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Preparing pre-service teachers for inclusive classrooms: revising lesson-planning expectations

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The purpose of this article is to explore the use of a lesson-planning template designed to support and scaffold pre-service teachers' lesson-planning techniques for a wide range of learners in inclusive classrooms. This template is currently used across the final three semesters of a dual certification inclusive elementary and special education teacher preparation programme. This article reports on an empirical study using a mixed methodology that addresses the following question: How do pre-service teachers, university faculty, supervising teachers and field supervisors perceive their experiences using this template? Addressing that question led to revising the original template. This article concludes with that revised lesson-planning template.

Keywords: inclusive classrooms; lesson planning; pre-service teachers; teacher preparation; universal design

As students in our public schools are becoming increasingly diverse, and students with disabilities are being included with increasing frequency, there is a growing need to plan lessons that are differentiated and universally designed to meet the needs of a wide array of learners. The authors of this article are charged with preparing pre-service teachers at a large north-eastern research university to do just that – teach a diverse group of elementary students in the general education classroom. In order to teach this very complex skill, we have designed a lesson-planning template that is introduced to pre-service teachers at the beginning of their junior year (two semesters prior to student teaching). This template has been used with nearly 100 pre-service teachers over the last year and a half.

One purpose of this article is to help gain an understanding of how pre-service teachers perceive their experiences with learning to plan lessons in inclusive classrooms through the use of an extensive lesson-planning template. Another purpose is to understand how university faculty, field supervisors and supervising teachers perceive the use of the lesson-planning template. Collecting and analysing this data created the impetus for a revised template to better meet the needs of pre-service teachers as they teach a diverse classroom of elementary student learners. This new template is included as an appendix.

The lesson-planning template upon which this study and redesign are based was built upon the foundational principles that ineffective lesson planning has a dramatic negative impact on classroom instruction and therefore achievement (Allwright 2005;

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Beers 2006; O'Mahony 2006; Panasuk and Todd 2005). While many teachers feel pressed for time to teach the standards, well thought out lesson plans allow teachers to use this limited time more effectively (O'Mahony 2005). Planning with the end or purpose in mind has allowed for teachers to plan more coherent lessons that focus on essential learnings (Hendrickson 2006; Wiggins and McTighe 1998). This has shown to be increasingly important for students with diverse learning needs like ELLs and students with disabilities (Allwright 2005; Copeland and Keefe 2007; Cummins 1997). This research on lesson planning and the following theoretical concepts undergird the development of a carefully designed lesson-planning template and this study.

Theoretical framework and research questions

This article comes from a theoretical position built upon the foundational concepts of universal design (Bowe 2000; Danielson 1999), multiple intelligence theory (Gardner 1999), culturally responsive teaching (Gay 2000; Ladson-Billings 1994, 1995) and curricular adaptations (Udvari-Solner 1995, 1996). Each of these concepts has influenced the construction or flow of this new lesson-planning template. The strengths of some more traditional forms of lesson planning such as Hunter (1982), Mager (1984) and Bloom (1956) are utilised as well.

Universal design means the design of instructional materials and activities that makes the learning goals achievable by individuals with wide differences in their abilities to see, hear, speak, move, read, write, understand English, attend, organise, engage and remember. Universal design for learning is achieved by means of flexible curricular materials and activities that provide alternatives for students with differing abilities. These alternatives are built into the instructional design and operating systems of educational materials – they are not added on after the fact (Bowe 2000; Danielson 1999).

In multiple intelligence theory, Howard Gardner suggests that there are eight different intelligences to account for a broad range of human potential in children and adults. These intelligences are: (1) linguistic intelligences; (2) logical mathematical intelligence; (3) spatial intelligence; (4) bodily kinaesthetic intelligence; (5) musical intelligences; (6) interpersonal intelligence; (7) intrapersonal intelligences; and (8) naturalistic intelligence. In this lesson-planning template, students are asked to think about how each intelligence could be addressed (Gardner 1999).

Ladson-Billings proposes that culturally responsive pedagogy, 'rests on three criteria or propositions: (a) students must experience academic success; (b) students must develop and/or maintain cultural competence; and (c) students must develop a critical consciousness' (1995, 160). Gay asserts, '*Explicit knowledge* about cultural diversity is imperative to meeting the educational needs of ethnically diverse students' (2002, 107). It is essential that these necessary components of culturally relevant teaching are a part of the initial thinking about lesson planning otherwise there is little change in the curriculum and instruction to respond to the cultural needs and experiences of the students (Zarrillo 2008).

The curricular adaptation decision-making process focuses on tenets of reflective practice as teachers design instruction for students in heterogeneous classrooms. Udvari-Solner proposes beginning lesson planning with a clear picture of a student's strengths, needs and high priority educational goals in mind and carrying those strengths and needs throughout the lesson design (Udvari-Solner 1995, 1996).

Building on the above theoretical foundations and in light of this need to prepare pre-service teachers to plan lessons in different ways, this article addresses the following research question: How do pre-service teachers, university faculty, supervising teachers and field supervisors perceive their experiences using this template? In addressing that question, we subsequently revised the original template. This revision is discussed at the conclusion of the article.

