

Planning Essay

Using the elements of backwards planning, my first step in planning is analyzing the content standards and learning objectives that my students should be able to meet by the end of the unit. This gives my unit a direction and allows me to break down the main objectives into smaller, supporting learning targets. Once I have created a summative assessment and have a basic skeleton for the unit in place, I focus in on the activities I will use in order to support learning in the classroom. There are a number of resources (see mrcmathematics.weebly.com for these) I use to plan these activities. This is my opportunity to get creative as a teacher and to look at and use ideas that other teachers have developed.

When planning each class period, I start with an agenda and decide on the materials needed for the day's class. I consider the implementation of the activities (i.e. how long everything should take, what time I want to start new tasks, possible questions I want to ask, etc.) and try to anticipate student responses or misconceptions to the math being done. I plan formative assessments and write questions that will help me see what students know and if I need to reteach or review concept. Furthermore, because students have varying needs and skill levels, I consider what modifications, accommodations, or extensions are appropriate for each lesson.

As a high school teacher, I understand that it is crucial for me to plan my lessons and units effectively in order for my students to learn math deeply. To this end, I must ask myself how I can use students' relationships to one another to strengthen their relationships to the subject. My experience working in high school classrooms leads me to believe that education is often an individual process. Students listen to lectures, quietly take notes, work on assignments out of books that require little collaboration with one another, take tests by themselves, etc. They may experience failure more often than not because they are thrown into an ocean of knowledge

and asked to figure it out on their own. Incorporating collaborative group activities into school curricula is one thing I can do to step away from this individuated learning and use community and relational experiences to enhance the learning process. Although math teachers are notorious for presenting seemingly irrelevant information to students, Willis (2007) explains that, even with math, it is possible to incorporate problems students can relate to, engage with, and find compelling. It is this experience of engaging with the subject matter and with each other that will help students develop more positive associations with their education, allowing their brains to process new information and synthesize it to what they have learned in the past.

Bibliographic Information

Willis, J. (2007). The neuroscience of joyful education. Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/summer07/vol64/num09/The-Neuroscience-of-Joyful-Education.aspx>