

MENTOR HANDBOOK

S2 | SUBJECT: PLANNING BACKWARDS FROM LEARNING GOALS

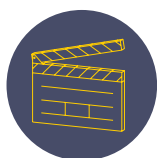
STUDY

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR THIS MODULE

Your teacher can begin to make a difference to pupils by:

- > Planning backwards from specific, ambitious goals for knowledge, skills and values: the learning goals set out in the curriculum.
- > Using their knowledge of the subject and topic and how pupils learn it to break big goals into smaller, more manageable ones and to sequence these goals logically.
- > Organising the lesson into a sequence of meaningful steps towards their learning goal.

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SUMMARY BELOW:**

TEACHING CHALLENGE

Ms Andrews is increasingly confident in managing behaviour and motivating students to participate in lessons. This gives her more time to think about lessons. She wants to ensure she is making the best use of the limited time she has with pupils: how can her planning best ensure pupils learn?

KEY IDEA

Effective teaching is planned backwards, breaking down and communicating ambitious learning goals set out in the curriculum.

BASING LEARNING ON THE CURRICULUM

Ms Andrews' planning begins with the curriculum. The curriculum sets out the learning to which all pupils are entitled (Wiliam, 2016). It determines the ideas pupils should encounter and the knowledge and skills they should acquire (Wiliam, 2018). This guides teachers to teach the most important knowledge, skills and values effectively. For example, a carefully designed maths curriculum (alongside effective teaching methods) appears to increase pupil learning (Jerrim & Vignoles, 2016).

Most schools base their curriculum on the national curriculum, with adaptations to suit pupils' needs and the school's vision. Individual teachers are not responsible for setting the curriculum: what they do, which no curriculum designer can do, is make the curriculum comprehensible. They do this by connecting what pupils are to learn with their existing knowledge and experience (Young et al, 2014). Ms Andrews' success relies on secure knowledge of the curriculum and her pupils in order to motivate and teach them effectively.

WHAT TEACHERS NEED TO KNOW ABOUT WHAT THEY TEACH

A challenge intrinsic to teaching is making complicated ideas in the curriculum comprehensible to pupils (Kennedy, 2015). In doing this, Ms Andrews must balance making ideas simple enough to understand, whilst remaining meaningful, and true to the curriculum. Ms Andrews' skill in doing this rests on her developing understanding of the knowledge, skills and values she teaches. As well as being guided by the school curriculum, she can use colleagues and shared resources to build this knowledge. When she does so, to translate curriculum goals into effective learning experiences, Ms Andrews needs to know:

- > **The topic:** What a non-specialist, but well-informed adult might know about it.
- > **Ways to introduce and sequence ideas:** In what order to introduce key ideas, and how best to explain them.
- > **Where pupils will struggle and what they might get wrong:** Allowing her to anticipate and overcome pupils' misunderstandings.
- > **Potential links:** How the current topic connects to past and future topics (Ball, Thames & Phelps, 2008).

Ms Andrews needs more than a knowledge of the topic: she needs to know how students learn it and how to make it comprehensible to them.

BREAKING LEARNING DOWN

This knowledge — of curricular goals and how pupils learn them — allows Ms Andrews to plan lessons which

work towards her goals in logical, carefully-pitched steps. Ms Andrews is aware of the need to break complicated ideas down to make them comprehensible: she designs tasks so that they do not provide too much new or complicated information at once.

However, she recognises a broader point about breaking learning down when she plans lessons which work towards learning goals. Rather than designing isolated tasks and fitting them into a lesson, she seeks to link tasks to form a sequence of meaningful steps towards learning goals across multiple lessons. To succeed she needs to make explicit links to what has been previously studied and learned as she goes. For example, when she introduces a new idea with concrete examples and highlights the underlying principles and offers practice, each activity is a step towards achieving the learning goal, building on previous study.

This approach allows her to organise her lessons around a narrative structure of steps towards understanding and achieving a learning goal: this approach is both more comprehensible and more memorable for pupils (Willingham, 2009, pp.66-9).

