

# Sample Lesson Plans

## Overview

This section contains a collection of Lesson Plans created by the teachers who taught at the New School, Canada (National Youth Literacy Demonstration Project). They focus on literacy development and use Youth Literacy Readings as a basis for integrating discussion, reading and writing. All incorporate strategies designed to engage students' minds, draw them into reading and thinking, and prompt them to offer their opinions, discuss ideas, and share experiences. Most of these Lesson Plans make references to the themes and readings on this site (The \$100 Laptop, How We Think and Learn, Poetry, Multiple Intelligences, Jimmy Baca Biography, About the Brain). Three Lesson Plans (Sort and Predict, Two Column Notes, and Reciprocal Teaching) illustrate the use of teaching and learning strategies (see the Strategy Section). Those lessons can be used with any reading a teacher might select. These plans are not meant to be followed slavishly, rather they are meant to offer ideas on how content-based reading can be connected to students' ideas and experiences and how comprehension strategies, if properly demonstrated and frequently used, can facilitate the understanding of texts, even those which at first glance appear too challenging for struggling readers with little background knowledge in the content areas.

These lesson plans are merely a sample of the lessons that can be created to increase subject-matter knowledge and build a repertoire of skills and strategies that students need as they move on to higher levels of learning. They have been chosen to illustrate that depths of understanding and repeated practice and reinforcement of skills (presented in different contexts) will serve students better than a wide array of fun activities that have little connection to each other.

## ***Purpose and Guiding Principles***

All of these Lesson Plans serve a common purpose: To connect students' background knowledge and experience to what's to be learned, respect their opinions and insights, promote thoughtful interaction with print, demystify the reading process, and by doing so help students become successful learners and competent readers. We know that struggling learners benefit a great deal when lessons focus on three key characteristics: Engagement, focus, and practice. It is this "trinity" that served as a guiding principle for the Lesson Plans in this section.

## ***Lesson Flow***

These Lesson Plans were designed to flow clearly and logically so that the purpose of a lesson and the process of learning (and teaching) is transparent to students. Each lesson incorporates several elements but remains focused on a related set of objectives. Important information and key strategies stay interconnected through engagement and practice. These plans should help teachers stay on course so that students can concentrate on the content of a lesson rather than get distracted by too many asides (although there should always be time to take advantage of a "teachable moment"). To help struggling students be comfortable with a routine for learning, the lessons follow a common flow that generally starts with activating student background

knowledge and is followed by a teacher describing the usefulness of the information or strategy of a lesson. The core of each lesson is hands-on practice with ideas, texts, strategies, and practice that includes students sharing ideas and working collaboratively in groups or in pairs.

### ***Lesson Plan Sequence***

Each lesson plan follows a common sequence: The first sections (1-6) provide an overview, suggest the learning materials that should be on hand, describe the objectives, and list the kinds of activities that can be used to bring the lesson to life. Section 7: A Step-by-Step outlines the teaching and learning activities that form the core of the lesson, including pre-activities that may be needed to build the necessary foundation for the lesson. Post-activities explain the kinds of follow-on lessons a teacher might create to reinforce key concepts and provide additional practice in reading and strategy use. Out-of class assignments are listed as well along with possible extension activities. Section 8: Assessment suggests ways to capture what students have learned through quizzes and tests, informal student reflection or more formal reflections that might find their way into a student portfolio. Since, in the New School Canada, class size was fairly small (20 students) and most classes were team taught, teacher observation and subsequent discussion of student work was a key strategy for assessing who was learning and who was not so that steps could be taken to either challenge a student or provide additional support to help him or her “get” the lesson.

The final two sections of each Lesson Plan (Sections 9 and 10) serve to evaluate the lessons from the teacher’s perspective (What Worked Well and Why) and offers Tips for Teachers who might want to try the lesson and put their own imprint on it. Since these Lesson Plans were selected because the lesson flowed well, students responded and were engaged, subject matter knowledge came across, and students practiced the strategies they needed to make sense of the print in front of their eyes.

### **Focus of Individual Lesson Plans**

#### ***Lesson Plans Focused on Content-Based Readings***

1. **How We Think and Learn** invites students to reflect on their own experiences related to thinking and learning by responding to a series of questions posed in a Pre-Reading Discussion and Anticipation Guide. They then share that information with their group. In the process they are introduced to ideas related to conditioned learning, phobias, and peer pressure, concepts that also appear in the reading How We Think and Learn. To further encourage connections between the text and the student, an activity is introduced that asks students to zone in and highlight a point that appears interesting to them, to add their own thoughts to a passage in the reading, and to synthesize the information by putting the ideas into their own words.
2. **Multiple Intelligences** introduces students to a set of ideas on Multiple Intelligences (see PowerPoint and Reading in the How We Think and Learn section). This lesson also uses an Anticipation Guide along with two other hands-on activities for literacy development, the ZAP activity and a vocabulary activity (Latin is for Word Lovers) that focuses students’ attention on common Latin prefixes that also appear in the Multiple Intelligence Readings.

The Lesson Plan makes reference to two commercial products used in the New School Canada: A Kagan Multiple Intelligences Placemat (<http://www.kaganonline.com/Catalog/index.html>) and a Resource Book for Teachers: 50 Literacy Strategies by Gail E. Thompkins (Pearson Publishing).

