

Planning a lesson and lesson sequences

What is the pedagogical practice of planning a lesson and lesson sequences?

The high-leverage practice of lesson planning and sequencing is the exercise for teachers to plan and design lessons in a sequenced manner. Sequenced lessons "help students develop a deep understanding of content and sophisticated skills and practices" allowing them to maintain a consistent approach "while keeping students engaged; they also help students appreciate what they have learned" (Teaching Works, 2023).

This practice involves organizing classes in a logical and progressive sequence of more than one class, allowing students to build on what they have previously learned. In this way, each class builds on previous learning, giving students the opportunity to reinforce and apply previously developed knowledge and skills. "Planning units means methodically asking how one day's lesson builds on the previous day's lesson, how it prepares students for the next day's lesson, and how it all fits into a larger sequence of objectives leading to mastery of a subject" (Lemov, 2016).

In addition, it is important to consider the time distribution and the number of classes needed to achieve the specific objectives. This ensures consistency and continuity in the sequence and provides opportunities for exploration, application, review and consolidation of knowledge. The number of lessons for a planning sequence depends on the complexity of what is expected to be achieved, the educational level and the time available. To determine the length of a class sequence, it should be considered that the defined learning objective(s) are fully developed, allowing for a logical progression of skills and content. Therefore, it is suggested to work with a limited number of curricular objectives so that the sequence is effective and poses learning in a meaningful way.

This practice implies that the teacher must use the curricular instruments to clearly define the learning objectives he/she wishes to develop at the end of each class included in the sequence. Along with this, when planning a class or sequence of classes, teachers are expected to "demonstrate a broad, deep and critical understanding of the knowledge, attitudes and skills of the discipline or disciplines they teach" (Framework for Good Teaching, 2021).

It is important for the teacher to conduct a diagnostic assessment to determine the students' prior needs and abilities in relation to the learning objectives. This will help

him/her adapt instruction and the design of each class to meet individual needs and ensure the relevance of the content in a situated context.

Once the curricular positioning exercise has been carried out, the teacher must design the didactic transfer of its purposes. For this, the concept of "constructive alignment", proposed by Biggs and Tang (2007), which implies coherence or alignment between the objectives, methodologies and teaching-learning activities, such as assessment and feedback throughout the sequence and in each class, seems useful. It implies verifying that the learning objectives established for each class are clearly aligned with the general purposes of the sequence and with the results that the students are expected to achieve. In addition, it implies selecting strategies and organizing activities in a sequential manner, ensuring that basic concepts and skills are mastered before moving on to new or deeper learning. To do this, it must "provide opportunities for student inquiry and discovery that include opportunities for students to practice and master basic concepts and skills before moving on to more advanced ones" (Teaching Works, 2023).

A didactic sequence can be guided by the choice of a relational theme or by the development of a particular knowledge. This provides a coherent structure that facilitates learning and understanding. It acts as a thread that connects content and activities, allowing students to see connections between concepts, categories and ideas in different contexts. By addressing a central theme, students develop a more complete and deeper view of knowledge, exploring diverse perspectives rather than viewing learning in isolation.

Choosing a cross-cutting theme can enhance learning by integrating objectives from different areas of knowledge. This allows students to explore the topic from multiple perspectives and generate connections with other fields. The integration of interdisciplinary objectives in class sequences enriches the educational process, encouraging the application and transfer of knowledge in diverse contexts, which promotes meaningful and lasting learning. In addition, it stimulates collaboration among teachers, who can work together to design classes and sequences that enrich the educational experience of students.

When planning a lesson sequence, it is important to include instances and strategies for assessing student progress and providing effective feedback. For this purpose, evaluations can be implemented at different moments of the sequence and at the end of it. It is essential, at the end of each session, to obtain detailed information about the learning achieved by the students, to verify understanding and evaluate the effectiveness of the teaching. This information will help to adjust the teaching-learning processes of the upcoming lessons, adapting them to the identified needs and difficulties. The exercise of planning classes and sequences not only allows projecting into the future but also promotes reflection on one's own teaching practice and the integration of new knowledge and pedagogical experiences based on situated experience. Once the class or sequence of classes has been taught, it is necessary to consider a time to reflect on the effectiveness of the instructional design. This will allow evaluating if the learning objectives were met and if the strategies and activities used were adequate to make improvements in future planning.

