

# INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING

*Across Learning Environments*

MODULE 1 – SESSION 5





# Planning Instruction for all Learners and Environments

## DUCKS IN A ROW

Are you the type of instructional planner who needs to have all of your ducks in a row before walking into a classroom? If so, how do you handle it when your carefully crafted plans are thrown into chaos by things like a sudden shift in learning environments? One of the greatest – and most exhausting – challenges for teachers during emergency remote teaching (ERT) was the rapid pace at which we had to shift our instructional plans. So many teachers are burned out after the daily planning sprints that turned into a marathon.

While burnout is real, we need to remember that planning a unit or lesson can actually be extremely satisfying. Why? Because instructional planning is both an art and a science; it draws upon our power of creativity and professional knowledge.

Learning to develop effective lessons is a major objective of teacher training programs. Do you remember how elaborate and detailed your earliest lesson plans were? We had so much to do: gradually release responsibility, embed formative assessments, and demonstrate a high level of reflection and self-evaluation. Yikes!

Classroom experience eventually conditions us to think on our feet and develop our own version of the "loose-tight" lesson plan. While that confidence is important, effective lesson planning is the bedrock of successful learning outcomes for students. And when we move across learning environments, planning is even more important.

## DUCKS IN CHAOS!

# Elements of a Well-Designed Instructional Plan

Educators at **William & Mary School of Education** describe a well-designed instructional plan as one which achieves the following:



## 3 Strategies

to maintain these elements when teaching across learning environments:

1. **Essential Questions**
2. **Backward Design**
3. **Universal Design for Learning**

Turn the page to learn more...

01.

**Understand** →

Helps students and teachers understand the goals of an instructional module



02.

**Translate** →

Allows the teacher to translate the curriculum into learning activities



03.

**Align** →

Aligns the instructional materials with the assessment, and the assessment with the learning goal



04.

**Ensure** →

Helps ensure that the needed instructional materials are available



05.

**Enable** →

Enables the teacher to thoughtfully address individual learning needs among students



# Resilient Pedagogy + Instructional Planning Strategies

In Session 1 of this module, you were introduced to the concept of **resilient pedagogy**, which Drs. Rebecca Quintana and James DeVaney (2020) define as “the ability to facilitate learning experiences that are designed to be adaptable to fluctuating conditions and disruptions.” **Resilient design for learning (RDL)** focuses on three design concepts: extensibility, flexibility, and redundancy. Borrowing from Clum, Wicks, Ebersole, and Shea (2022), we equated these three concepts to a vacuum cleaner with extensions (extensibility), a tailored suit (flexibility), and back-up power sources during a power failure (redundancy). For a refresher, go to Session 1 where we explain these analogies in detail.

**Extensibility** – aka the vacuum cleaner – refers to designing the most basic version of your lesson with the goal of extending it as you address various learning styles and needs. **Flexibility** – aka the custom-tailored suit – is about responding to changes in the learning environment and adapting to suit (no pun intended) individual needs.

**Redundancy** – aka the backup generator – is all about making sure that we have some good substitutes, reserves, and alternatives in case things don’t work out as planned. In planning for learning across all environments, it’s important to connect each of these concepts to a specific strategy for instructional planning.

## EXTENSIBILITY

**RDL PRINCIPLE:** FIRST DESIGN THE BASIC LESSON AND THEN EXTEND IT TO ADDRESS VARIOUS LEARNING STYLES AND NEEDS

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING STRATEGY:** ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

An essential question speaks to the intended goal of the lesson; students must be able to answer the essential question by the end of the lesson. Teachers who plan using essential questions metaphorically offer a “vacuum cleaner” – a critical question – that undergirds the lesson. The essential question allows individual students to create their own “attachments.” These attachments – previous experience, personal interests, cultural assets – allow each learner to make a deep connection to the content of the lesson.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

## FLEXIBILITY

**RDL PRINCIPLE:** RESPOND TO CHANGES IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT AND ADAPT TO INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING STRATEGY:** BACKWARD DESIGN

With backward design, teachers consider the learning goals of the course first. Once the learning goals have been established, the next task is to consider the evidence of learning or the assessment. We can think of this “back-mapped” plan as a loosely tailored suit; the basic structure is there, we know what the end product should look like, but we leave extra material to stay flexible for the individual customer. In other words, the learning experience should match the goals and how we plan to assess attainment of the goals.