NUANCES AND CAVEATS

While schools establish what they will teach informed by the National Curriculum, teachers are always doing curricular thinking, as they find new and better ways to teach the school's curriculum. Their thinking then informs future revisions of the curriculum. Gaining this knowledge of how pupils learn a subject takes time. A new teacher would not be expected to achieve this depth immediately: the usefulness of these categories is in knowing what to think about in planning, and what to ask colleagues. High-quality curricular resources may also embody these forms of knowledge, for example textbooks or colleagues' shared resources aligned to the school curriculum.

SELECT

Before you observe, first select a **DEVELOPMENT AREA** to focus on. Next, familiarise yourself with the **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREAS**, as you will zoom in on one of these during your observation. Finally, craft a **PRECISE TARGET** when you observe your teacher (examples are provided below).

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
Learning goals and end points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, identifies achievable and demonstrable learning goals linked to the knowledge and skills pupils need. > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, accesses and reviews subject resources to ensure that learning goals relate to the ambitious learning outcomes for the longer-term curriculum. 	
Planning backwards from learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, reviews the learning goals for a lesson and identifies the knowledge and skills required to meet them. > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, ensures lessons contain the knowledge and skills in the learning goals and these are sequenced to build towards the learning goals. 	<p>If your teacher is...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Not doing it at all: Review and edit upcoming lesson plans ensuring tasks address all knowledge and skills in lesson learning goals. > Doing it but needs some improvement: Review and edit upcoming lesson plans changing or omitting tasks that do not cover the knowledge and skills in lesson learning goals. > Doing it well, but needs some stretch: Review and edit upcoming lesson plans ensuring knowledge and skills are sequenced to build towards lesson learning goals.
Linking tasks and learning goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, accesses and reviews subject materials to understand how tasks build pupils' knowledge and skills towards the learning goals for a lesson. > Teacher, with the support of a colleague, accesses and reviews subject materials to understand how to adapt task content to efficiently build pupils' knowledge and skills so they can meet the learning goals for a lesson. 	

RECORD YOUR THINKING HERE

DEVELOPMENT AREA	FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA	EXAMPLE PRECISE TARGETS
(select before observing)	(select whilst observing)	(select/write whilst observing)

OBSERVE

Consider the following questions based on a short (approximately 15 minute) observation of your teacher.

What was your teacher's **previous** target? Are they meeting it? How do you know?

For the **DEVELOPMENT AREA** you are focussing on for this observation, what is your teacher already doing well?

Next, go to the previous page and select a **FOCUSED DEVELOPMENT AREA** to further zoom in on. Then select (from the examples) or write one **PRECISE TARGET** (bite-sized action) to coach your teacher on. You can choose to stick with the previous target if your teacher have not made enough progress yet.

How will you model the target to your teacher to show them what good looks like? What questions will you ask to check your teacher understands the model? For example, 'How it is different from your current practice?', 'What impact might it have on your practice and pupils?', 'What links can you see between the model and the module principles (below)?'

Reminder: Your model should help your teacher develop their ability in some of the following:

- > Set tasks that stretch pupils but are achievable within a challenging curriculum.
- > Identifying essential concepts, knowledge, skills and principles of the subject and providing opportunity for all pupils to learn and master these critical components.
- > Draw explicit links between new content and end points in the subject.
- > Build in additional practice or removing unnecessary expositions.

Next, meet with your teacher to work through the 'Feedback' stage of instructional coaching. See the guidance on the feedback stage in the appendices of the Mentor Handbook for support.

REFERENCES

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- Epstein, M., Atkins, M., Cullinan, D., Kutash, K., & Weaver, K. (2008). Reducing behavior problems in the elementary school classroom. IES Practice Guide. bit.ly/ecf-ies
- Gathercole, S., Lamont, E., & Alloway, T. (2006) Working memory in the classroom. *Working memory and education*, 219-240.
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