

# Foreword

I have been teaching for over eighteen years. I am amazed at how much I have learned from the children I teach. So many of them enable me to feel younger and even smarter. They have taught me the meaning of respect, loyalty and courage. I always said that if I won the lottery, I would become a teacher. I thought I would be a lawyer or a doctor. However, it has taken me eighteen years to realize that I did win the lottery after all.

That is why I decided to write this guidebook for new and experienced teachers alike. There should be no need to reinvent the wheel. It is my belief that the information enclosed can help you “hit the lottery” in a shorter amount of time. Most schools consist of an eight period day. I submit to you that most of teaching takes place during that extra period of time I like to call, the ninth period. Most secondary teachers work in a school where there are eight classroom periods. It is my belief that a teacher’s success begins and ends with the “ninth period.” This is the time before or after school when a teacher plans, meets with students, and prepares for the day.

Most people want the quick fix, so I have made this manual compact, yet informative enough to assist you in organizing your life as a teacher. I wish you luck on the path to the greatest career in America. Trust me when I say, ours is the OLDEST PROFESSION!

Best wishes,

Marc Hoberman

Many people have helped me edit and improve this guidebook. I am eternally grateful to Anthony Stephens, Lori Stiller, Debbie Rivera, Lenore and Syd Farber.

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## Chapter 1-Planning

*“Our whole economy is based on planned obsolescence...we make good products, we induce people to buy them, and then the next year we deliberately introduce something that will make these products old-fashioned, out of date, obsolete.”*

Brooks Stevens

# Chapter 1-Planning

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As far as I can see, much of education has become “flavor of the month” oriented. This disturbs most of my colleagues because we find ourselves teaching a different type of curriculum every few years. Besides, I don’t deal well with change unless I am the one initiating the change....but I digress. Luckily, the one thing that does not have to change is our persona in the classroom and the ways in which we impart information to our students. This chapter is dedicated to the planning of lessons in a way that can adapt to any content area. I have had the pleasure of teaching with “the best in the business” and have included some practices of Master Teachers in this book. Your professionalism need not ever be *obsolete*. As long as you grow constantly as an educator, you will be initiating your own changes and that is part of the formula for success in teaching.

## **Walk the Walk and Talk the Talk**

Just like any profession, there are certain tools that you will need to look and feel like a pro. As Billy Crystal said on “Fernando’s Hideaway” on *Saturday Night Live*, “It is better to look good than to feel good.” When students see you in the classroom you want them, like Mr. Crystal, to say, “You look Mahvelous!.” This applies to your teaching “wardrobe” as well as your clothing.

## **Attendance**

This tool is very important. Students can’t learn when they are not present. You are responsible for recording student absences and this serves many important purposes.

1. You need proof on paper of how many times a student is late or absent especially at interim report and report card time.
2. Make no mistake! Teacher attendance reports have been subpoenaed in court. Students who use your class as an alibi can see their alibi vanish if you have proof that they were not there that day. This does not happen often, but if it does, you must be prepared.
3. When you can show a student in “black and white” how much he or she is out of class or late, you have a greater chance of impacting that child.
4. In most school districts, you can’t fail a student for lack of attendance. However, you can fail students for work missed during their absences.

5. For late students, try quizzes that start at the very beginning of the period and last only 5 minutes or so. Do not allow students who are late without a pass to take or make up that quiz. Their lateness is disrespectful to you, disturbing to the class, and detrimental to their grades. **The very next instance when they come in on time, thank them and congratulate them. Let them know it is a sign of maturity that they made it on time. Positive reinforcement is the key.**

Some teachers disagree with me about thanking the students and congratulating them. But, don't you feel good when someone compliments you?

## **Record Keeping**

This section discusses a necessary evil. I used to be a very bad record keeper. I still am! Don't let that bother you. I can teach it better than I can do it. As my father used to say when I told him I would start smoking if he didn't stop, "Do as I say, not as I do." (He had emphysema for many years... I never smoked.)

Whether you are religious or not, your record book is your bible. It contains the students' names, grades, assignments, and more. You need to be organized and consistent in your approaches to record keeping. Below are some suggestions that should help you create an organized and effective record book. Make copies of your pages often in case the book is lost or stolen. Some people think they can do all this on the computer but I still like to do some things the "old-fashioned way."