To aid in the clarity of this writing, several concepts need to be described or defined. First, from this point on, when referring to students we will be talking about the elementary students who are being taught by our undergraduate pre-service teachers. Second, pre-service teachers refer to the students at this university who are in the inclusive elementary teaching programme, seeking teaching certification. Third, when referring to the instructors of the university courses (tenure track, clinical or adjunct) we will use the term university faculty. Fourth, supervising teacher is a term used to mean the classroom teacher or special education teacher who is hosting our pre-service teacher and supervising their work with students in the field. Fifth, field supervisor refers to university-employed staff (often graduate students or retired teachers and administrators) that observes and provides feedback to the pre-service teachers during their field experiences. Next, the methods of research will be discussed.

Context of the inclusive lesson-planning template

The inclusive lesson-planning template was designed to scaffold pre-service teachers' planning in the delivery of lessons to diverse elementary classrooms. In order to ground this article and study in the appropriate context, this section will provide a brief description of the lesson-planning template on which our study was based and how it is used across one teacher preparation programme.

The lesson-planning template includes six sections specifically created to guide pre-service teachers through the process of designing inclusive lessons. The sections include: (1) lesson context; (2) lesson content; (3) lesson product/assessment; (4) lesson process; (5) lesson outline; and (6) reflection (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, and Trezek 2008). This template was originally published in the *International Journal of Inclusive Education* (Causton-Theoharis, Theoharis, and Trezek 2008). The original template and the full description of the creation and design of it can be found there.

This template was created for use in a dual certification teacher preparation programme. Upon completion of their undergraduate degree, pre-service teachers in this programme are certified to teach both general and special education at the elementary level (first–sixth grade). These pre-service teachers are taught the components of this template and are expected to use it to plan lessons and units across math, science, social studies and curricular adaptation methods courses two semesters before student teaching in their coursework and field placements.

The pre-service teachers are then expected to use a condensed form of the template for planning lessons and units during their differentiation and special education methods courses, which take place the semester before student teaching. Lastly, during their student teaching semester, the pre-service teachers use a shortened version of the template, which they help design during student teaching seminars. All lessons that students plan with this template are taught in the field placement components of their programme with elementary students in elementary classrooms.

Methods

In addressing the research question, this study utilised a mixed methodology of surveys and course evaluations from pre-service teachers as well as interviews and focus groups with university faculty, field supervisors and supervising teachers. We primarily ground this study in the qualitative tradition (Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Strauss and Corbin 1998), but we will use descriptive statistics about the pre-service teacher perceptions.

We collected data from pre-service teachers through the ongoing format of course evaluations. A large component of the end-of-semester evaluation is specifically designed for students to provide feedback on the lesson-planning template. This evaluation of the template was given anonymously across three semesters of the teacher preparation programme. Each student in these semesters had time in class to complete the evaluation immediately after using the template.

We recognise the ethical dilemma of studying students who are taking our courses. This work requires sensitivity and thus we have taken a number of steps to create a transparent process that protects the students and allows them to be honest without fear of retaliation. The evaluations of the template were completed anonymously (online or in writing) and collected by a programme assistant. The evaluations were compiled and released to the researchers only after all grades have been turned in and finalised. Each semester these procedures and the steps taken to create some distance between the students and the evaluation were presented both orally and in writing to students.

Since the creation and adoption of this template for use across the inclusive elementary and special education preparation programme, about 100 pre-service teachers have planned lessons and units using it. In collecting data from university faculty, who teach in the semesters where this template is used, we met twice a semester to review the template, once before the template was introduced and at the conclusion of the semester. Upon compiling all the student evaluations, the faculty had another discussion of the template's structure and use.

Field supervisors who are connected to the semester where the template is introduced attend these meetings as well and added to this collection of data. In addition, we held one focus group (Bogdan and Biklen 1998) with field supervisors to gather perceptions about their experiences with the template. Three of these field supervisors were former principals and the remaining seven were former teachers – both special education and general education. Upon completion of our analysis of the pre-service course-evaluations, we went back to the five supervisors who have worked with the most students required to use the template with additional questions based on patterns from the pre-service teachers' perceptions.

Additionally, we held three focus group meetings for supervising teachers to discuss: (1) the expectations of the pre-service programme in general; and (2) the lesson-planning template. The group was comprised of both general and special educators from urban and suburban schools. These data were recorded using meeting minutes and using chart paper/white boards to collect their ideas. See Table 1 for demographic information about the participants in this study.

We used the constant comparative method of data analysis (Bogdan and Biklen 1998; Glaser and Strauss 1967) using course evaluations that the pre-service teachers complete each semester as well as with the data from university faculty, field supervisors and supervising teachers. We utilised deductive and inductive (Strauss and

Table 1. Demographic information about participants.

