

Big picture (diamond) lesson plan



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The 'Diamond lesson Plan' is described in-depth in my textbook, *'Outstanding teaching and learning 14-19'* and forms the core focus of my training workshops on 'Outstanding teaching and learning.' The **Big Picture lesson plan** is an adaptation to make lesson planning fast and easy. The second diamond of the Diamond Lesson Plan refers to the importance of the Big Picture lesson introduction both to enthuse students and to ensure clarity as to the expected learning outcomes. To facilitate this I recommend the use of Smartart graphics on screen via Powerpoint or Keynote to display the lesson objectives. I also recommend the replacement of formal behavioural objectives with Key Questions as far as possible. The Big Picture lesson plan has a staff version and student version and incorporates all nine steps of the Diamond Lesson Plan. Print off the three pages and take a look. Both staff and students have the same title page and this is dominated by a Smartart graphic to display the lesson objectives or key questions. However, it should be printed as a handout. The student version has the Big Picture title page and on the reverse page a *'My lesson review'* template to encourage self-assessment and meta-cognition. The teacher version has a chunky, visual lesson planning template as the reverse page. Please read the following notes to support the completion of the Big Picture lesson plan and you are invited to experiment, alter, adapt and adopt as you wish. Let me know how you get on via LinkedIn or direct by emailing bradley@collegenet.co.uk.

Page title

You may add your College logo and name and/or Programme Area title. The Diamond Lesson plan graphic illustrates the recommended teaching order. You may also, if wished, jot the number of minutes you intend to devote to each step as you move through the lesson plan template.

Big Picture using Smartart™

Enter Smartart on your computer and select a visual template that you like. The circle diagram I have selected illustrates the approach but there are many others to choose from. You can add or take away individual shapes/branches to match the number of objectives or key questions you wish to display. As far as possible put the Topic Title for the lesson into the centre of the diagram and if wished add a week number or other reference link to the Scheme of Work. In my example I have selected 'the Cold War' as the lesson title because I am an ex- history teacher. Note that in the outer circles I've opted for Key Questions instead of objectives. I prefer to say to my students, *'By the end of the lesson I'd like you to be able to answer...'* Try this out once or twice and see if you think key questions work better than formal lesson objectives to help the students focus on learning. Key questions will not work smoothly in place of objectives every time but as far as possible do adopt key questions. As your lesson unfolds pause to check the answers to your key questions and the space around the diagram can be used by the students to capture some key points and to build-up their own annotation as they go forward. I have also applied differentiation by starting with factually based questions and then moving up Bloom's

cognitive hierarchy by posing questions that prompt analysis and evaluation. If you teach a programme that has pass, merit and distinction levels try to reflect this marking hierarchy across your key questions or objectives. Share the differentiation with the students and expect all to 'have a go' at the higher level questions. I dislike the implicit limitations presented by 'all, most and some'. Let's maintain high expectations. It is your challenge to stretch all to the highest learning outcomes not just some.

What do we know about this topic already?

This heading at the foot of the title page is to prompt and capture recap and to check for any prior knowledge of the topic. A recap can be a brief check on learning or progress to date or a more substantial Assessment for Learning (AfL) based activity as a feature of the lesson. However, do not skip recap because our focus must be on learning i.e. what do your students know and understand? We should plan for one step back and three steps forward every lesson. The one step back is important to check what your students know and more crucially what they do not know. Write your chosen recap activity along the arrow at the foot of the 'big picture' title page but leave blank on the student version to provide space for them to record key points in response to the prompt question, *'What do we know about this topic already?'* This may link to the completion of the *'My learning review'* template.

Appetiser

You may prefer the term 'starter activity' or perhaps in one to one situations an 'icebreaker'. Introduce a quick 3-4 minute presentation of information often linked to current affairs or wider curriculum information to capture interest and to stir curiosity. Note that students should be drawn into presenting appetisers like 'website of the week' etc to help embed Functional and employability skills and to promote independent learning. The appetiser might also arise and extend from the Bridge task set at the end of the lesson.

Differentiation notes

Consider the appropriate level of challenge for Level 1, 2 and 3 students and within the level how best to support those who are operating at pass level and suitable 'stretch and challenge' for those who are operating at a high level. If you have the support of a Teaching Assistant then note the support you expect them to provide. As far as possible involve the Teaching assistant in joint lesson planning / discussion. The setting of differentiated objectives or key questions, as described above, should prompt effective differentiation. However, in general also remember the Equality and Diversity 'narrowing the gap' agenda and consider the composition of your class and how far ability and achievement gaps exist between different groups of students.

Resources

List the significant resources required to support the lesson activities and as far as possible consider the integration of I.T. Remember the importance of resources placed on the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and the wider internet and make appropriate links and references for useful extension learning and / or support. The digital generations Y and Z are used to colour, diagrams, video, photographs, website sites, Google, chat forums, ebooks, apps, texting etc and most of all choice so ensure that overtime your resources embrace variety and choice.

