

## **Elements of an Effective Lesson:** **By Latoya Dixon and Michael Waiksnis**

### **Clear Daily Objective**

Daily objective(s) should be posted (visible) and referred to throughout the lesson. This will give you and your student's clarity for the purpose of the lesson. An objective answers the question "**What is it we want students to know and learn?**" Please note that an objective is not an agenda for the day. It states what the students should learn by the end of class. If an observer asks a student what the objective for the day is, students should be able to describe what they are expected to learn that period.

### **Teaching/Modeling/Demonstrating**

Effective educators understand the value of providing a lesson with an appropriate structure. They may begin with direct instruction, model or demonstrate for students what it is they are to do/learn, provide the opportunity for guided practice, and then move students to working independently and offering differentiated measures of support based on the individual needs of students.

A variety of instructional strategies may be used: interactive lecture, small group instruction, or hands on/kinesthetic activities, etc. The lesson should always be "chunked" into manageable parts. Between various parts of the lessons, after utilizing a particular instructional strategy, it is a good idea to have students write or talk about what you just taught (think-ink-pair-share, oral discussion, post-it and respond). Gradually, we release the responsibility and work our way to students working independently.

### **Guided Practice**

Students must have the opportunity to practice what it is they are expected to learn during every lesson. Guided practice opportunities should be built into each lesson that you teach. This is a good time to observe student thinking, misconceptions, and make note of the level of understanding demonstrated by students. Feedback from you to the student is critical during this time. Feedback should be specific, personalized, and timely. This portion of the lesson answers the question: "**How will we know when they've learned it?**

## **Check for Understanding (Formative Assessment)**

This section of the lesson answers the questions: **How will we respond if they don't learn the material? How will we respond when they already know it?** It is imperative to check for understanding throughout your lesson. Do not rely on students who raise their hand. Be sure to select non-volunteers and do cold-calls with students who are unlikely to ask questions, don't always volunteer, etc.

If we always call on one or two kids, we only know that they know the material. Make sure you develop ways to determine how many of your students understand and have mastery of the concept you've presented. Strategies for checking for understanding may include: Kahoot, exit slips/tickets, a short formative assessment via Socrative, Nearpod, ABCD cards, thumbs up/down, or student self reflection also known as the 1, 2, 3 method (1= I got it!, 2=I need more help!, 3= I do not understand at all!, etc. It is important to know how many students and which students understand something or have mastery of material before moving on to the next instructional concept. Effective teaching involves:

1. Clarity of what is to be taught and what students should learn (standards based instruction)
2. Knowledge of various effective instructional strategies (differentiation to meet the needs of all learners)
3. Opportunity for students to read, write, and speak about what they are learning. Students need time to read in class.

## **Reflection**

This is a time after the lesson is complete to reflect, think, and discuss with yourself, your department peers or team members how effective your lesson was for students. This will allow you to determine what instructional adjustments should be made, what interventions are needed to bring students to mastery, and what opportunities for enrichment/extension might be necessary to challenge students who are quick to master the material. Sample reflection questions are for teachers to answer at the conclusion of a lesson with an instructional coach, principal, or alone. See next page.

### **Sample Reflective Questions:**

1. How much are students reading and writing and speaking in my class? Is it enough?
2. Are you doing enough for our students who suffer from word poverty?
3. Which students did not master the content? Are their commonalities with these students in terms of the missing pieces of their learning? What strategies will I use to bring students to mastery?
4. Which students are mastering the content and do so quickly? How can I further differentiate my lessons to provide opportunities for extension and enrichment for my students?
5. Are my questioning techniques effective? Do they involve higher order thinking skills?
6. How many opportunities for demonstration of understanding am I providing for students throughout various “chunks” of the lesson?
7. Am I looking at my teaching objectively? Do I use video analysis to observe my own teaching behaviors and reflect on my effectiveness?
8. Are my assessment techniques appropriate and effective? Am I assessing what it is I expect students to master in a rigorous manner?
9. Am I calling on volunteers and non-volunteers to create a classroom climate and sense of classroom community where everyone learns?
10. Have I noted what went well in the lesson and documented strategies that worked effectively for particular learners so that I may revisit them in the future?