

Educational Planning Tools and Methods for Extension Educators

Extension has a long history of delivering research-based knowledge to the community. Since the Smith-Lever Act was signed in 1912, land grant universities (LGUs) have been charged with providing quality research-based education to the community. The successful delivery of technical content to lay audiences requires thoughtful planning and execution.

When working with youth audiences, K-12 teachers often receive years of preparation in terms of pedagogy, lesson planning, and curriculum design. Extension educators who work with youth audiences receive ongoing professional development on using and adapting the experiential learning model which has five steps: Experience, Share, Process, Generalize, and Apply (National 4-H, 2011). When followed, the model will lead learners through an experience that will teach a new topic and/or skill followed by intentional practice and internalization. This process encourages authentic learning for the participant. (Fields 2017)

When adults are the target audience of the extension educator, the opportunities for exposure to pedagogy and research-based teaching models may not be readily available. Extension professionals who enter the field may not have formal educational training in the method and design of adult learning known as andragogy. According to Dvorak (2014), andragogy is rooted in the pursuit of lifelong academic advancement of adult learners.

In Extension, adult learners are community members, business owners, farmers/growers, volunteers, parents, or university faculty/staff. Each of these populations have their own set of experiences and different levels of prior knowledge on a given subject. The challenge for the adult education practitioner is to present content that will engage the audience and enhance the knowledge of the participants. Knowles (2005) states that when teaching adults, lessons should contain material that can be used

immediately, is relevant to the learner, and is presented in a welcoming environment. Furthermore, educators should present content that is engaging to participants and is respectful of their prior experience and/or knowledge related to the topic.

This publication will discuss the major components of educational planning tools for extension professionals. It will provide strategies needed to adapt/create learning materials that meet the needs of the intended audience.

Engage Your Learners

Youth and adult learners who attend extension workshops or seminars elect to participate. In many cases, the participants come to learn more about a topic, renew certification, or gain a new skill/competency. Since learners come by free will, the instructor must prepare materials that add value to the participant.

Considering the teaching, scholarship, and/or service expectations placed on educators/agents, they should use educational tools that are easy to plan, implement, and replicate. According to Fields (2017), a standardized lesson plan enhanced quality programs by efficiently providing consistent content delivery. If planned appropriately, extension educators will communicate material that will impact the knowledge, skills, and attitudes of the learner.

Extension educators should consider how participants learn as well as teaching techniques when preparing for a teaching event. There are a variety of techniques that when used properly, can increase learner engagement and information retention (Dvorak 2014). According to Fields (2011), when selecting a tool that will prepare an educator for a teaching session, it is important to consider the following: *target audience, the time allotted, expected outcomes, and alignment with campus-wide initiatives.*

- ▶ **Target Audience:** Refers to the clientele that will attend the session. For some extension professionals, the audience may be a class of 3rd graders or the local garden club. For others, it may be a group of producers who want to learn about changes in legislation or safety recommendations.
- ▶ **Time Allotted:** Indicates the amount of time available for the one-time session to occur. Write in the amount of time allotted and use the Estimated Time section of the selected tool to map out each portion of the session. This will prevent running over or under the time allotted. Attendees will appreciate starting and ending the session on time.
- ▶ **Learning Objectives:** A key part of planning is to list the knowledge, attitudes, and/or skills participants will learn. It is important to list learning outcomes (also known as objectives) so that the instructor can refer to them while planning. Educators can also use the objectives to promote the course as well as during the session so that the learners know what to expect. Learning objectives give purpose to training, inform participants of what will be taught, and measure what was learned (Northwest Center for Public Health Practice 2014). Evaluation tools, if offered by the educator should be tied to the expected outcomes and learning objectives. This practice will give a measurable indication of whether the learning outcome was achieved.
- ▶ **Alignment with Campus-Wide Initiatives:** Although the instructor is responsible for providing the learning opportunity in the community, all extension efforts must be coordinated. Many LGUs are guided by a set of core principles and/or long-range goals. The work of extension program areas should be aligned within the core principles of the LGU to improve impacts to the greater community.

Select a Planning Tool

In extension, learning experiences can be single-session workshops, multi-session workshops, seminars, short courses, semester classes, etc. For each learning opportunity, the following tools are available: *Youth Lesson Planning Template*, *Adult Seminar Template*, and *Short Course Planning Template*. To select the best tool for a teaching event, the first item to consider is the type of learning experience being prepared.

Type of Learning Experiences

Youth Workshops

In this construct, the youth will interact with the instructor for one session. The most appropriate planning tool would be the Youth Lesson Planning Template (Appendix 1). This tool outlines the major components of a one-time seminar/workshop. The Youth Lesson Planning Template allows the instructor to note the date of the session, the time allotted, and group information to avoid duplicating workshops/seminars topics to the same group. The template also has places for the instructor to plan materials needed, intended outcomes, evaluation goals, and main points to address within the time allotments. While preparing or during the workshop/seminar, the instructor can use the template to make notes on items to remember to do, say, or bring.

