CHAPTER 7　ULTIMATE LESSON DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN

INTRODUCTION

The development of lesson plans is closely linked to preparing for a presentation. The more a trainer knows about his or her audience—including their individual and collective experiences and expectations—the easier it is to develop a lesson plan to meet their needs.

In some cases (such as the National Victim Assistance Academy), lesson plans must also correspond with a written text. It is essential to identify the most important information a presenter should offer, based upon the topic, amount of time allotted for the presentation, and his or her knowledge of the audience.

Lesson plans are designed to give structure to the training or learning environment. They serve as an overall guide to accomplish the presenter's training goals and objectives, yet should be flexible enough to also accommodate students' expectations and needs.

The development of lesson plans serves two important goals:

1. To help the instructor or facilitator prepare, plan and present information in a manner that is organized and interesting.

2. To help students learn in a structured environment that understands and respects their experiences, and guides them toward learning goals and objectives that impart new knowledge and skills.

In developing lesson plans, the instructor:

C Identifies the focal points for developing the training strategy.

C Creates a framework for the instructional resources that must be developed.

C Provides the foundation to evaluate what participants have learned.

C Establishes criteria for self-assessment to measure the effectiveness of both the instructor, as well as the instructional process.

C Creates a learning process and environment that are structured and consistent.

While lesson plans offer an important framework for instruction, they should not be carved in stone. When utilized as a tool for training in the field of victim services, lesson plans cannot be rigid, and must adapt to specific training challenges. The following list describes essential considerations that a trainer should keep in mind when developing lesson plans:

C *The expectations of the students*. For what purpose(s) are they attending the training program?

C *Potential trauma reactions to the content of the lesson*. Some crime-related topics can produce trauma reactions in victims, and secondary trauma reactions in service providers. Instructors should address the issue of potential "trauma triggers" at the beginning of each learning session to help students understand possible reactions they may have, and offer a pathway for validation and assistance.

C *Current events directly related to the topic(s) included in the lesson plan*. In particular, when a high profile crime occurs in conjunction with a training program, flexibility in structured lesson plans is necessary. For example, a trainer was addressing victim sensitivity and victim trauma issues with 50 probation officers as the mass tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado, was unfolding. On the second day of the training program, the trainer provided the students with a lengthy opportunity to discuss the horrific crime and related it back to the lesson plan topic of victim trauma. The participant evaluations reflected considerable gratitude for this flexibility.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

While lesson plans are often structured to reflect specific curricula or resource materials, they should also be designed, whenever possible, to address:

C Type of audience.
  – How many participants will there be?
  – What are the range and levels of professional and volunteer experiences among the training participants?
  – What degree of diversity is there among the participants?
  – Do participants work together in any capacity?

C Knowledge base of audience.
  – Does the audience have any knowledge about the subjects for which they will receive training? If so, what is the general level of knowledge?
  – Is there a "learning curve" among audience participants? (This can work to the presenter's advantage, allowing him/her to utilize the knowledge and experiences of more advanced students to facilitate the learning experience.)

C Expectations of audience and sponsors.
  – As a result of the training experience, what do the participants and training sponsors hope to gain? (Note: The expectations and goals of the *training sponsors* should be determined and incorporated well in advance of developing the lesson plan.)
  – Can these expectations be matched to the learning goals and objectives in the lesson plan?

C Duration.

– Lesson plans should be structured within specific time frames. Often, the objectives and content of the plan directly relate to the length of time allotted for the training program.

– In the discipline of victim services, it is helpful to develop lesson plans for a topic that can be taught in different time segments. Typically, these might include:

< 30 minute speech presentation.
< 90–120 minute workshop.
< Half-day session (3½ to 4 hours).
< Full day session (6½ to 7 hours).
< Multiday sessions.

C Understanding the exact duration of a training session helps the presenter to predetermine the most important information that can be provided within the time frame allotted. Lesson plans can be tailored either to condense and highlight information or to expand into the content and learning activities in a more detailed fashion.

MATERIALS REQUIRED

The "List of Training Aids" included in Chapter 6 offers an overall summary of resources that can enhance the training process. In addition, the "Instructional Activities" (see below) further define materials that are needed to facilitate a positive learning environment.