Title	Total number	Race	Gender	Age range (years)
Pre-service teachers	97	84 – white 7 – students of colour	91 – female 6 – male	20–25
Faculty	12	10 – white 1 – faculty of colour	7 – female 5 – male	26–63
Field supervisors	10	8 – white 2 – supervisors of colour	6 – female 4 – male	36–68
Supervising teachers	26	23 – white 3 – teachers of colour	20 – female 6 – male	27–62

Corbin 1998) analysis in coding. After our initial coding of the template evaluations, there were three areas that emerged as reoccurring themes from the constant comparative analysis. We will structure the findings for research question three around these three emergent themes. In order to elaborate on these three emergent themes, we used a combination of the words and ideas provided by all participants as well as descriptive statistics from the pre-service teacher surveys.

Findings: perceptions of the inclusive lesson-planning template

In addressing the research question about various stakeholders experiences using the template, our analysis produced three major themes. These themes are: (1) initial impressions of using this lesson-planning template; (2) perceptions of impact on planning/delivery of instruction; and (3) suggestions for revision/future use of the template. Through our analysis, we identified areas that all participant groups shared about their experience using the template. In the following sections, we use a mix of the different stakeholders perspectives, but are purposeful in creating the most space for using and hearing the perspective of the pre-service teachers themselves.

Initial perceptions

A clear pattern has emerged from the pre-service teachers in regards to their initial perceptions of the inclusive lesson-planning template. In analysing their evaluations, 83 out of the 97 (86%) who completed the evaluations discussed primarily that they initially felt overwhelmed by the template and what was required of them. Four field supervisors felt that the template was overwhelming as did one faculty member. A number of supervising teachers echoed this sentiment. Additionally, individuals across all groups had other initial comments and a number did not provide initial impressions.

Overwhelmed at the length and requirements

The message from the pre-service teachers is that when they were introduced to the template they felt it was lengthy, overwhelming, extremely detailed and that it seemed formidable to plan in this manner. We do not present all of their comments to this regard but a collection that typify this perception. These comments included:

I felt that the template was overwhelming, tedious to complete/follow and long. I believed that it was not a good template because in the real world, we will not have to write plans like that.

I was very nervous thinking how the heck am I ever going to fill this all!?! I wanted to cry.

I felt that it was a lot to do. But I felt confident that my teaching would reflect the time I spent planning.

That it was the most intimidating thing I have ever looked at! I thought that it was very detailed and covered every possible aspects of a lesson *possible*.

While these pre-service teachers' sentiments vary slightly, there is a clear pattern that the initial perception for 86% of them is one that includes stress and a sense of intimidation by the expectations. While it is important to understand that initially, some of these future teachers see this as 'unnecessary' and some saw it as potentially helpful, the resounding perception is that the expectation to plan lessons in this manner is lengthy, overly extensive and overwhelming. This was a pattern seen across the field supervisors and supervising teachers that the initial impression was that the template was 'excessive' and 'too much for new [pre-service] teachers to handle'. After supervising teachers' initial viewing of the template and a discussion of how it was used and designed to scaffold thinking, the majority of these supervising teachers reported that they understood why it was important and saw 'real value in this'.

Other initial perceptions

In looking to understand the pre-service teachers' initial perceptions, no other patterns in responses emerged. One commented, 'Full time teachers have no time to do it'. One commented that she/he felt 'Fairly good', and the last commented that, 'It all made sense'.

Other initial perceptions from faculty included, 'this is the kind thinking about lesson planning that research says is needed'. Another said, 'The [National Council of Teachers of Mathematics] just had an article about this depth of planning'. Other initial perceptions from eight supervising teachers included responses such as 'this kind of detailed thinking matters a lot' or 'I learned a lot myself from being forced to think through everything in great detail'.

While there are some pre-service teachers who felt comfortable with their initial contact with this lesson-planning template, the message from the vast majority of pre-service teachers and supervising teachers is that planning inclusive lessons using this template initially seemed like a formidable and overwhelming task. The pre-service teachers did not, at least initially, see what the benefit to themselves or their students would be from planning in this manner. After understanding initial perceptions, it is necessary to examine how they see the work involved in this template impacting their lesson planning and delivery of instruction.

Perceived impact on planning/delivery of instruction

The second clear theme from our analysis was the perceived impact, it had upon pre-service teachers' planning and delivery of instruction with elementary students in field

placements. There were five areas that were discussed regarding how using this template impacted planning and instruction. These five areas are: (1) the pre-service teachers had thought through ‘everything’ so they were prepared to teach; (2) the pre-service teachers understood the importance and complex nature of planning; (3) the pre-service teachers were better able to teach a wide range of diverse students and reach all learners; (4) no impact on their planning/teaching; and (5) this lesson-planning template had a negative impact on their planning and teaching.

In looking across these areas, about 81% of the pre-service teachers shared that the template impacted their planning and teaching in a positive manner. They discussed at least one of the first three areas, but many of them shared a combination of two of the three positive areas. Eleven per cent of these pre-service teachers that felt using the template had no impact (7%) or a negative impact (4%). There was an additional approximately 7% that did not discuss the impact the template had in their comments. The comments from faculty, supervising teachers and field supervisors ranged across all five themes. Given the smaller sample and the openness of the focus groups it is not practical to use descriptive statistics with these groups but to incorporate their perceptions with the pre-service teachers’ perceptions under each theme.