This practice implies that the educator must:

- Design each class within a sequence of classes, taking into account the overall progression and coherence of the learning experience in relation to the general objectives. Each sequence should define an overall objective in itself that is related to the guiding theme or content and that allows establishing a goal to be achieved.
- Clearly define what students are expected to learn or achieve at the end of each class as well as at the end of the sequence by writing objectives that are specific, measurable, attainable, relevant and time-bound.
- Determine the logical order in which content, concepts, categories and skills will be presented. Ensure that there is a clear progression based on a pre-established parameter (from the general to the specific, from the concrete to the abstract, from the known to the unknown, in chronological order, in methodological order, etc.) that allows for a natural flow between topics, content or skills.
- Design classes that build on each other, allowing students to reinforce and apply previously acquired knowledge and skills.
- Consider the distribution of time in each class and in the total sequence. A balance should be sought between the time allotted for the introduction of new concepts, independent practice, consolidation of skills, and review and synthesis of learning.
- Ensure that the objective of each session is aligned with the overall learning objectives and is appropriate to the level and prior knowledge of the students.
- Determine how the learning of each session and of all sessions will be evaluated, considering: evaluation procedure, evaluation instrument and agent.
- Provide opportunities for review and analysis of learning, reinforcement and extension of objectives to ensure cumulative learning throughout the sequence.
- Consider the coherence between learning and the teaching strategies to be used. For example, in more theoretical and epistemic contents, direct teaching, reading, group discussion and synthesis of information could be more effective than practical activities, demonstration and exploration. It is also relevant to align the sequence of activities to the learning expected to be achieved. For example, if the objective is to compare musical styles, within the planned activities, students would be expected

to listen to two different styles of music and identify similarities and differences between them.

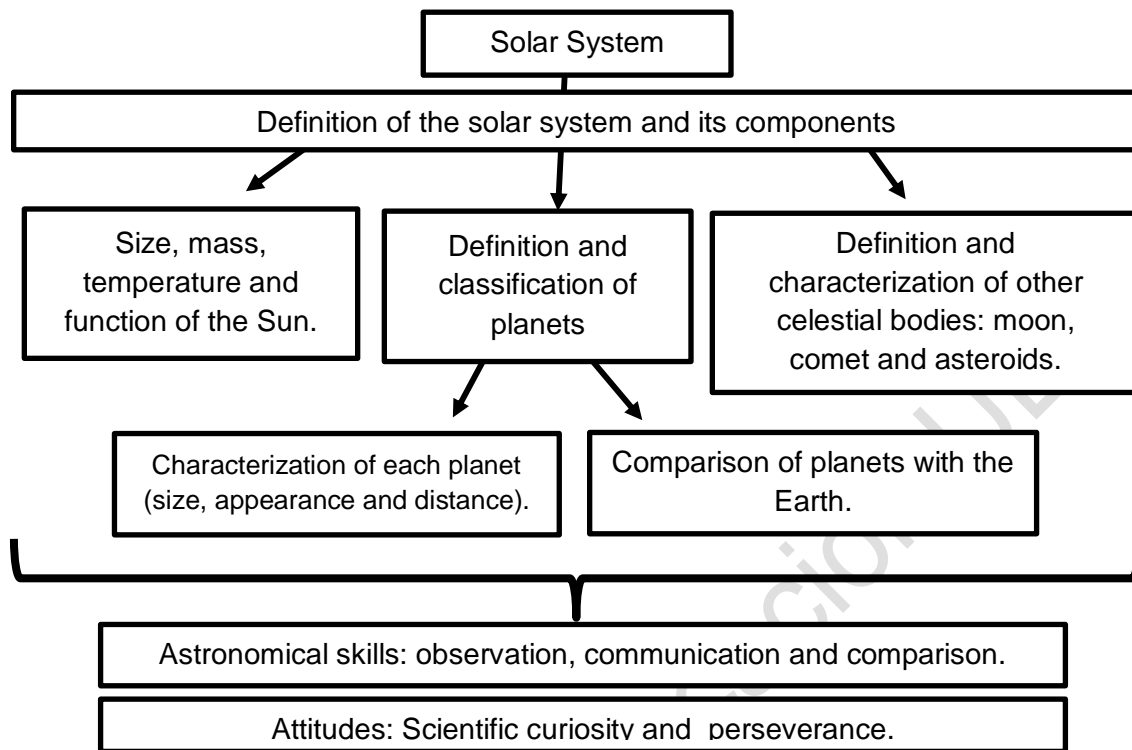
- Identify in advance the resources and materials needed to support the planned activities ensuring that they are of good quality, effective in engaging students' interest and participation. This may include textbooks, readings, work guides, multimedia resources, technological tools or concrete manipulative materials.

