



*Qualities of Effective Teachers* by James H. Stronge

Successful teaching involves careful preparation, including planning objectives and activities on an hourly, daily, and weekly basis. In addition, long-term planning ensures coverage of the curriculum across a marking period, semester, and year. Effective teachers demonstrate high expectations for students and select strategies to propel the students' learning.

Beyond planning and preparation of materials, effective organizing for instruction also involves the development of a conscious orientation toward teaching and learning as the central focus of classroom activity. Further, teaching and learning as a focus must be consistently communicated to both students in the classroom and to observers. This chapter explores elements of planning, organizing, and orienting for instruction that have been identified as part of effective teaching practice. Figure 3.1 illustrates that instructional planning is one of the six core domains in the Framework for Effective Teaching. Figure 3.2 outlines the subdomains of the instructional planning domain. Figure 3.4, located at the end of this chapter, links the subdomains of instructional planning to key references.

### 3.1 Framework for Effective Teaching: Instructional Planning

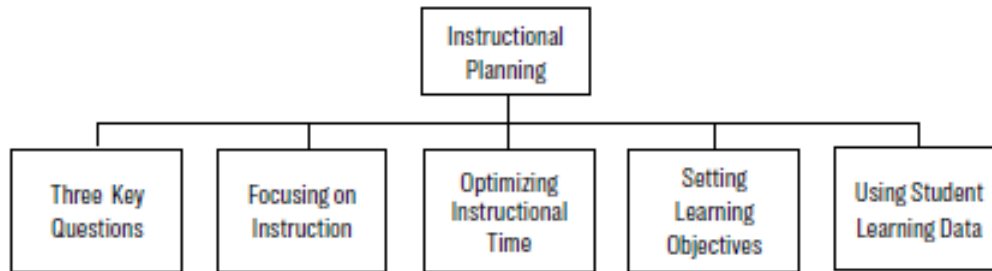
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### 3.2 Framework for Instructional Planning

Instructional planning refers to the process a teacher engages in while planning and structuring learning activities to meet the needs of all students using the state's standards, the school's curriculum, data, and engaging and appropriate strategies and resources.



#### Three Key Questions in Instructional Planning and Organization

The school district curriculum, state standards, and national standards certainly play a role in what students should learn, but it falls to the teacher to structure how students should learn it. Thus, in most schools, teachers determine how content and skills are delivered in the classroom. Instructional planning plays an enormous role in this complex process, as the teacher attempts to weave *what* students should learn with *how* they should learn it. Essentially, ineffective planning means ineffective teaching.

Planning is a deliberate process that results in teachers being well prepared before walking through the classroom door for the day (Graeff, 2010; Wharton-McDonald, Pressley, & Hampston, 1998). Organizing time and preparing materials in advance of instruction have been noted as important aspects of effective teaching. Both the organization of time and the preparation of materials are components of the broader practice of planning carefully for instruction. Evidence suggests that once effective teachers develop their instructional plans, they follow those plans while continuously adjusting them to fit the needs of different students. Teachers must consider a variety of factors when planning instruction, including how to pace the delivery in the classroom. The feasibility of a particular lesson depends largely on student ability and variation, content goals and mandated objectives, time and material resources, and so forth.



In particular, teachers need to consider three key questions for effective instructional planning:

1. What should be taught?
2. How should it be taught?
3. How do we know if students learn what we taught?

## What Should Be Taught?

Effective student learning requires a progressive and coherent set of learning objectives. Effective teachers excel in delineating the intended outcomes of each lesson and describing the behaviors or actions that students should be able to perform after participating in the learning activities (Ko, 2012; Reed, 2012). An instructional plan is far more than a written blueprint; in fact, in some instances, it may not exist as a paper or electronic document. Expert teachers frequently have a blueprint in their minds that has been formed and re-formed over time. Perhaps because of their expertise gained over time through a continual process of planning-reflection-refining, these expert teachers are more prone to rely far less on written, formalized lessons than on their well-formed and fluid mental planning model. Additionally, expert teachers conceive a lesson along two dimensions simultaneously:

1. The teacher's own actions, thoughts, and habits
2. The students' thinking and understanding of the content

Thus, effective teachers plan both what to teach and for whom they are going to teach. They exert effort to reach beyond their comfort zone of disciplinary thinking and actions to incorporate their students' learning preferences.