Thought through everything and were prepared

The majority of pre-service teachers who used the inclusive lesson-planning template shared a similar sentiment to this, ‘It makes you think of, and account for everything. You can’t forget anything, the template won’t let you’, and as a result they reported feeling, ‘Very planned, always prepared’. In sum, many felt this process, ‘Helps you think about the entire picture. I feel I planned great lessons because of my planning with the template’. It seems that one positive aspect according to the pre-services teachers’ perceptions of using this template is that detail and thoroughness required made many of them feel prepared and that they had given a great deal of thought to their lessons or units.

Supervising teachers and field supervisors echoed this theme. One supervising teacher commented, ‘I love that template. It really makes them [pre-service teachers] think through every aspect of their teaching. When they taught in my class, they really were prepared’.

The importance and complex nature of planning

The second area that was discussed as a positive impact of the template was their realisation through using the template that thorough planning is important and complex. One pre-service teacher commented, ‘It certainly has made me realise how much goes into planning a lesson. A lesson is not merely content, it is so much more’. It seemed as though they were recognising the importance of tying parts of a lesson or unit together. One commented, ‘My lessons changed throughout the planning periods as I became more aware, especially of matching objectives to assessments’. A supervising teacher stated:

I saw [Carrie] really go back to address the many things that good teachers do automatically and she seemed to realise by being asked to think in-depth that there is a lot more to planning than she had originally thought.

Pre-service teachers learned that in good lesson planning, ‘Everything needs to be strategic and thoughtful, there is more involved than just writing down what you are going to do’. They stated that this process ‘gave many different angles, perspectives and ways to view my lesson ... that’s what makes a lesson great’. One pre-service teacher concluded, ‘[Using the template] has made me realise how important the lesson planning process is’. In understanding the importance and complex nature of planning, one aspect that a number of the pre-service teachers shared was that with thorough and careful planning, ‘Helps us plan out many things we may face as well as to predict the situations’, and additionally ‘It has forced me to be over-prepared and therefore able to expect and handle the unexpected’.

Field supervisors shared comments that mirrored these pre-service teachers’ sentiments. One stated:

The best [pre-service teachers] really got into depth in many of the areas they were forced to think about and they seemed better for it. The struggling ones did not, but these struggling one seemed to realise that good teaching is about a whole lot more than ‘sit and get’ or ‘cute’ craft projects. So while our weak [pre-service teachers] were not made into great new teachers overnight they seemed to realise the enormity of the responsibility of teaching.

Many supervising teachers shared this perspective:

[The template] made the two girls [pre-service teachers] I had this year think through everything. When they taught their lessons, they were really prepared for all different aspects of teaching. They were still young, and not master teachers, but I thought they had a handle on the range of things involved in teaching in an inclusive classroom.

In understanding these perceptions about the impact the template had on their planning and teaching, it was clear that they realised how important and complex planning can be. In part, they saw this importance of planning as a way to reach all students regardless of ability.

Reaching all learners

The third positive perception of the use of the template was the idea the template helped the pre-service teachers’ ability to plan for and reach *all* of the students in the classes during their field experience. One supervising teacher comments:

I have never had [pre-service teachers] who are so into and interested in planning specifically for each child’s needs in my class. [Jeri] has been more focused on the individual needs and strengths of our students with disabilities than I have seen before.

One pre-service teacher stated:

It took more thinking and planning than I imagined. I had to revise a lot of things because they did not fit the needs of all students. I am glad the lesson plan was a helpful reminder of what I need to think about and I need to modify.

In thinking about the template and planning for all students, another pre-service teacher stated, ‘Your mind becomes open to all possibilities for error – i.e. Your lesson plan may be “perfect” but if the desks and other environmental conditions are not appropriate, some students may not benefit as much as they could have’.

A number of field supervisors shared that the pre-service teachers are using the lens of multiple intelligences in new ways in ‘sincere efforts to reach the wide range of students’. A key element of the template that the pre-service teachers attribute to their ability to plan for and reach all learners is the target student and positive student profile requirements. One shared a story from her field placement:

Initially I thought that the positive student profiles were a waste of time until I was able to attend parent–teacher conferences. I was allowed to start the conference off for [a fourth grade student with a disability]. I shared with [the student’s] Mom a summary of my positive student profile on her son, and she started to cry. She said, ‘no one at school has ever had anything positive to say about him’. She loved all the positives things I had to say and they were all true. This was a powerful way to start a conference and a helpful way to view this student.

Another pre-service teacher concluded that ‘This template has been the single most powerful part of my teacher preparation. I now understand what it means and what it takes to plan for *all* students’. An important perception is that across the groups, participants felt that the pre-service teachers are able to plan for and reach all students by using the template. While the vast majority felt the template had a positive impact on their planning and teaching, there were a number of comments and issues that were not positive.