What is not planning a class and a sequence of classes:

- ⇒ Focus only on the sequencing of declarative content without considering the progression of skills or attitudes.
- ⇒ Focusing only on learning outcomes, content, concepts or skills without including details of the methodologies, activities and strategies to achieve these objectives.
- ⇒ Start and end each class with a quick learning verification check as an entry and exit ticket, without considering the previous and/or subsequent for construction and analysis.
- ⇒ Designing classes in isolation, without establishing explicit relationships between one session and another.
- ⇒ Designing a class sequence focusing primarily on what the teacher will teach and the activities they will conduct, without adequately considering the needs, interests and learning styles of the students.
- ⇒ Plan only summative or graded evaluations, without considering diagnostic and formative evaluations.
- ⇒

Teaching strategies for planning and sequencing lessons:

• **Integral learning scheme:** Before starting the process of planning the sequence of classes, a scheme can be developed that integrates the concepts, skills and attitudes that students should learn in a unit in the case of elementary and middle school, or the distinction between learning objectives (LO) and transversal learning objectives (TO) in the case of preschool education. It can be a concept map or a spider map that allows for clarity and focus on the educational objectives, ensuring that no important aspect is overlooked. In addition, the outline facilitates the creation of a coherent structure and logical sequence of content, skills and attitudes, allowing students to build on what they have previously learned and establish meaningful connections. For example, in the subject of Natural Sciences in third grade for the unit on the Solar System for OA 03: Describe the characteristics of some of the components of the Solar System (Sun, planets, moons, comets and asteroids) in relation to their size, location, appearance and relative distance from the Earth, among others.



- **Initial scheduling:** This consists of creating a calendar to organize the learning objectives in an orderly and sequential manner, either by week or by session. This practice makes it possible to clearly visualize the time available and to establish a balanced distribution of topics and skills throughout the teaching period.

To implement the initial scheduling, it is advisable to begin by making a list of the days of the year and the hours of class per week, which will help us to estimate the time available for each objective. In addition, we should consider holidays, school extracurricular activities, days for tests and reviews, as well as formative evaluations and feedback. It is useful to establish a coherent sequence of teaching and learning, ensuring that the most important objectives are addressed in each class and adequate time is devoted to each topic and skill.

- **Start with the end:** According to Lemov (2016), an effective strategy for planning lesson sequences is to take a reverse perspective. He suggests starting with unit planning and then moving to planning for each class. This allows one to establish the overall objectives of the unit and then reflect on how to assess student progress. From there, appropriate activities can be selected for each lesson, ensuring that they are aligned with the stated objectives.

- **Conduct a diagnosis:** Design and apply an evaluation instrument to determine the students' prior knowledge. The objective is to obtain accurate information about the conceptual management, skills and attitudes that students have before starting the unit.

Create an instrument that gathers information not only on declarative content management, but mainly focuses on skills and attitudes. This allows you to obtain key information for the whole year and not just the unit you are starting. You can use different methods, such as questionnaires, written tests, practical activities, survey-type games or group discussions. In addition, observe how students interact with the topic in everyday situations or talk to them to learn about their experiences and perspectives. You can also review assessment results from previous years to identify students' strengths and areas for improvement.

- **Review of previous activities:** Analyze and review the activities and materials used in previous years in order to determine their effectiveness in student learning. This allows identifying which strategies and resources have been successful and which have had less impact on the teaching-learning process. The following questions allow for reflection: Which activities generated a higher level of student participation and engagement, which activities did students find most challenging but also most rewarding, which activities did not allow students to achieve the expected objectives, which activities did not allow students to achieve the expected objectives, and which activities were too difficult to complete. This will allow you to identify the activities that captured their interest and promoted meaningful learning as well as those that did not generate the expected results. You will then be able to analyze the reasons behind their success or failure and consider maintaining, modifying or replacing them.