## How Should It Be Taught?

Once the learning objectives are developed, expert teachers are more competent than non-expert teachers in translating their instructional plans into actions. Additionally, more effective teachers have the ability to follow their predefined plan while simultaneously remaining open to changes and continuously adjusting their instruction based on student needs. Further, expert teachers anticipate the difficulties students might encounter while learning the content of the lesson (for Chinese teachers,



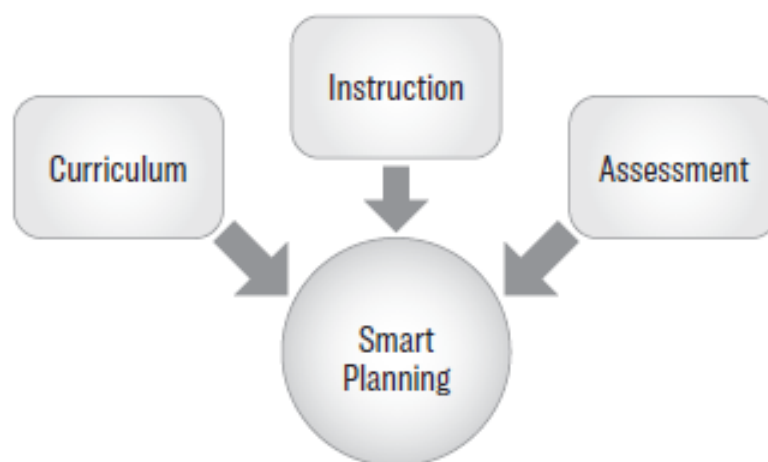
this process of anticipating student challenges is commonly referred to as the “difficult point”; Stronge et al., 2014). Expert teachers consider students’ thinking in order to assess the success of the lesson plan and then modify their instruction promptly. The secret these teachers know is that having a quality lesson plan is important, but merely having a plan cannot ensure that the lesson will be implemented as prescribed. Consequently, effective teachers need to be opportunistic and tap into their pedagogical and content resources in a fluid and flexible manner in order to proceed smoothly.

## How Do We Know If Students Learn What We Taught?

In essence, for planning purposes, this question really is, *How should instruction and student learning be assessed?* When establishing learning objectives, in addition to aligning activities to the objectives, teachers need to link the assessment plan to the learning objectives. Alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment is integral to any quality instructional design. Consider this the CIA of smart planning (see Figure 3.3).

### 3.3 CIA: Components of Smart Planning

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This type of alignment optimizes students’ opportunity to learn. Before the instruction starts, teachers need to select valid and reliable assessment tools that will generate useful student learning data, and then



they need to use those data to judge the success of the instructional plan. Additionally, good teachers should communicate to their students what the students are expected to achieve and inform them how they will be assessed after participating in the learning activities.

### Focusing on Instruction

The effective teacher recognizes academic instruction as central to his or her role; it's what teachers are employed to do. This focus on instruction guides the teacher's own planning and classroom behavior and clearly conveys to students that instruction is the major element in a robust learning environment. A teacher may say to students, "It is my job to see that you succeed," or, "I want you to be prepared for life beyond the schoolhouse door." Although effective teachers believe that students must be challenged, they also realize that students need to experience success.

Several studies emphasizing the importance of a focus on high-quality instruction in supporting student achievement include the following findings and conclusions:

- Effective teachers see consistency and organization in their classrooms as important because these elements allow the central focus of classroom time to be on teaching and learning (Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Curby, Rimm-Kaufman, & Abry, 2013).
- Effective teachers solicit assistance from the administration to minimize external interruptions, such as intercom announcements or unscheduled visits, to protect instructional time and increase students' engaged learning time (Gettinger & Walter, 2012).
- Effective teachers who consistently prioritize instruction and student learning as the central purposes of schooling communicate an enthusiasm and dedication to learning that students reflect in their own behavior (Bain & Jacobs, 1990; Brophy, 2010).
- Effective teachers reinforce their focus on instruction through their allocation of time to the teaching and learning process, and through their expectations for student learning (Brophy & Good, 1986; Cotton, 2000; Covino & Iwanicki, 1996; Creemers & Kyriakides, 2012).
- Effective teachers carefully plan instructional strategies to be deployed in the classroom and the timing of these strategies (Cotton, 2000; Johnson, 1997; Spear-Swerling & Zibulsky, 2014).
- Effective teachers use advance organizers, graphic organizers, and outlines to plan for effective instructional delivery (Koscianski, 2012; Manoli & Papadopoulou, 2012; Marzano, Norford, Paynter, Pickering, & Gaddy, 2001; Wang, Haertel, & Walberg, 1993b).