3. **About the Brain** challenges students to work with what a reading centering around scientific concepts and containing sophisticated vocabulary. The plan shows students how to use a set of strategies associated with “Reciprocal Reading” (also known as Peer to Peer Reading) to grapple with the ideas and “unpack” what appears to be a dense reading at first glance (The strategies associated with Reciprocal Reading are further explained on the [Strategy Section](#) on this site and in the “Reciprocal Teaching Lesson Plan” below. To help students keep track of the questions they have about vocabulary and concepts (and to encourage them to have questions in the first place), the lesson uses an activity called “Two Column Note Taking”, further explained in the “Two Column Notes Lesson Plan” below.
4. **Jimmy Baca** introduces students to poetry through the biography of Jimmy Baca (*Why Write Poetry*). Jimmy Baca is a contemporary poet engaged in poetry that speaks to youth and adult learners and whose voice can be heard on the video series TV 411(see <http://www.tv411.org>). The New School Canada made extensive use of the poetry sections on TV 411, a series and website specifically designed for youth and adults (videos are available for loan from the Resource Library at Literacy B.C.) For this lesson, Episode 19, Coming into Language was used. The Jimmy Baca lesson also uses a Sort and Predict Activity (see Hands-on Activity Section and Lesson Plan below) to help students see connections between words and concepts that later appear in the reading.) A reader response activity (You and Jimmy Baca, available on the Hands-on Activity Section) is included as well.
5. **Jabberwocky** uses the Lewis Carroll poem to awakens students’ sense of language, showing them that they intuitively know a great deal about the meaning and structure of English. Students focus on tone and mood and then use their background knowledge of English to identify nouns and verbs and other parts of speech, using a Parts of Speech hand-out as a resource (see the Parts of Speech Grammar Activity in the Hands-On Activity section). Ideas for a number of engaging Extension Activities are provided including having students rewrite the poem using real words, visualizing what is going on and story boarding the action and reading the illustrated version of the poem. Skill building activities such as using nonsense words to focus students’ attention on spelling patterns can be found in this plan as well.
6. **Opinions about the \$ 100 Laptop** ask students to read an article about humanitarian aid to children in the developing world, while using a comprehension strategy called Click, Clunk (see also the [Strategy Section](#)). The lesson also reviews and reinforces the strategies associated with Reciprocal Teaching (See Lesson Plan below). At the start of the lesson, students are invited to respond to questions that appear at the end of the reading and give their opinions and later on have the opportunity to see if their opinions are supported by facts or if they may need to revise them.

7.

### ***Lesson Plans Focused on Comprehension Strategies***

1. **Reciprocal Teaching (RT)** introduces four research-based strategies that have been found to positively influence reading comprehension. Students are invited to (1) Ask and Answer Questions based on information in the text, identify information that is not clear and work with others to (2) Clarify difficult language or concepts, to (3) Summarize sections of the text and put them into their own words and to (4) Predict what might be coming up in a text based on the information they have read so far (see also the Strategy Section for a further explanation of Reciprocal Teaching (also known as Peer to Peer Teaching) and descriptions of the individual strategies that make up RT.
2. **Two Column Notes** teaches students to keep track of difficult or interesting passages by drawing two columns and entering their notes on one side of a page and the questions they have about the material on the other. The strategy builds self-monitoring skills and meta-cognitive awareness of one's own processes for making sense of print. The Lesson Plan shows how this strategy can be combined with other comprehension-focused strategies such as ZAP or Reciprocal Teaching. The plan explains how to use two column notes (sometimes called 'double entry journals' as part of note-taking during a lecture, while reading, or to review and study.
3. **Sort and Predict** presents a powerful pre-reading strategy that asks students to create connections between words and sort them into categories. In the process they create concepts and relate ideas to each other and end up implicitly predicting the content of a reading. The lesson plan shows how a relatively simple strategy can result in the use of higher order cognitive skills (categorizing, and creating relationships, justifying one's decisions, and seeing multiple perspectives as they listen to others who formed different categorization. Sort and predict can also be used to reinforce ideas introduced in the 7 Habits of Successful Readers (See Hands-on Activity Section) showing students how relating words to each other is another way of "connecting the dots" in your mind.

### **Files**

#### **Lesson Plan: \$100 Laptop (doc | pdf)**

Students read an article about humanitarian aid (a program providing inexpensive laptops to Third World children) and then use the Click, Clunk strategy to understand the content.

#### **Lesson Plan: About the Brain (doc | pdf)**

Students use Reciprocal Reading and Two Column Note-taking strategies to better understand a reading about how the brain is structured.

#### **Lesson Plan: How We Think and Learn (doc | pdf)**

Students use the **ZAP** strategy (Zone in, Add your own thoughts, Put into your words) to analyze the content of a reading about how we think and learn.

**Lesson Plan: Jabberwocky (doc | pdf)**

Students use word attack strategies in making sense of the nonsense poem "Jabberwocky." They identify nonsense words as to their appropriate parts of speech.

**Lesson Plan: Jimmy Baca (doc | pdf)**

Students use the ZAP strategy and the Sort and Predict pre-reading strategy to better understand the short biography of Jimmy Baca.

**Lesson Plan: Multiple Intelligences (doc | pdf)**

Students use a number of strategies and several documents and presentations to explore the concept of multiple intelligences and identify their own "intelligences."

**Lesson Plan: Reciprocal Teaching (doc | pdf)**

Students follow this teacher-guided strategy that focuses on skill development in four areas of reading comprehension: questioning, clarifying, summarizing, and predicting.

**Lesson Plan: Sort and Predict (doc | pdf)**

Students use the Sort and Predict strategy to analyze a series of words out of context of a reading.

**Lesson Plan: Two Column Notes (doc | pdf)**

Students use this note taking strategy to reinforce the skills of questioning, clarifying, and summarizing.