## BACKWARD DESIGN

## REDUNDANCY

**RDL PRINCIPLE:** HAVE SUBSTITUTES, RESERVES, AND ALTERNATIVES IN CASE THINGS DON’T WORK OUT AS PLANNED

**INSTRUCTIONAL PLANNING STRATEGY:** UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING (UDL)

UDL is grounded in designing learning experiences to maximize accessibility for the greatest number of students. UDL embraces accessibility because all of our students can benefit from having a variety of tools, learning formats, and assessments. In the same way that a backup generator provides an option in the case of a power outage, UDL creates redundancy in a unit or lesson by providing multiple means for engagement, representation, and expression.

## UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

# EXTENSIBILITY

Start with the basic lesson and extend to address various learning styles and needs.



# ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

Identify the essence of a lesson with a single question that sparks student learning.



## Essential Questions

Working with an essential question is a foundational planning strategy that helps teachers identify the essence of a lesson. It is a single question that students should be able to answer by the end of the lesson. But it isn't a simple yes/no or fill-in-the-blank question. An essential question prompts students to analyze and apply what they have learned in an extended format.

### Well-crafted essential questions

- are open-ended; the question does not have a definite answer;
- are engaging, thought-provoking, and relevant to students' everyday lives; and
- promote critical thinking and further inquiry; the questions lead to other questions.

For example, if we were to teach a lesson about essential questions, we might pose this to our learners: *How can using essential questions help students progress through Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives?* There are myriad ways a learner might answer this question. Some learners might dig into the levels of Bloom's Taxonomy to analyze and apply what they have learned. Other learners might choose to develop a sample essential question and map how it supports students to progress up the levels from remember to understand, apply, analyze, evaluate, and create.

## Connection to Resilient Design for Learning

Essential questions help build extensibility into the instructional plan. Teachers who plan using essential questions engage their own higher-level thinking skills in order to activate the thinking skills of their students. In effect, they set out a "vacuum cleaner" – an essential question – that undergirds learning across modalities. The essential question allows individual students to create their own "attachments." These attachments – previous experience, personal interests, and cultural assets – allow each learner to make a deep connection to the content of the lesson.

# FLEXIBILITY

Respond to changes in the learning environment and adapt to individual needs.



# BACKWARD DESIGN

Set learning goals and identify evidence that students have met those goals. Then tailor instructional content to help students meet those goals.



*Start  
at the  
End*



## Backward Design

Teachers typically plan units and lessons in a “forward design” manner, meaning they consider the learning activities (how to teach the content) first. This is followed by developing assessments around their learning activities, then by attempting to draw connections to the learning goals of the course.

Backward design is the opposite approach. In this planning framework, teachers set the learning goals of the unit or lesson first. These learning goals include the knowledge and skills students should be able to demonstrate by the end of the unit or lesson. After we set the learning goals, it is time to identify the evidence that will allow us to know that students have, in fact, achieved those learning goals. Only *after* identifying the learning goals and how learning will be assessed do teachers start developing the content of their unit/lesson.

## Connection to Resilient Design for Learning

Backward design helps build flexibility into the instructional plan. We can think of this “back-mapped” plan as a loosely tailored suit; the basic structure is there, we know what the end product should look like, but we are leaving room in the build in order to stay flexible. We want the suit to match the customer – in other words, the learning experience should match the goals and how we plan to assess the attainment of the goals. And as learning environments change, we can tailor our units and lessons appropriately and still help our students reach the learning goals.

# UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

Provide multiple means of engagement, representation, action, and expression.

## REDUNDANCY

Have substitutes, reserves, and alternatives in case things don't work out the way we planned.



### Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Kevin Gannon, Director of the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning at Grand View University, provides a powerful way to explain the purpose and value of UDL:

To get a sense of what UDL is really about, think about the sidewalk ramps that are at most intersections (including those on our campuses). They were originally mandated by law to make it safer for people using wheelchairs to cross the street. But once in place, their benefits began to be remarkably inclusive. The ramps make it easier for parents pushing strollers, for elders using walkers, and for bicyclists and skateboarders. A modification to a basic sidewalk design, originally done to address a specific disability, ended up benefiting everyone, regardless of ability or the reason they were using the sidewalk. That's universal design: the idea that design can make things better for everyone by focusing on what makes things the most accessible for the greatest number.