- **Collaboration and planning support:** This strategy seeks to foster the sharing of experiences and obtaining support in planning lessons and sequences. Sharing experiences with teaching peers and seeking ideas from other teachers enriches pedagogical practice and provides new perspectives. Participating in discussion groups, workshops or professional communities provides the opportunity to learn about successful practices and strategies that have worked well in similar situations. In addition, receiving accompaniment and monitoring in planning, either through feedback from an Academic Coordinator, Head of UTP or Department Head, offers additional support to improve the quality of planning. In addition, designing interdisciplinary class sequences enriches pedagogical practice and allows sharing knowledge and approaches, which can lead to a more integral and effective teaching.

- **Designing review and reinforcement activities:** When designing the lesson plan or sequence of classes, it is important to include activities that allow students to review and reinforce previously acquired knowledge and skills. These activities are fundamental to consolidate learning. It is important to mention that not all classes should focus on new content, but it is also necessary to dedicate time to review and reinforce what has been learned. When planning, be sure to dedicate time at the beginning of each class to briefly review key concepts and skills learned in the previous class. In addition, throughout the class, you can include interactive activities, such as educational games or digital applications, that allow students to review the content in a playful and dynamic way.

- **Consider the transferability of learning:** When planning class sequences, it is important to consider the connections and relationships between the topics or learning units as well as with other situations of daily life. To do so, it is important to include in the planning activities and strategies that help students establish meaningful connections through strategies such as practical examples, case studies, research projects, interdisciplinary projects, simulations, use of news, use of social networks, and applications in different contexts. In addition, when planning lessons and instructional materials, identify how concepts, skills, and/or topics relate to each other and be sure to address them co

Facultad de Educación UL

References:

Biggs, J. and Tang, C. (2007). *Teaching for Quality Learning at University*. 3rd edition. England and NY: Society for Research into Higher Education and Open University Press.

Bowen, R. S. (2017). *Understanding by Design*. Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching. Retrieved [today's date] from <https://cft.vanderbilt.edu/understanding-by-design/>.

Lemov D. (2016). *Teach Like a Champion Field Guide 2.0: A Practical Resource to Make the 62 Techniques Your Own*. 2nd Edition. Jossey-Bass

McLeskey, J. (Ed.). (2019). *High leverage practices for inclusive classrooms*. New York: Routledge.

Mineduc (2021) Estándares de la profesión docente, Marco para la Buena Enseñanza. Centro de perfeccionamiento, experimentación e investigaciones pedagógicas (CPEIP) <https://estandaresdocentes.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/MBE-2.pdf>

Mineduc (2023). *Orientaciones para planificar el aprendizaje*. <https://www.curriculumnacional.cl/portal/Tipo/Asociados-a-la-Base-Curricular/Partes-de-los-Programas/14601:Orientaciones-para-planificar-el-aprendizaje#:~:text=La%20planificaci%C3%B3n%20de%20las%20clases,aprendizajes%20que%20se%20debe%20alcanzar.>

Mineduc (2023). *Guía para el proceso de elaboración de la planificación*. <https://liderazgoeducativo.mineduc.cl/wp-content/uploads/sites/55/2016/04/II.-Gu%C3%ADa-para-el-proceso-de-elaboraci%C3%B3n-de-la-planificaci%C3%B3n.pdf>

Teaching Works, University of Michigan. (2022) High-leverage practices. Recuperado el 16 de diciembre de 2022 <https://www.teachingworks.org/high-leverage-practices/>

Instructional Moves, University of Harvard, (2023). Encouraging Students to Put Each Class in Context with the Broader Course. Recuperado el 02 de julio de 2023 <https://instructionalmoves.gse.harvard.edu/encouraging-students-put-each-class-context-broader-course>

Instructional Moves, University of Harvard, (2023). Sequencing materials to build student energy and excitement. Recuperado el 02 de julio de 2023 <https://instructionalmoves.gse.harvard.edu/sequencing-material-excite-and-challenge-students>

Suggested citation for this document

Observatorio de Buenas Prácticas Pedagógicas, Facultad de Educación, Universidad del Desarrollo (2023). “Planning a lesson and lesson sequences”.

This document was prepared by Francesca Grez Cook and reviewed by María Paz Arriagada, Valentina Ohlsen, María Luisa Salazar y Trinidad Ríos within the framework of the Observatorio de Buenas Prácticas Pedagógicas, Facultad de Educación, Universidad del Desarrollo, Santiago, Chile.

Translated by María José Galmez, September 2023

Facultad de Educación