

The Mechanics of Planning

An effective extended period lesson possesses certain characteristics. The following section provides examples of the components and structures necessary in the design of a lesson that engages all learners and uses class time efficiently.

In preparing for battle, I have always found that plans are useless,
but planning is indispensable.

- Dwight D. Eisenhower

Good plans shape good decisions. That's why good planning
helps to make elusive dreams come true.

- Lester R. Bittel

What Works: Ideas for Making the most of an Extended Class Period

Vary Instructional Strategies:

Use at least three different types of activities in each class period. Be sure to alternate between teacher-centered (lecture, question and answer, demonstration, etc.) and student-centered activities (peer teaching, cooperative learning, games, presentations, role play, research, project building, etc.). Roll call, progress checks and lesson closure should be activities which require the active participation of each student or cooperative group. Organize your instruction to reach students with strengths in a variety of learning styles, i.e. get them to move, compete, cooperate, make music and art, build and reflect.

Break it Up:

Students can maintain optimum focus for only short periods of time. Use this to your advantage by breaking up the class period into a series of brief but relatively intense and challenging activities. Organize your lesson into a series of short (5-15 minute) activities or several short activities and perhaps one longer (30-45 minute) exercise. Break extended projects into short, measurable steps and bring the group together from time to time to monitor progress.

Allow Time for Reflection:

Journals, reflection pieces portfolios and quick checks are tools that can be used across the disciplines to help students monitor their own progress and take responsibility for their learning. Such practices enhance student focus by providing them with tangible evidence of their personal and academic growth.

It is not only necessary to assess the course, unit or chapter. We must also assess the last 15 minutes of instruction by providing opportunities for students reflect on what they understood, formulate questions for clarification and explain their thinking to one another.

Plan Opportunities for Movement:

Requiring students to stand or move about will help to keep them alert and focused and, if used purposefully, will add depth to their understanding of the material. Physically transitioning between small and large groups, using students to collect and distribute materials, incorporating strategies such as role play, statues, TPR and corners into your instructional repertoire and organizing games and activities which necessitate movement will help to achieve these goals.

Incorporate Multiple Media:

Allow students to listen to recordings of music, speeches, interviews, poems, drills and readings from plays and novels in addition to lectures; make use of posters, slides, films, videos, overhead transparencies and computer programs in addition to board or overhead notes; make available paints, fabrics, textured papers, colored pencils, clay and glue in addition to pen and paper.

Make the Most of Transitions:

Allowing students to move about the classroom during transitions between activities will help them remain alert and focused, but can also provide excellent opportunities for learning. Try displaying a quote, cartoon or other image relevant to your lesson as students enter the classroom, using a roll exercise to review prerequisite information before moving ahead, posing an opinion-type question for students to discuss as they move into new groups, set-up a puzzle or other thinking problem before transitioning back to the larger group, proposing a sequencing or categorizing challenge prior to clean-up, and using an exit activity that requires students to respond in some way as they leave the classroom. Transitions can be further enhanced through the use of music, directed movement or visual cues and are always more effective when students are given a clearly defined task and time limit.

Make Use of School and Community Resources:

Extended periods provide excellent opportunities for class excursions, visits from guest speakers, job shadowing, content-related community service, integration of technology, interdisciplinary projects, outside research, etc. Seek out resources within your school and its surrounding community for making course content relevant to the world outside of your classroom.

Possible Organizing Scenarios for Extended-Period Lessons

I. Single Complex Concept or Skill:

This scenario works best with complex or difficult-to-grasp material. Devoting an entire extended period to a single, well-defined skill or concept allows for more rapid mastery and improved retention of content.

5 minutes	Opening Activity: Review prerequisite skills/information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engage all students •Set pace for the class period •Assess readiness
5 minutes	Introduction of New Concept or Skill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Clarify instructional objectives •Focus student attention •Create a need to know
10-15 min	Direct Instruction of New Concept or Skill <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establish relevance •Engage all students •Assess comprehension
25-30 min	Large or Small Group Activity (Preliminary application of new concept or skill) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Define task •Clarify expectations •Monitor student progress
5-10 minutes	Regroup to Share Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold all students accountable •Debrief process and product •Clarify instruction as necessary
15-20 min	Small Group or Partner Activity (see Group Activity, above) (Refined application of new concept or skill)
5-10 minutes	Regroup to Share Results/Review Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold all students accountable •Commend effort and progress •Summarize essential learning
5-15 minutes	Quiz, Performance, Assignment or Other Assessment

Possible Organizing Scenarios (continuation)

II. Learning Project:

This plan works best when used to complete projects students have been prepared for in advance of an extended class period. The key to making it work is to require that the project (or some well-defined phase of it) be completed and turned in at the end of the day's session.

5 minutes	Opening Activity: Review prerequisite skills/information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engage all students •Set pace for the class period •Assess readiness
5-10 minutes	Introduction/Review of Project Guidelines <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Teach evaluation criteria (rubric) •Provide models as appropriate •Establish final <u>and</u> incremental deadlines
25-30 min	Preliminary Work Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Define preliminary task •Clarify expectations •Monitor student progress
5-10 minutes	Progress Check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold all students accountable •Debrief process and product •Clarify instruction as necessary
25-30 min	Final Work Period <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Define final task •Clarify expectations •Monitor student progress
10-20 min	Regroup to Share Results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold all students accountable •Commend effort and progress •Summarize essential learning
	SUBMIT FINAL PRODUCT (or some substantial and predetermined portion of it)

Possible Organizing Scenarios (continuation)

III. Tying Up Loose Ends:

This particular model is designed for use with concepts and skills to which students have already been exposed but which they have not yet mastered. It is important to avoid trying to address more than three separate areas in a single class period. Also, consider using an individual activity in the first half of the class period and a group activity in the second half or using two small group/partner activities and skipping the individual activity altogether. All three scenarios work well. Your choice will depend on the types of activities you have planned and on the needs of your particular student group.

5 minutes	Opening Activity: Review/Practice (Skill/Concept #1) (Choose content that is prerequisite to the remaining topics) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engage all students •Clarify instructional objectives •Assess readiness
5 minutes	Brief Review (Skill/Concept #2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Establish relevance •Engage all students •Assess comprehension
20-25 min	Small Group or Partner Activity (Skill/Concept #2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Define task •Clarify expectations •Monitor student progress
5-10 minutes	Regroup to Share Results (Skill/Concept #2) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Hold all students accountable •Debrief process and product •Clarify instruction as necessary
5 minutes	Brief Review (Skill/Concept #3) (see above)
20-25 min	Small Group or Partner Activity (Skill/Concept #3) (see above)
5-10 minutes	Regroup to Share Results (Skill/Concept #3) (see above)
5-10 minutes	Review (Skills/Concepts 1-3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Engage all learners •Summarize essential learning •Commend effort and progress
5-15 minutes	Quiz, Performance, Assignment or Other Assessment