In developing a list of materials required, it is helpful to determine in advance of the training session exactly who is responsible for providing them. For example, the training sponsor can assume responsibility for audio/visual equipment, while the trainer should develop and provide materials relevant to instructional activities. The presenter should inform the program coordinator about any on-site needs he/she has.

LEARNING GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

In developing lesson plans, learning goals and objectives keep the instructor focused, and augment the cohesive structure of the learning environment.

Goals are "macro statements" about the reality an instructor is trying to create. Goals take a while to get to. They are long term, e.g., teaching participants techniques for becoming more effective adult trainers. Finally, goals need to be realistic and specific (Marshall *Developing Goals* 1999).

A learning objective is a "micro statement" that provides a detailed and measurable description of what learners will be able to do after they have participated in a training session. Objectives should not focus on what learners do during the training process but, rather, what the expected outcomes are of that training process.

It is important to remember that the more objectives one seeks to accomplish, the less time the instructor can spend on providing information and resources relevant to the successful completion of each objective. In other words, a lesson plan should limit the number of objectives to fit the duration of the session, experience of participants, and desired outcomes of the training sponsor and participants.

Objectives should be designed to help the instructor or trainer assess the participants' levels of knowledge and skills. They should be concise, clear, action-oriented, and measurable:

C A good way to begin the development of an objective is as follows: "As a result of this learning experience, the student(s) will be able to . . ."

C Statements of objectives that follow the opening statement cited above should be *no longer than one sentence.*

C Statements of objectives should always begin with an active (as opposed to passive) verb. For example, "As a result of this learning experience, the student(s) will be able to (1) describe the five core rights for victims of crime and (2) cite an example of one law that implements a core victim's right in this jurisdiction."

C Statements such as "gain knowledge," "understand (certain things)," and "expand levels of expertise" are not valuable objectives, as they are vague and unmeasurable.

Once the first draft of objectives has been developed, it can be placed in context of the lesson plan by determining:

C Can these objectives be adequately accomplished in the time allotted?

C What guidance from the instructor (or from other participants) will the participants need to accomplish each objective?

C Are there specific resources that the participants will need—or be able to reference—to perform tasks related to each objective?

C Will the objectives require follow-on training, technical assistance, or other resources to ensure that they are accomplished?

The answers to the four simple questions above offer guidance to instructors that may result in revising the original objectives. Finally, criteria for measuring successful completion of objectives should be developed.

To achieve learning objectives, the presenter must develop and design specific instructional activities that are tailored to the experience level and needs of the participants.

INSTRUCTIONAL ACTIVITIES

In general, there are four types of instructional activities that can be incorporated into lesson plans:

1. *Preassigned individual activities*. Participant activities assigned in advance of a training program offer an immediate and personalized linkage to the session. The participant must think in advance about the topic(s) to be addressed and, as such, think about his or her expectations of the training experience. For example, in a session about victims' rights laws, students could be asked to bring an example of a specific victims' rights law in their state, and be prepared to briefly discuss the impact (if any) that it has had on victims' rights and services.

   Preassigned activities can also be fun assignments to incorporate into training icebreakers. For example, at many of the sites for the National Victim Assistance Academy, students are asked to bring and wear a hat the represents their agency, community, or state, with prizes awarded for the most creative hats. This small but significant activity creates an immediate bond among participants.

2. *On-site individual activities*. In order to avoid "group think"—where students' ideas and opinions are formed by the collective group, rather than by each student—individual activities provide each participant with the opportunity to consider and possibly express his or her individual opinion. Such learning activities can be facilitated through the use of individual worksheets or specific assignments. In addition, individual activities can be further processed in small groups or a plenary session.

   In training environments that incorporate focused group discussions, individual activities and worksheets serve the additional purpose of providing a record of individual students' perspectives. When written records are a component of a training session, these worksheets can provide important information that may not otherwise be processed through small or plenary group activities.

3. *Small group activities*. The individual experiences and attitudes of each participant can contribute to excellent small group activities that determine "common ground," as well as differing perspectives among participants. Small group activities should be designed to be structured and highly interactive, and to have a clearly stated expectation and outcome. Such activities can be further processed in the full group.

   For example, in order to help criminal and juvenile justice officials understand the importance of victim impact statements, an instructor can create a case scenario of an offense involving both adult and juvenile offenders. After reading the scenario, students work in small groups to complete a victim impact statement, based upon their unique perspectives. The content of the small groups' victim impact statements are then processed (read to the full group) by the instructor, who points out the wide variations in individuals' reactions to traumatic events and specific needs that aid victims in reconstructing their lives in the aftermath of a crime.