1. Set up each page in alphabetical order. One page per class.
2. I like to skip a space or two between each letter. For example, If I have four students whose last names begin with the letter "S", I skip one line or more before I start the letter "T". The reason behind this is simple. Children leave and enter my class throughout the year because they move, and I hate to cross out names every quarter or add new students to the bottom of the list. Another good idea is to write the names in pencil.
3. I like to number my homework assignments and therefore list them in my record book by number and actual assignment and date. This way, if a student wishes to make up an assignment, (don't laugh, sometimes they want to make up missed work) I can look up the date, or the assignment number rather quickly.
4. I know teachers who have a separate notebook for each class with one page set aside for each student. They keep these anecdotes and record student performance, behavior, phone calls and have a PAPER TRAIL for each student. I did this one year when I worked in a middle school and it worked phenomenally well. It is a lot of work, however, but well worth the effort. Students are shocked during a parental visit when you point out something they did two months ago. Hint: Try to record positive behaviors and experiences as well. **Positive reinforcement is the key.**

## **Lessons**

It is now “meat and potatoes” time. I believe you must have a good lesson plan that is organized and well thought out in order to present a good lesson to your students. However, I do **not** agree that this plan must conform to your school, district or chairperson’s format. Unfortunately, especially for untenured teachers, you may be forced to adhere to a set format or template when creating your lesson plan.

My philosophy is that a lesson plan is only as good as the teacher. A great lesson plan on paper means absolutely nothing if the person instructing is lethargic, not respected by the students, and ineffective. Below are the elements of a lesson plan format that I use in the classroom.

### **Aim:**

The aim is always posed in the form of a question. This should not be a question that can be answered with a yes or no response. It is my hope that students will NOT know the answer at the beginning of the lesson, but will be able to answer the aim out loud or in their minds by the time the lesson is completed.

### **Do Now:**

This should be a review of the previous day’s work or something that the students can do for five minutes or so that directly relates to the present day’s assignment. This is a great time for you to take attendance, collect homework, and answer any student questions. (Sound like a lot? Welcome to teaching.)

### **Motivation:**

I usually think of a question related to the lesson that will stir some sort of discussion in the room. You must have backup questions in case no one answers your initial question. This rarely happens. (I am being sarcastic. It always happens, so be prepared.)

### **Development:**

This is the part where you actually teach the lesson. Hopefully there will be note taking and discussion. Of course, there will be questions but you must be sure to get through the lesson. I am sure you will have a set curriculum to get through by the end of the year so keep the kids and yourself on task.

### **Summary:**

This usually takes two minutes as you try to have students summarize what they have learned. I do not advocate lecturing to kids and therefore like to hear THEM do the summary. I know that I understood the material but did they? Make sure and let them prove it to you. They are your critics and if they learned, then you earned yourself a four star review!

Following is an example of a lesson I have done while teaching Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*.

**Aim:** Why is Romeo considered to be Petrarchan in his actions?

(The students do not know who Petrarch is at this point)

**Do Now:** Write a brief journal entry describing what true "love" means to you.

**Motivation:** What is the difference between love and infatuation?

(There is usually discussion here and we finally come to a definition TOGETHER that infatuation is when you are so taken by someone that you do not see his or her faults, while love is accepting people for their faults and loving and accepting them anyway.)

**Development:**

- a. Petrarch-Italian poet who wrote about love. Petrarch was in love with love just as Romeo loves to be in love. Romeo has just ended a relationship with a young girl as he meets and immediately falls in love with Juliet.
- b. Petrarchan sonnets dealt with love and because we see that Romeo is always passionate about someone he is seen as a Petrarchan lover.
- c. We then read the next part of the play that shows how passionate Romeo is and how he is the essence of love and passion in a human being.
- d. After the reading I summarize by referring back to the Aim.
- e. I then assign the homework and ask for questions. Always ask if the students understand the homework assignment. This way they can't tell you the next day that they couldn't do the homework because they didn't understand it. (Now that you eliminated that excuse, you have to work on the others.)

I had a student who couldn't do his homework because his grandmother died. After speaking with my colleagues I found out that he was a most unlucky child because his grandmother died eight times in the month of April. How unfortunate!

Speaking of homework, don't give homework just for the sake of homework. Make it meaningful or the students will see it as a waste of time. I usually read the responses out loud, (without disclosing names), so they know I read it and they learn from their classmates. I usually don't give homework on Fridays. I tell the students I want to give them some time to relax over the weekend since I give homework Monday-Thursday. To be truthful, I don't like to come back to a lot of papers on Monday morning. I deserve a break too! (See Chapter 10.)

## **Tests and Quizzes**

Tests and quizzes should be challenging and check for understanding of the material that was taught. This is not your opportunity to trick the students but rather to make sure that they know the material and can apply it appropriately. I once had an entire class fail my test and I was proud that I was able to fool them. I soon realized that I did not fool them at all. They fooled me into thinking that I taught the information correctly. I tossed the papers in the garbage and told the students we both needed to do our jobs better. On the next test, I had a seventy-percent passing rate. This was a low-level class and no small feat.

## **Following the Curriculum**

More often than not, there is a standardized test lurking in the distance waiting to pounce on our students at a moment's notice. We are responsible for teaching our students information and strategies that will enable them to reach their full potentials on a variety of exams in many disciplines. This is a necessary evil and we need to realize that we do not teach in a vacuum.