No impact

As stated previously, there were a number of pre-service teachers who did not comment on the impact the template had on their teaching and planning, but there were seven (7%) who shared that the template had no impact on their planning or teaching. These pre-service teachers were specific in stating that using the template had ‘No impact’, or, that it ‘has not directly influenced my planning at all’.

Multiple field supervisors and faculty felt that the pre-service teachers were brainstorming creative ideas in the lesson product and lesson process sections, but that these creative ideas in many cases were not impacting the actual lesson. One faculty member stated, ‘They come up with great ideas but then they use traditional strategies and products’. A field supervisor echoed this, ‘I was usually very impressed by the brainstorming on paper, but there was a huge disconnect because these ideas were often never used’.

Negative impact on my teaching and me

While this is a very small group, it is important to discuss that four (4%) of the pre-service teachers felt that their use of the template had a negative impact on them and/or their teaching. One stated, ‘I knew the lesson plan was unrealistic from the beginning and it was so frustrating knowing that I had to type up a 20-something page lesson and an even longer unit. It hindered the actual teaching of my lesson’. Another continued sharing a similar sentiment, ‘It was discouraging [to use the template] and I feel this was an unrealistic format we needed to use. It made me question how well I could do this type of thinking + planning daily’. A couple of supervising teachers shared this perspective. One stated, ‘This [template] is excessive and the students I had this year worried about filling it out more than actually teaching their lessons’. Lastly, one pre-service teacher stated, using the template, ‘Didn’t affect my planning

as much as my own ideas plus my supervising teacher's feedback. [The template] created stress in areas that I was confused about not sure what to do'.

In sum, out of the 97 pre-service teachers who used the template and took part in this evaluation, 4% felt it contributed negatively to their planning and teaching and 7% stated it had 'no impact' on them. We have no data on approximately 7% and the remaining 81% felt using the template had a positive impact in that they felt prepared, had thoroughly planned and thought through their lessons/units, understood the importance of planning, realised that a lot goes into preparing engaging and meaningful lessons, and felt they were really reaching the wide range of learners in their classrooms. To be clear, we are not saying that these pre-service teachers enjoyed using the template, only that they perceived it having an important impact on their planning and teaching. They had a variety of suggestions for future use and 'improving' this lesson-planning template.

Suggestions for revision/future use of the inclusive lesson-planning template

This third important theme that emerged from the perceptions of the inclusive lesson-planning template was suggestions for revision and future use of this template. In evaluating the template and all the components across the 97 pre-service teacher participants, there was both support for and critique of each section. Where one student had positive perceptions of a particular section another might find it to be unnecessary. For this article and our analysis, we were not interested in representing that back and forth for each section. Instead we focused on themes across their comments. We found two major suggestions that were represented across the pre-service teachers' comments: (1) shorten or condense the template; and (2) eliminate repetition within the template. We took these issues back to our discussions with the other three stakeholder groups and the faculty, field supervisors and supervising teachers have made additional suggestions for revisions.

Shorten or condense the template

In congruence with the overwhelmed sense that most of these pre-service teachers felt at the beginning was their call for revising the template in a manner that was shorter or more condensed. There were almost no specific suggestions as to how to do this, but one pre-service teacher after another commented in general that the template should be 'shorter'. Four people, all of whom felt they had been negatively effected by the template, suggested that this be shortened to their perception of what 'real teachers do'. A suggestion was to cut the template to include 'just the body or outline of your lesson and reflection'.

Eliminate repetition

The second general suggestion that the pre-service teachers made about the template was to eliminate the repetition within the required sections. Again, this was a general comment shared by approximately 30% of the pre-service teachers. There were a couple of specifics that were articulated. These were 'there was too much repetition about assessment ... the product section, and the reflection'. Another specific suggestion was that 'the sequence and the body had the same information'. Since repetition was an issue raised by a number of people, this needed to inform template revisions.

Additional suggestions for revisions

The key issues framing the revision were identified by the pre-service teachers were important as we went back to the other stakeholder groups to revise the template. There were a number of important suggestions that came from university faculty, field supervisors and supervising teachers. We list them here and then in the following discussion section indicates how we included these suggestions in the revisions. The suggested revision were as follows: (1) revise how the students are expected to think creatively or divergently in their planning/brainstorming; (2) streamline the template so that the pre-service teachers and supervising teachers understand that all of this thinking is a part of the actual lesson and not a add-on; (3) have the pre-service teachers think purposefully about terms and vocabulary related to the content and specific lesson; (4) try to help the pre-service teachers think more about the ‘skills’ needed if students are expected to use technology or work in groups; (5) provide a greater focus on assessment, which should include more systematic summative and pre-assessment; (6) the template should reinforce that it is expected to include a creative introduction, the use of an agenda and objectives with the students, and a closure; (7) the template should help the pre-service teachers purposefully include target student’s strengths in their teaching as well as making the lesson culturally relevant; (8) need more emphasis on tying objectives to teaching to assessment; (9) a number of the headings in the original template like the ‘lesson sequence’ made the pre-service teachers write too much narrative – they end up working too hard in certain places; (10) there is not enough room for substantial comments when observing the lesson in the ‘notes’ column; (11) make the reflection focus on really examining their practice and not on surface level addressing of a lot of issues – there are too many prompts for the reflection so the pre-service teachers address them all but superficially; (12) not enough room for detailed step-by-step planning in the chart for the lesson procedures; and (13) add technology to the advanced preparation reminders as they have many technology issues during teaching.