4. *Full group (plenary learning environment).* The traditional lecture or presentation of structured curricula is conducted in a plenary format. Audio/visual aids are helpful to structure the full group learning environment. In addition, it can be interspersed with individual and small group activities that, as noted above, can be processed by the plenary group.

EVALUATION/ASSESSMENT

Based upon their effectiveness in a training environment, lesson plans should be reviewed and revised, as needed. The instructor or presenter can rely upon participant evaluations for their assessment of the structure of the lesson. In addition, answers to the following questions can combine with participant evaluations to further evaluate the effectiveness of the lesson plan:

C Is the scope and content of the lesson plan clear and appropriate for the intended audience?

C Are the goals and objectives clearly stated in both the lesson plan, and the actual training session?

C Can the lesson plan accommodate flexibility, dependent upon students' expectations and needs?

C Does the lesson proceed in an organized fashion?

C Are the activities appropriate for the time frame allotted for the lesson?

C Are the lesson's content and learning activities delineated clearly enough that another trainer could follow the plan?

C Does the body of the lesson detail a time plan?

C Have transitions been clearly identified and are they appropriate? Do transitions occur smoothly during the presentation?

C Are the individual differences among potential students/audiences considered in the lesson activities?

C Is an effective closure (ending to the lesson) planned?

C Is time allotted for an adequate closure at the end of the presentation?

C Do the lesson activities clearly lead to the attainment of the lesson goals and objectives?

C Is the lesson appropriate and engaging for the stated audience (Keeler 1998)?

PUTTING IT TOGETHER: LESSON PLAN PRINCIPLES AND PREPARATION

The Department of Education Technology at San Diego State University offers the following guide to preparing lesson plans, based upon the "events of instruction" developed by Robert Mills Gagne, co-author of *Conditions of Learning Training Application*, published in 1995 (Marshall *Guide* 1999):

LESSON PLAN PRINCIPLES

PRINCIPLE	DESIGNED TO	EXAMPLES OF
Motivation	Get and keep the learner's attention	Novelty Arouse uncertainty Cite model Establish relevance Raise confidence Establish reward Establish credibility
Objectives	Focus the learner's attention	State formal objectives State informal objectives
Prerequisites	Link prior knowledge or experience	Cite previous learning Use analogy
Information presentation	Convey information	Provide overview Provide background Give definition Examples Demonstration Rhetorical questioning Discussion Analogy Summary
Practice and feedback	Let learners try out their new knowledge	Drill Individual practices Guided practice Group feedback Peer feedback Delayed feedback Role play Vicarious practice Simulation
Testing	Find out how well the learners are doing	Student self-test Pretest Posttest
Others	Complete the learning process	Remediation Enrichment Administration Social Break Rearrange classroom

FOLLOW-UP ACTIVITIES

A range of follow-up activities can be incorporated into the structure of a lesson plan. However, there are some unexpected activities that may result from the unique perspectives of the students, and how they contribute to the overall learning environment.

Examples of follow-up activities can include the following:

C Providing students with information about how to obtain additional resources relevant to the training topic (such as pertinent Web sites, toll-free information centers, etc.).

C Closing the training session with an individual exercise/worksheet that encourages students to consider "what I can do differently" and "what my agency can do differently" to assist victims of crime, as a result of what students learned from the training session.

C Providing students with a brief summary report of the training proceedings, with emphasis on action items developed by the participants.

C Providing students with stamped postcards on which they can write their name and mailing address on one side, and their "three main objectives" in utilizing the information they learned at the training program in their work or lives. The instructor can mail the postcards six to eight weeks following the training program.

C Inviting students to contact the instructor(s) by telephone, e-mail, or fax if they have any questions, or need further information.

Follow-up activities provide important, ongoing linkages to the training session, as well as continuity to guide participants along the route from "student" to "practitioner."

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Marshall, J. 20 September 1999. *Guide to Preparing Lesson Plans*. San Diego State University, CA: <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Courses.EDTEC532/assignments/lpprinciples.html>.

Marshall, J. 7 October 1999. *Developing Goals and Objectives*. San Diego State University, CA: <http://edweb.sdsu.edu/Courses.EDTEC532/jobaids/Design/goals.html>.