Exposition

This is simply whole class teaching or more popularly 'chalk and talk'. Record in this box the key learning points you wish to explain and develop.

However, remember that listening is one of the least effective means of learning and so avoid too much '*chalk and talk*' – over talking is one of the principal reasons why many lessons are ineffective because concentration spans are stretched too far and students drop off task. Twenty minutes is perhaps optimum but remember that Generations Y and Z in general are reputed to have lower attention spans (around seven minutes according to Stanford University) and Level 1 students will generally have lower attention spans to Level 3. The answer is to watch the body language and to respond to it. Are the students engaged or not? Lessons should be flexible, not fixed.

Question and Answer

Follow any exposition with Question and Answer as your premier Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategy because if there are 20 students in the room there will be twenty versions of what has just been presented. No one listens or observes a demonstration perfectly. We all have little 'micro-sleeps'. Students may mishear an explanation. Students may think they have understood but more commonly because of social embarrassment do not ask for help even though they know they don't understand. Consequently always check the learning / understanding via question and answer and in practice this will overlap and merge with the exposition into '*chalk, talk and question*'. Good Q&A is an art form. Ensure a variety of Q&A activities overtime, give thinking time and have a 'no hands-up policy and select who you wish to answer the question. Write into this box your chosen Q&A activity, random name generator and differentiation considerations.

Active learning

Set an individual, paired or group task. It is important for students to have the opportunity to reflect and process new learning and this is most effective in mixed ability pairs and groups and/or ability matched pairs and groups. Provide clear instructions, set a time limit, place a timer on screen and encourage a variety of outcomes and feedback strategies overtime. Consider the opportunities presented by the tasks for embedding Functional and Employability skills overtime.

Check and summarise

Reserve the last ten minutes of your lesson plan to check and summarise key learning. Return to your objectives or key questions and/or introduce a final Assessment for Learning (AfL) based activity to check learning. Also summarise key learning in terms of note-taking prompts because some students are poor at note-taking and recording and particularly at Levels 1 and 2. Ensure the students explain and tell you what they have learned rather than you telling them.

Skills and E& D opportunities

It is important to take every opportunity to embed opportunities to practise and build Functional and Employability skills. Remember reading ages are often low and there may be issues with spelling and punctuation so as you write on the board or mention a key word deliberately pause and ask '*how do you spell ...?* Or '*does that need an apostrophe..?* Or what is the difference between, '*where, were and wear?* Those sorts of simple steps can reinforce good English and, as need be, take two minutes to highlight the three major rules for using the apostrophe etc. Equally in regard to spoken English alert your students to the difference between dialect and Standard English. They may say '*icklɛ*' in Lancashire meaning small but it is not Standard

English not is text speech etc. Also how far do you coach public speaking in advance of an activity that might involve giving a presentation? In regard to employability skills there are many variations but perhaps the CBI list is one of the best plus they provide survey results from UK employers. Remember also that Bloom's Taxonomy has been re-written for the 21st Century with '*creativity*' widely regarded as the highest cognitive skill. Also make it your mission to build competence across Microsoft Office and Apple equivalents overtime. Embedding Equality and Diversity is also important. The UK is a firmly established multi-ethnic society so consider raising awareness of different cultures and faiths to combat discrimination and simple ignorance. The Equalities Act 2010 specifies seven key aspects of personal identity that we should seek to affirm: gender, race, disability, age, sexual orientation, transgender and belief. Look at your lesson materials, resources, case studies, photographs, images, language, curriculum displays, seating plans, group membership etc through the eyes of a Muslim, a woman, a black person, a white boy, a homosexual etc. How far are there opportunities for building mutual respect and awareness across the different aspects of personal identity and ensuring that every student sees evidence of respect for their culture, faith, sexual orientation etc.

Bridge

This is a bridge to the next lesson. This is about effort and hard work outside of the classroom. Our most able, independent learners already work hard outside of the classroom without prompting and this underpins why most gain high marks. However, too many of our students do not study outside the classroom. Set 'bridge' tasks as an introduction to the next lesson that do not involve marking but do involve research tasks to be completed outside of the classroom. This approach can also be extended into facilitating a 'flipped learning' environment, if wished, whereby your students prepare more formally for the next lesson. The theme of 'flipped learning' is developed in my textbook, *The i-learning Revolution: a new pedagogy*.

The student focussed 'My learning review'

At the end of your lesson (or outside of the lesson) invite your students to reflect on their personal progress by completing the '*My learning review*' template which forms the back page of the student version of the 'Big Picture' lesson plan. Developing the ability to self-assessment progress and to set own learning targets is a very powerful driver of effective learning. This example version of a self-assessment template incorporates the popular 'traffic light' system and you may devise your own versions and vary the style and nature of the prompts overtime or in direct relation to the demands or expected learning outcomes of a particular task.

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