Taking feedback seriously: revising the lesson-planning template

First, it is important to discuss the intense nature of the template. Because the template itself is perceived as too ‘overwhelming’, it is possible that some of these pre-service teachers are turned off to lesson planning in general or more specifically differentiated and inclusive lesson planning to meet a range of learners’ needs. One compelling finding in this study was that although over 80% of students found the template to be initially overwhelming, yet over 80% felt the lesson template had a positive impact on their planning/teaching. These two groups overlapped, but were not identical. It is important to note that some of the lessons these pre-service teachers have reported learning about planning (e.g. proactive accommodations for a range of learners, anticipating student misconceptions and pre-planned questioning techniques) resonate with literature on effective content instruction. Again, supervising teachers and field supervisors shared that this was a positive aspect of the template in many cases.

Revised lesson template

The revisions to this template came as a direct result of the data analysis. Both the structure and content of the original lesson template has been changed to create a

revised template (see Appendix 1). The following sections describe the major revision made to this template: structural and content changes.

Structural changes

The biggest structural change came in response to the data suggesting that the template was intimidating, visually overwhelming and too long. They called for shortening or condensing the template and eliminating repetition. A reoccurring theme from pre-service teachers, supervising teachers and field supervisors was their perception of a disconnect between the original template's requirements before the 'actual lesson' or the lesson outline. Thus, we have moved many central components into the lesson section to reduce that disconnect and eliminate repetition. We used check lists whenever possible instead of narrative text.

In tightening up the template and situating key concepts within the lesson section, we created the first two sections that focus specifically on the students and the subject. This was done to situate lesson planning first in relation to the students in the class. We start with a focus on the students and then move to think about the specific subject and content to be taught before jumping into brainstorming ideas or selecting ways to teach.

Many supervising teachers as well as pre-service teachers, suggested that the chart in the original lesson body was difficult to use they suggested that there was 'not enough space' for detailed steps of notes from supervising teachers. So, we changed the format of this chart. In addition to giving more space for these items, this created more room for detailing the steps of the lesson procedure.

Changes to the content

University faculty and field supervisors suggested adding prompts about culturally relevant teaching. So, we have added those components to the new concept maps section and to the checklist following the lesson. Another common critique from field supervisors was that the students did the brainstorming, but did not use any of the creative or interesting ideas in their lessons. About 20% of pre-service teachers commented that the brainstorming in the original template around lesson product and lesson process seemed redundant. Therefore, the revised template provides greater flexibility on how to create the concept maps, and asking them to mark their ideas with codes that are available following the lesson chart. Our hope is that this reinforces our expectation to see their ideas within the body of lesson while giving them more freedom to be creative in a manner that suits them.

Comments from faculty and field supervisors indicated that in the original template the pre-service teachers did not systematically think about assessment during the lesson or after they attempted to assess their students' learning. While we have guiding questions about assessment and product differentiation in the concept maps, we have added an entire section after the lesson on assessment where pre-service teachers think through student learning and use samples of students' work to discuss and reflect upon learning.

Across comments from supervising teachers, pre-service teachers and field supervisors, pre-service teachers assumed their students knew how to access technology or knew how to function effectively in cooperative groups. To help plan for these issues, we have added a heading titled, pre-requisite skills in the lesson section. There are

additional minor changes and wording changes made to this revised template that do not merit mentioning in this article.

Limitations and implications for future research

A limitation of this study is that this template has been used at one university with a particular population of pre-service teachers, predominantly white women between the ages of 20–25 attending a private residential university. As other programmes become familiar with this template, we are eager to see how others use and study this lesson-planning process.

A second limitation is that this study does not address the impact on teaching or student achievement. While comments from field supervisors and supervising teachers suggest that this template holds the potential to impact student learning, now that this template has been developed, piloted, the perceptions of pre-service teachers, supervising teachers, field supervisors and faculty have been collected, and a revised template has been produced, the next step is to engage in studying the impact on actual teaching and learning in the field. Future research will involve studying this revised template as we seek to determine how this new template impacts the pre-service teachers' ability to plan for and teach to all students and the impacts on student learning.

A final word

Meeting the needs of all students in inclusive elementary classrooms is a complex skill not easily mastered by the most veteran of teachers. This template attempts to assist pre-service teachers as they learn how to create universally designed lessons from the beginning of their careers. Our collection of perceptions and experiences with the template drove the creation of a revised and hopefully more useful template. It is our sincere hope that this revised template can be used in teacher preparation programmes to help pre-service teachers prepare to deliver a rich and engaging curriculum that all students can access.

