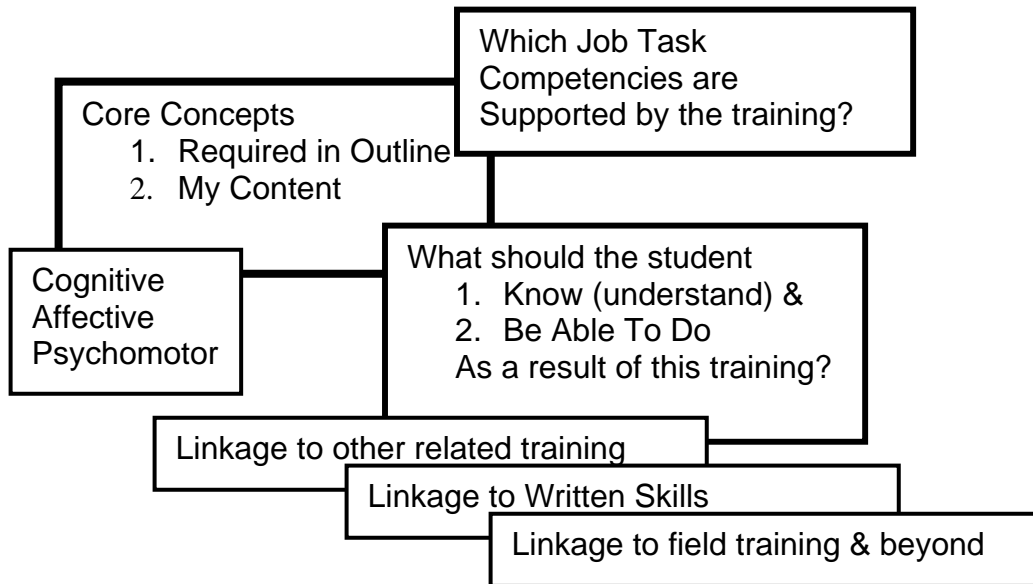
Consider the core of what they should know and do as a result of training, remain flexible in your approach, and stay focused on the outcomes of your work.

Self Assessment Exercise for Academy Instructors

Instructor Pre-Planning Instrument

- In what ways does my course content relate to the Learning Objectives of the Basic Course Learning Domain or established standards for this training
- Which aspects of the Peace Officer Competencies are supported by the training if a basic course offering?
- Which other Learning Domains are related to the content of this training? How might I link this training to those concepts in an integrated manner?
- What is the core concept (the "big idea") of the:
 - Learning Domain?
 - My overall content?
 - This block or unit's content?

- What should the student know and be able to do at the conclusion of the learning experience to enhance their success in real-world performance?
- How could my class support engagement in Cognitive, Affective & Psychomotor domains?
- How might my training support the student's written and verbal communications skills?



As you can see, the concepts overlap, as does the delivery of training. The encouragement for instructors is not to segregate concepts in training just to deliver it in “small bites.” Problem solving instructional approaches and critical thinking strategies encourage instruction that provides a simulation of the complexity of the tasks for which the training is designed. Allow students to grapple with skills and concepts, and to “fail forward” in the safety of training to minimize chances they will fall short in real life.

For additional information on trainings in lesson planning, contact Sierra Training Associates on the web at www.sierra-training.com. You can also contact us to inquire about training and workshops centered on adult learning instruction and lesson design customized to address your specific goals.