Adult Workshops/Seminars

Workshops and seminars for adults usually occur in single or multiple sessions. This could be a single session workshop on a standalone topic or multi-part workshop on similar concepts. The Adult Workshop/Seminar Template (Appendix 2) would be the most appropriate planning tool. The instructor can make note of the date of the session, the time allotted, and group notes. The planning tool includes spaces for the instructor to plan materials needed, learning objectives, and evaluation. For specific time interval spaces, suggestions are provided for sample content. Space is also available to list the teaching methods, key points, and references needed. While preparing or during the workshop/seminar, the template has space for the instructor to write notes to help with organization.

Multi-session/Courses

Multi-sessions are learning opportunities that can also be delivered as courses that are based on an overall topic (for example, a Master Gardener training course). The Extension Course Planning Template (Appendix 3) enables the educator to create a plan of the learning experience. When planning for courses, the educator will consider the session number, date, topic, key points/inputs, and outcomes/outputs. After the course plan is developed, the educator can make detail individual workshops/seminars using the Adult Workshop/Seminar Template (Appendix 2).

Analysis & Reflection

Reflection is a strategy where educators make observations after the session has ended to evaluate how it was conducted. The analysis phase is used to determine whether the learning objectives were met and how to make improvements in future sessions. Richards (1991) stated that reflective teaching based on observation and analysis is valuable for the continued growth of the practitioner. Making notes on the lesson after it concludes is a way for the educator to be better equipped to teach the session at the next offering.

Preparation is Key

Extension educators are professionals who are content area experts in their respective fields. For this reason, they are often asked to communicate information using various delivery modes. To ensure that the information delivered is in alignment with University goals and meets the intended audience objectives, preparation is key. The tools presented in this document are meant to increase the efficiency of the practitioner and the quality of instructional outcomes. The ability to efficiently communicate may be the difference that determines if a community makes healthy changes in their knowledge, attitudes, or skill level. Extension is an informal educational platform but the preparation and planning that is involved in delivering research-based content are essential to successful communication with the public.

References

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Youth Lesson Planning Worksheet

Lesson Title: _____

Prepared By: _____ **Date:** _____

Location/Purpose:	Time Required:
Intended Audience: (Group Name)	Intended Age/Grade:
Learning Objectives:	Youth Priority Needs:
Materials List:	Success Indicator:
Background Info:	
5 E Model – (Include time required for each section)	
Engage: (Grabber/Hook)	
Explore (Experience)	

Explain (Why it happened/What is going on?)	
Extend/Process (What is the next step OR extension for advanced learners)	
Evaluate (How can the new learning be applied to other areas?)	
Preparation Notes for the Educator:	Reflections on the Lesson:
References:	Adapted By:

Reference: Fields, N. (2017). *Developing Extension Lesson Plans: Using a 4-H Youth Development Lesson Plan Template to Strengthen the Rigor and Quality of Research-based 4-H Programs* (University of Maryland Extension Publication FS-1060). Retrieved from <https://extension.umd.edu/learn/publications/developing-extension-lesson-plans-using-4-h-youth-development-lesson-plan>

Adult Seminars/Workshops Template

Title: _____ **Week:** _____ **Group Name:** _____
Date: _____ **Time Needed:** _____ **Audience:** _____

Learning Objectives/Outcomes (What do you want them to know at the end?):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

Materials List:

Seminar Format:

TIME	CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/KEY POINTS	RESOURCES
	<p>Housekeeping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Notices ▶ Reminders ▶ Agenda & Learning Objectives – on board, screen or handout 		
	<p>Introduction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Attention getter ▶ Topic and chapter – tie into course outline (if applicable) ▶ Benefit to future career ▶ Review, tie into previous material 		

TIME	CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/KEY POINTS	RESOURCES
	<p>Knowledge Check</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Gauge previous knowledge of topic ▶ How will it be measured? 		
	<p>Learning Objective #1</p>		
	<p>Learning Objective #2</p>		
	<p>Learning Objective #3</p>		

TIME	CONTENT	TEACHING METHODS/KEY POINTS	RESOURCES
	<p>Evaluation/ Assessment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Assessment (did learning take place?) 		
	<p>Conclusion</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Refer to objectives/ learning outcomes ▶ Review and summarize main points ▶ Program Evaluation ▶ Teacher Effectiveness Links/QR Code 		

Instructor Notes:

Reflection:

- 1. Was the instructional objective met? How do I know that the participants learned what was intended?**
- 2. Were the participants productive? Engaged? How do I know?**
- 3. If I had the opportunity to teach the lesson again to the same group of students, would I do anything differently? What? Why?**

Adapted from <http://www.humber.ca/centreforteachingandlearning/instructional-strategies/teaching-methods/course-development-tools/building-lesson-plans.html>

Extension Course Planning Template

Title: _____ **Audience:** _____

Instructor: _____ **Location:** _____

WEEK	DATE	SESSION TITLE	MAJOR TOPICS/INPUTS	OUTCOMES/OUTPUTS
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

Adapted from <https://www.algonquincollege.com/profres/files/2013/10/Revised-10-Course-Planning-Lifesaver.pdf>

Instructor Notes:

Lesson Reflection/Autopsy

- 1. Were the instructional objectives met? How do I know participants learned what was intended?**

- 2. Were the participants productively engaged? How do I know?**

- 3. What additional assistance, support, and/or resources would have further enhanced this course?**

- 4. If I had the opportunity to teach this course again, what would make the content stronger? The delivery more efficient?**