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Appendix 1

Inclusive Lesson Planning Template

This lesson-planning template is designed to help you develop skills and attitudes about thoughtful, inclusive lesson design. Therefore, we expect a great amount of detail as evidence of your thinking. Please understand, when you are designing lessons as a certified teacher, your written plans will not include as much detail, however you will engage in a similar, albeit abbreviated, thinking process.



Section 1 – THE STUDENTS

A. Describe Your Class:

School _____ Grade Level _____ Number of Students _____

Demographic information (race, gender, class, dis/ability):

Other important information about your class:

B. Describe Three Target Students:

Select three students to keep in mind during this lesson designing process. These students should represent an academic, behavioural and/or social range of learners in your class (e.g. struggling, average, high performing). Specifically consider students who have a disability and English language learners. Use initials to ensure confidentiality.

Write a positive student profile for each of the students, at minimum you must include the following information: (1) Like/dislikes; (2) Intelligences/Strengths; (3) Communication; (4) Behaviour; (5) Academic performance; (6) Subject specific performance; (7) Social Information; (8) Concerns; and (9) Other pertinent information.



Section 2 – THE SUBJECT

A. Subject:

What is the primary subject (e.g. social studies) and the area(s) of emphasis (e.g. geography)? Is this lesson interdisciplinary? If so, what other subjects are integrated (e.g. music)?

B. Theme, Concept, Problem or Unit:

C. Background:

What has come before this lesson and what will follow? How does this lesson connect to the larger unit?

D. Lesson Standards:

What grade level specific national and state standard(s) are being addressed?



Section 3 – THE CONCEPT MAPS

Provide evidence through your own concept maps/webs/brainstorms/MI think-tac-toes that you have thought about the following questions.

- **What aspects of this subject could I teach?:**
- **How could I teach it?:**
 - *How will you share information? How will the students engage in the learning? How will students be grouped?*
 - *Consider: Demonstration, modelling, mini-lecture, draw and tell story, student research, inquiry project, games, simulations, centres, video, etc.*
- **What are the various products students can create to demonstrate their new knowledge?:**

These should tie specifically to the lesson objectives:

 - *Consider: Work samples, song, play, photo essay, mural, article, demonstration of a skill, booklet, individual or group presentation, videotape, CD, teaching another person, etc.*
 - *Consider: Will these products vary by student? Will students have a choice? Will different levels of mastery be accepted?*
- **How can I assess it?:**

How will these products be assessed? What criteria will be used? Include a rubric.
- **How will I address the strengths of the target students?:**
- **How will I address each of Gardeners Multiple Intelligences?:**
- **How will I address student culture? How is this culturally relevant? How will this take advantage of students' backgrounds, environment, etc.?:**
- **How will I differentiate? Extend? Modify?:**



Section 4 – THE LESSON

What specifically will you do during your lesson?

Lesson abstract:

Write a 1-paragraph summary of your lesson.

Lesson Goal:

In general what do you want students to know and be able to do by the end of this lesson?

Lesson Objectives:

Specifically, in measurable language, what do you want students to know and be able to do by the end of this lesson? Use the Mager format (Condition, Performance and Criteria) and Blooms Taxonomy

Whole-Class Objectives:

- Essential – What every student will learn and do.
- Expected – What most students will learn and do.
- Enrichment – What a few students will learn and do.

Student Specific Objectives:

Target students and others:

Consider: The student's profile, educational priorities and IEP goals to justify your decisions.

Definitions of Targeted Terms

List the targeted terms or content specific words and both of the corresponding definitions.