You need to familiarize yourself with the curriculum. Feel free to ask as many questions as necessary. Ask your colleagues and your chairperson or Assistant Principal. Leave no stone unturned. After all, every finger will be pointed at you if your kids do not achieve. Keep a log of whom you asked and what the responses were so you have proof that you asked for help.

## **Audio and Video in the Classroom**

I love the use of audio and visual aids in the classroom. Technology has come so far that it is silly not to take advantage of how you can utilize it in your lessons.

You have audio, visual, kinesthetic, tactile, and other learners in your classrooms and you need to address the many learning styles of these children as efficiently as possible.

**Audio:** I use tapes and now mostly CD's of song lyrics, speeches, and lines in plays to help get my point across. With the Internet and CD burners, there is virtually no limit to what you can bring into the classroom setting.

**Video:** I love to use video in the classroom but I am very much against the ever so popular "plug 'n play" method employed by far too many teachers. I always supply students with a study guide that they have to follow and answer while the video is on. I often stop the VCR at key points and have a brief discussion about the material covered.

## **Interactive Teaching**

Graphic Organizers

VCR

CD or Tape Player

Overhead Projector

Socratic Seminar

Proxima (hooked up to the computer)

Smart Board (This is wild. It's a board that is a giant computer.)

The above items add so much to the teaching experience and help to motivate students. Most students do not need to be motivated. They are alive and energetic and always ready for action.....NOT!

## **Note Taking**

I feel that I am always growing as an educator and am learning constantly. Note taking is definitely an area in which I stray from the average teacher. First of all, my handwriting is terrible. Secondly, I believe that if you teach something properly, students will remember it...plain and simple. Students do not take notes during their favorite song or movie but are still able to regurgitate everything down to the finest detail. Why is that? Because it was interesting! I don't believe that the average student even knows how to take notes effectively and that is why I address it in my *Speed Reading and Study Skills Seminar*. They certainly don't study from their notes correctly so if you are big on notes, you need to monitor their work.

1. I used to check notebooks as part of the quarter grade. BORING!!!
2. A teacher once showed me how she gave Notebook quizzes. I ask four questions on a sheet of paper. The students have four minutes to answer all of the questions. If their notebook is organized, they will have no trouble receiving a 100. If they are disorganized, they are up NOTEBOOK CREEK without a paddle. After all, just two incorrect answers will result in a failing grade of 50.
3. An example of questions follow:
  - a. What was the Aim on October 10<sup>th</sup>?
  - b. What was the name of the author we studied on October 12<sup>th</sup>?
  - c. What was Homework Assignment #14?
  - d. What is the definition of personification as written on October 18<sup>th</sup>?

If children were absent, they are still responsible for the work so I do not excuse them from the quiz. This MOTIVATES them to get the work they missed since this is the easiest 100 they will ever see. This works for Notebook Quizzes in all subjects.

I tell students to get the name and phone number of at least two students in the class so they can call them for work when they are absent. This was a given “back in the day” when I went to school but children feel they should be exempt from any work if they were absent. Let them know that you missed them, and that they missed an assignment. Accountability is very important in education!

### **Socratic Seminars**

I am absolutely in love with this method of teaching. It works for any discipline and any age level. It brings out the maturity in the students and it feels like you are in a college setting. To help the students, use the A-Z sheet at the back of the guidebook for them to list characters and adjectives, nouns, etc. This is how I first introduce it to the students.

“Today we are going to learn about Socratic Seminars. Socrates was a philosopher who not only taught his students, but learned from them as well. We are going to get in a circle and answer questions based on the material we are currently working on. You can pass if you wish but you cannot pass twice. Once you answer the question, others will help you expand your answer.”

All students are then instructed to take out a piece of paper and write their names on it and fold it over so it stands up in front of their desks. I am the FACILITATOR of the seminar NOT the teacher. I have questions prepared and ask them to prepare one question on their own. We then go in order, clockwise.

The answers are amazing. The circle brings us together as a team and we have incredible discussions. A variation I created is to put one student in the middle and the other students ask him or her questions. You get one point for a correct response and one point for stumping a student. If you stump someone, you go in the middle. The person with the most points at the end of the period wins a prize. (a coupon for a slice of pizza, extra points, and so on.)

### **Assemblies**

Some people don’t feel that this is part of your lesson but I disagree. I tell the students that they will walk in two lines in the hall, boys on one side and girls on the other side. These are high school kids and they don’t like this but it really works.

Because of my humorous rapport with my students, I threaten to make those who talk hold hands on the way to the assembly. They always laugh at this, so be sure they know you are kidding.

Always sit with your kids at the assembly. There are too many teachers who stand by the wall as if they don’t want to be near their kids. The smartest people I have ever met in education are the students themselves. If you don’t like them, they will know it before you do. You may want to sit next to the ones who usually have the most difficulty keeping quiet. They feel your presence and will be better behaved at the assembly.