UDL happens during the instructional planning process and is guided by three principles:

1. Provide multiple means of engagement to stimulate student interest and motivation for learning
2. Provide multiple means of representation by providing information and content in different ways
3. Provide multiple means of action and expression by differentiating the ways that students can demonstrate what they know and have learned

### Connection to Resilient Design for Learning

UDL helps build redundancy into the instructional plan. In the same way that a flashlight and candles provide multiple backup options in the case of a power outage, UDL creates redundancy in a unit or lesson by providing multiple means for engagement, representation, action, and expression. In fact, this principle is embodied in the read, watch, or listen options you are provided in the TALE Academy sessions. You, as learners, can choose the method of engagement that works best for you!

# 3 PHASES OF BACKWARD DESIGN

IDENTIFY DESIRED RESULTS.

DETERMINE ACCEPTABLE EVIDENCE.

PLAN LEARNING EXPERIENCES & INSTRUCTION.



(SOURCE: VANDERBILT UNIVERSITY)

# 3 FEATURES OF AN ESSENTIAL QUESTION



## OPEN-ENDED

The question does not have a definite answer.

## ENGAGING AND THOUGHT-PROVOKING

The question is relevant to students' everyday lives.



## PROMOTES CRITICAL THINKING AND FURTHER INQUIRY



The question leads to other questions.

(SOURCE: GOALBOOK)

# 3 PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN FOR LEARNING

1

## Provide multiple means of engagement

Stimulate interest and motivation for learning

2

## Provide multiple means of representation

Present information and content in different ways

3

## Provide multiple means of action and expression

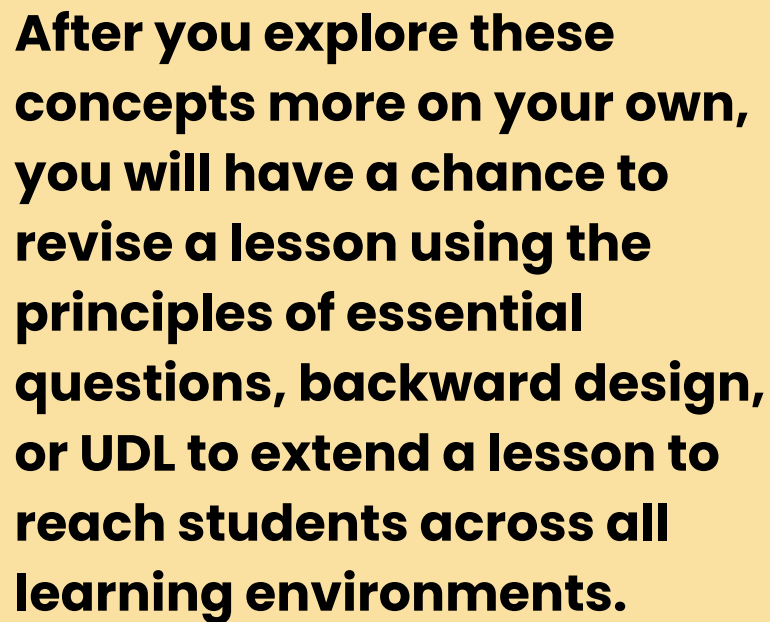
Differentiate the ways that students can express what they know

(SOURCE: CLARE-GLADWIN REGIONAL EDUCATION SERVICE DISTRICT)





**Now it's your turn!**



**After you explore these concepts more on your own, you will have a chance to revise a lesson using the principles of essential questions, backward design, or UDL to extend a lesson to reach students across all learning environments.**

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# About Us

## **The TALE Academy**

The TALE Academy is a series of virtual learning experiences available to all New York State educators and offers a rich array of resources on topics related to teaching across learning environments (TALE). The TALE Academy is built upon the work New York State educators carried out during emergency remote teaching (ERT) throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and extends it toward the future. TALE invites educators to think beyond online learning to consider a broader perspective on teaching and learning that encompasses teaching across multiple environments (in-person, remote, and hybrid).

## **The Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE) Project**

The TALE Academy is part of a broader New York State Education Department (NYSED) initiative known as Teaching in Remote/Hybrid Learning Environments (TRLE). In July 2020, NYSED was awarded funding through the United States Department of Education's Education Stabilization Fund-Rethink K-12 Education Models Grant to implement TRLE – a three-year project to build the capacity of teachers and educational leaders to effectively implement remote/hybrid learning for all students. Launched in the depths of the pandemic, the first phase of the TRLE project focused on getting resources to the field through partnerships with Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) and school districts across the state. The second phase, which began in February 2022, focused on aggregating lessons learned and emerging teaching and learning strategies to address a broader field of practice: teaching across learning environments.

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