1. Formal definition
2. Grade-level appropriate definition

<p>Pre-assessment: Collect information on each student before you plan and teach. What do students know about this topic? How will you gather this information? <u>Consider: Formal or informal assessment, a quiz, anecdotal information, etc.</u></p>	<p>Pre-requisite Skills: What other skills do students need to have in order to participate in this lesson (e.g. cooperative skills, language, writing, technology)? For students who may not have these skills, how will you teach the skills, or modify the lesson (e.g. pre-teach, peer support, communication device).</p>
<p>Impact on planning: How will the info from the pre-assessment and pre-requisite skills impact your planning?</p>	
<p>Advanced Preparation Reminders: What do you need to take care of before the lesson? (e.g. make play-dough for dough maps). List these to help you organise yourself before the lesson. Make sure you write or draw an agenda and review it with the students. <u>If you are using technology, set up and practice before the lesson.</u></p>	<p>Materials and Assistive Technologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include numbers of each material that is needed and how many are needed for each group. (i.e. 12 timers; or each group will receive 1 thermometer, 2 sponges, 3 containers of hot water). • Describe any unique material considerations for specific students. • Are there any types of assistive technology (high or low tech) that will be useful for any student to help them to do a particular step in this lesson? • Make sure all materials look professional (i.e. worksheets must be computer generated). • <u>Consider: Access to written material, communication, the physical space etc.</u>
<p>Duration of the Lesson: How long will this lesson take?</p>	<p>Sequence of Lesson: (Check one)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>The Learning Cycle: Engage, Explore, Explain, Apply.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Hunter's sequence: Teaching: Input, Modelling and Checking for Understanding, Guided Practice and Independent Practice.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Math (and others): The Launch, the Exploration/Investigation and the Discussion/Congress.</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Inquiry Sequence – Define Problem/Question, Speculate on Answers, Plan Investigation, Gather Info, Analyse Information, Reach Conclusion</i> <input type="checkbox"/> <i>Other: Describe</i> <p><u>Label where each phase of the learning cycle or other lesson sequence begins</u></p>
<p>Student and Room Arrangement: How will students be grouped during this lesson? How will the physical arrangement of the room be configured for the lesson to ensure student success?</p>	<p>Teaching Strategies: What teaching strategies will be used to help the students learn? <u>Consider: Think-pair-share, graffiti, talk-walk, questioning, cueing, Pre-teaching, foreshadowing, adjust pacing, sequence, periodically check performance, reduce or increase complexity, physical guidance, pair verbal instruction with visuals, adjust behaviour management.</u></p>
<p>Co-Teaching and Collaboration: <u>Who is present during this lesson? Give all adults present a specific role.</u> Share this information with each of the adults who will be present during this lesson. <u>Consider: Options for co-teaching: Station teaching, one teach – one model, parallel teaching, alternative teaching, one teach – one make the presentation multi-sensory, split class with same content, team-teaching, tag-team teaching, etc.</u></p>	
<p>Behavioural Considerations: What behavioural strategies will you use to keep all students engaged? Do you anticipate that any students will exhibit challenging behaviour during this lesson? What positive behavioural supports will you put in place? <u>Consider: Setting expectations, praising desired behaviour, purposeful partnering, increasing student responsibility, individual behaviour plan, choice, scheduled breaks, voice/tone, incentives, etc.</u></p>	

Clock Time: e.g. 9:00–9:10	Sequence of Steps: Write in detail each step that will occur during your lesson.	Adaptations: Write any specific adaptations that are needed for the corresponding step of the lesson.
Step 1:	Creative Introduction: (Anticipatory set, The Hook or Launch): How will you grab the student’s attention and put them in a receptive frame of mind for learning? This should be creative and interesting.	Adaptations
	Your Key Questions and Anticipated Student Responses: Write key questions you will ask the students. Use Bloom’s Taxonomy. Write what you anticipate the students’ reaction will be to the content, not management or attitudinal responses.	
	Notes: Leave this space blank initially. During your lesson, have your teacher take notes and give you feedback here. Following your lesson, you add your notes in a different colour.	
Step 2:	Explaining Behavioural Expectations: How will you explain these?	Adaptations
	Your Key Questions and Anticipated Student Responses	
	NOTES:	
Step 3:	Sharing Agenda and Objectives: Agenda: Make sure you write or draw an agenda for your lesson and review it with the students. Objectives: Make sure you post (write or draw) and review your objective(s) in an age-appropriate manner.	Adaptations
	Your Key Questions and Anticipated Student Responses	
	NOTES:	
Step 4:		
	Your Key Questions and Anticipated Student Responses	
	NOTES:	
Continue steps here	Each lesson needs to contain detailed step-by-step procedures. You will have many steps.	Adaptations
Last Step:	Closure: This is to help students organise their learning, to reinforce major points to clarify any confusion. How will you help students to make sense of what they learned and transition to the next activity? This should be creative and interesting.	
	Your Key Questions and Anticipated Student Responses	
	NOTES:	

• **Make sure you have included the following in your lesson outline:**

- **Transition:** Include how you will transition students (activity to activity, location to location, whole class/small group, etc.).
- **Directions:** Describe step by step how you will explain the various concepts or activities.
- **Assessment:** Be sure to include when and how assessment takes place in the body of your lesson.

- **Flow:** Double Check that your objectives match your teaching and your assessment.
- **KEY:** Mark each step in your plan with the following code.
 - ★ Use of various multiple intelligences
 - ➔ Use of various components of Culturally Relevant teaching
 - ☺ Use of target students' strengths



Section 5 – THE ASSESSMENT

A. Evaluation of your students' learning:

What are you assessing? How you are assessing it? What criteria you are using? This should be connected to both the lesson objectives (mathematical emphases) and unit goals. Include the rubric or tool you are using to assess the work.

B. Examples of student work:

Provide evidence of student learning – at least three examples of student work. Include at least one student's work that shows limited understanding (below grade level), at least one student's work that shows good (at grade level) understanding, and at least one student's work that is exemplary (beyond grade level). If you do not have a student at each level, explain why and include a student at a different level. **Use target students where applicable.**



Section 6 – THE REFLECTION

A. After Teaching the Lesson Reflect on the Following:

- Think about: Student participation and your planning, preparation and teaching.
 - a. What did you learn from this lesson?
 - b. What were you proud of?
 - c. What would you do differently?



Section 7 – THE REFERENCES

- A. After writing your lesson plan, include references of sources, ideas, theory, etc.