

How To Conduct A Planning Conference That Focuses On Content

STEPS

QUOTES

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| <p>1. Dive right into the content.</p> | <p><i>“What content will you be focusing on?”</i></p> |
| <p>2. Directly examine the actual materials that will be used to teach the content.</p> | <p><i>“Is there a chapter in the book that goes with this content?”</i></p> <p><i>“What materials will you be handing to the students?”</i></p> |
| <p>3. Focus on the key concepts that the teacher wants the students to take away from the lesson.</p> | <p><i>“What are the most important things that you want them to understand?”</i></p> |
| <p>4. Delve deeply into the meaning of the content, with particular focus on the key concepts.
<i>(It is OK to admit you do not understand the material here as your struggle more than likely reflects student struggle and allows the teacher to get clearer about the content.)</i></p> | <p><i>“Can you explain that a little further?”</i></p> <p><i>“What exactly do you mean when you say process...?”</i></p> <p><i>“I’m not sure I understand...”</i></p> |
| <p>5. Break the concepts down hierarchically. First identify what prior knowledge students must have to be successful in the new task. Then break the current task down into steps. What must be understood first in order to understand the complete concept?</p> | <p><i>“So, what would students need to know from prior experience in order to be ready to move forward?”</i></p> <p><i>“How would you break this concept down into parts?”</i></p> <p><i>“Which part of this concept do you think students need to understand first?”</i></p> |
| <p>6. Have the teacher state the objective (Big Idea?) in kid-friendly language exactly as he/she plans to say it to the class and get an explanation of plans to display the objectives.</p> | <p><i>“How will you present the objectives to the class?”</i></p> <p><i>“Say it out loud now just as if you were talking to the class.”</i></p> <p><i>“How will present the information? On the board? Overhead?”</i></p> |
| <p>7. Ask the teacher how he/she plans to track student progress and understanding.</p> | <p><i>“How will you know if students are understanding or not?”</i></p> <p><i>“Will you have an assessment?”</i></p> |



8. Summarize.

- a) Have the teacher summarize exactly what he/she wants the students to learn.
- b) Summarize the accomplishments of the conference thus far.

“So, if you were to go around and interview the students at the end of the day, what would you want them to tell you to show they really understood?”

“So far I think we have really gotten clear on the content and defined the objectives, which are...”

9. Now you are ready to jump into the activities.
Make sure the activities relate directly to the objectives and that they do not require students to deal with too many variables.

“OK, so now what are you going to have the students do?”

THINGS TO NOTE

- Don’t start with “What are you going to do?” or “What are the student activities?” In fact, resist all questions about the lesson, grouping, timing, and student activities until the discussion of content and objectives is complete.
- Make sure the objectives identified are worthy objectives. Do not allow objectives to focus on anything but content and make sure that the selected objective is really worthwhile.
- Make sure to focus on specific definitions—avoid generalities and such language as “stuff” or “things.”
- Focus on understanding vs. the mechanics of completing a task or operation.

LIST OF THINGS TO HAVE THE TEACHER BRING TO THE MEETING

Basic level:

- Ask the teacher to bring all the materials that he/she plans to use, including books, worksheets, homework, and assessments.
- Ask the teacher to prepare the objective in kid-friendly language.

More advanced:

- Ask the teacher to break the concepts up in a hierarchical order.
- Ask the teacher to bring any examples of prior student work that might be relevant.

