

The 'Practice' of Teaching & Learning

EDWARD L. MYERS & TEAM ENTERPRISE



Building a strong practice of teaching & learning means treating every lesson as a deliberate cycle: you capture attention, explain the purpose, clarify targets, question deeply, design rich activities, analyze evidence, and plan next steps. The cycle can be broken into seven interlocking components - Hook, Explanation, Learning Targets, Questions, Learning Activities, Analysis, and Planning - each guided by reflective considerations for the teacher.

The **Hook** is the opening move. Its purpose is not entertainment for its own sake, but intentional engagement. A strong hook gathers students' attention, activates prior knowledge, prepares students for the lesson, and makes the lesson meaningful. This might be a brief scenario, a provocative question, a quick demonstration, or a personal connection that signals, "This matters, and you are part of it." By deliberately implementing a strong Hook, you avoid starting class with vague announcements or administrative drift and instead launch learning with focus and relevance.

The **Explanation** comes next and answers the "why" of the lesson. Here, it is revealed why the lesson exists and makes a connection to other learning. The teacher frames the concept within a larger unit, prior knowledge, or real-world application. Students should understand not only what they are doing today, but how it fits into a bigger picture. This step transforms isolated activities into a coherent learning journey and supports transfer, because students see relationships among ideas rather than memorizing fragments.

The **Learning Targets** clarify the "what." Learning targets should communicate what students will know or be able to do by the end of the lesson, reveal what success looks like, allow students to analyze and reflect on their progress, and represent rigor. Well-crafted targets are student-friendly, measurable, and aligned with standards. They give both teacher and students a shared destination. When targets are visible and revisited during and after the lesson, students can self-monitor: "Where am I now relative to this goal?" This supports metacognition and makes assessment feel like a natural extension of learning rather than a surprise.

Questioning is central to the practice of teaching. Questions should promote analysis and further inquiry, reflect higher order thinking, and develop from both the teacher and students. Instead of relying mostly on recall prompts, a strong teaching practice poses and cultivates questions that require explanation, justification, comparison, and speculation. Furthermore, advanced questioning techniques highlight student-generated questions and are a marker of mature practice: when learners are asking their own analytical and exploratory questions, they are actively constructing meaning rather than passively responding.

The heart of the lesson is the **Learning Activities**. Activities should require all learners to actively engage, allow students to construct meaning, match the learning needs of students with appropriate modifications, include various learning styles, and allow students to practice and demonstrate knowledge and skills. Interaction and monitoring are key features. Activities should include teacher & peer discussions, feedback, checks for understanding, follow a coherent sequence, include the appropriate resources, make students' thinking visible, and require students to explain their reasoning/answers. This cluster captures a shift from teacher-centered delivery to student-centered construction. Effective practice is not just about presenting content clearly; it is about engineering experiences where students talk, write, solve, create, and defend ideas. Making thinking visible - through writing, diagrams, discussions, or demonstrations - gives teachers formative data and gives students a chance to refine their understanding. Coherence and appropriate scaffolds ensure that every learner is both supported and challenged.

After instruction comes **The Analysis**. This phase includes concrete student data and assessment(s), sets growth targets, and answers the question, "Have the students learned what I wanted them to learn today?" Analysis is where teaching becomes professional inquiry. Instead of relying on general impressions ("That went pretty well"), the teacher examines work samples, exit tickets, observations, and other evidence against the learning targets. Where did students meet the goal? Where did they fall short? Which misconceptions appeared? This disciplined look at evidence is what transforms experience into expertise.

Finally, **The Plan** closes the cycle by looking forward. It should include the next steps for teaching & learning, reflect the degree of individualized learning that took place, and demonstrate awareness of what occurred during the lesson. Based on the analysis, the teacher decides what to reteach, who needs enrichment or additional support, and how to adjust hooks, explanations, activities, or questions next time. This step prevents lessons from existing in isolation; each one becomes part of a responsive sequence shaped by real student needs.

Taken together, the framework described here offers a concise blueprint for building a robust practice of teaching and learning. It moves educators from improvising day-to-day lessons to engaging in a repeatable, reflective cycle, while designing lessons with purpose, enacting active engagement, studying

evidence, and adapting. Over time, using these lesson dimensions as a “check and connect system” or planning template can sharpen instructional decisions, strengthen student ownership, and turn classrooms into places where both teachers and learners are constantly evolving their craft.