

WHEN DO YOU THINK YOURSELF AS A SUBSTITUTE TEACHER?

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**Abstract**

It is undoubtedly a fact that lesson plans were very essential for the new teachers. The importance doubled when the teacher was both a new one and a substitute teacher. In this paper I looked for this situation by comparing two different sample plans and shared my comments at the end of the paper.

*Key Words:* sample lesson plans, substitute teachers, student-centered lesson plan.

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## Introduction

The purpose of this article was to express my learning about lesson planning by comparing two sample lesson plans. In fact, it is also my self-evaluation on my understanding. In this paper, I am looking for what a *good* lesson plan means. Here, the way that I followed during my evaluations is *think yourself as a substitute teacher*.

## What a Good Lesson Plan Means?

### Evaluation of sample lesson plan1

The first thing that I realized with sample1 is the objectives do not make sense. For example, it states “The student will learn about  $\pi$ ” (Brahier, 2013, p.151). When I first read it, a question came to my mind: How? It sounds such a goal more than an objective since the verb *learn* is not measurable therefore not suitable to be an objective.

For the other objectives, I felt the need to learn further since they were not clear enough, either. One of them is like that “The student will work with another student”. Here two things came to my mind: First, *Should it be really in the objectives part or lesson procedure?* If it is also one of the objectives of the lesson (maybe to promote communication among students as an affective objective), then the second question is that: *What does it mean another student?* So, it must be stated more clearly. If the teacher thinks it as an affective objective he must clearly identify it with his word choice. Otherwise, I think it must be stated in the lesson preparation or lesson procedure part.

When I looked at the materials and resources part as a substitute teacher, it made me frustrated. I asked to myself, how many objects/calculators would be necessary. Instead saying just *several, a piece of* etc. it could be defined the numbers of materials. Additionally there is no information about lesson preparation, whether I must prepare/pay attention to something or not.

If I were the student, I would not be engaged to the topic when the teacher holds a string in his hands and says “*what do you think we will do with it today*” (Brahier, 2013, p.152). I think the starting sentence was not enough to stimulate interest among students. Besides, it is written there that the teacher would answer this question by his explanation on the issue. Without any explanation, maybe just using an open-ended and a bit challenging question it could be better to gain students’ attention.

When I read about the lesson procedure, it gave me an idea about what this class (in terms of lesson running) looks like. But the transitions were one of the missing things. The other is, although the explanations are given in general, I asked myself what I should consider having the *pairs*. As a substitute teacher, most probably I had not enough knowledge to be able to determine on the groups, and it might bring me some difficulties. For example it might become a chaotic environment easily if students want to work with their best friends and walk around the class. To be able to manage the activity, I must know the purpose of it. Maybe the teacher thought it to be such an activity to encourage students’ communication. But I must be informed by the lesson plan for such a situation.

If I were the teacher, I would ask more specific and purposeful questions instead asking *Any questions?* If I really want to know about the students’ learning, I must ask a variety of well-defined questions. Preparing the questions in advance and adding them in the lesson plan would be useful.

For the closure of the lesson, it is not stated any summary or wrap-up activity. Additionally there is no connection with the previous class or any sentence to stimulate interest for the following class. Furthermore, it is not defined any extension activity or any other modification for the class. All these are quite forceful for the substitute teacher.

Finally, the question that I asked to myself for the assessment part was that: Is it all about to observe and ask questions? To have a broad perspective about students' learning it must be considered much more neatly. I think that it is different to *observe* or *monitor* the students. To monitor the students effectively, it could be used a well-defined checklist or anecdotal notes during the activity for this sample. Other options for the rest of the class could be writing a journal or reflection.

### **Evaluation of sample lesson plan2**

This lesson plan made me more confident as a substitute teacher from the beginning. When I looked to its goal, I realized that it is in the same way with the NCTM standards. I think it is one of the things that lend wings to. Additionally the objectives are well-defined with its variety of *doing mathematics verbs*.

In this sample plan, the teacher not only informs about students' materials but also reminds for the necessary materials of the teacher. However it could be better if it is also given the idea about the activity by explaining where and how to use these materials briefly. It can be referred as a preparation part.

When I looked to the lesson procedure with its motivation, it seemed an entertaining experiment even to me. I think the key point here is to be clear with the transitions and instructions about what students will do respectively. It includes well-defined sentences and questions whereby all the class came alive in my mind. Another two things took attention of me in this part. First of them was the teacher took notes for herself. And the second one was the teacher mentioned about *flexibility* and even identified when it might be necessary in the class.

For the closure, I can say that the connection with the engagement part made sense of the whole class. It was a response of one of the most known question: *Why we did all these things?* Additionally I liked the idea of asking students for a small writing part which completes the

sentence: “*the most interesting mathematical idea that I learned today was...*” (Brahier, 2013, p.154).

### **Conclusion**

The purpose of this article was to compare the two sample lesson plans according to lesson evaluation rubric and by considering my learning from the school experiences and methods classes. After my evaluation I decided that sample 1 needs more concentration. However the second lesson plan is more student-centered than the first one. From the engagement to the closure, transitions, sentences, and questions were well-defined and easily understandable for students. I mean they were appropriate for their grade level. Additionally, the teacher considered on the students’ needs. As I mentioned above the *flexibility* part was a good example since it tries to provide enough time for students’ representations and discussions. It is also user-friendly. Joking apart, it makes the substitute teacher more confident about the lesson running during the class.

"A Bilkent student does not lie, cheat, or steal or tolerate those who do. On my honor, as a Bilkent student, I have neither given nor received unauthorized aid on this academic work."

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