

Why do lesson plans?

Why not just follow a book or "wing it" based on experience? Teachers who do take the time to draw up lesson plans variously report the following advantages:

- **LPs stimulate teachers to consider more deeply what can and should be accomplished in a class.** All the elements of a great class--modeling, sequencing, reviewing, and checking--are more effective if planned for than left to chance.
- **LPs encourage the teacher to think more deeply on the specific needs of each student in the class.** Thus, the specific needs (which can change often) and learning styles of each student can be considered in planning, as well as the learning and teaching styles of the teacher.
- **LPs provide an excellent basis for discussion between peers, program director and teacher, and teachers and students.** For new teachers and veteran teachers alike, lesson plans provide good bases for improving program design, planning professional development, and sharing lesson goals with students and even involving them in planning classes.
- **LPs invite teachers to be innovative, to consider a variety of approaches, or try new things that might get better results.** Human beings, teachers included, get stuck in comfortable habits (i.e., "ruts"), and busy schedules tempt teachers to "wing it" rather than plan out a class. Time spent on lesson planning often leads teachers out of their ruts.
- **LPs help teachers be prepared, feel more confident, and deal better with surprises.** A good lesson plan can help a teacher feel grounded, more confident, and able to foresee challenges and students' questions. By the same token, with this grounding the teacher is better able to handle digressions and unforeseen challenges and, ironically, be more flexible.
- **LPs deepen the teacher's own knowledge and skills.** Thorough lesson planning can push a teacher to make certain she knows the content, understands how to apply the skills to be covered in the planned class or classes, and, after the class(es) assesses how things actually went.
- **LPs can be shared.** Written curriculum and lesson plans are forms of "captured wisdom" that can be shared with other teachers or adapted to fit another class level, so they don't have to start from scratch every class. They can also be given to help teachers new to the program (or new to teaching) a sense of what instruction is like in a specific program.
- **LPs provide a good record of what actually occurs in the classroom.** Such records can be kept on file to form the bases for future classes, or to help substitute teachers cover classes effectively.