

At-a-Glance Brief #2: Lesson Deconstruction/Reconstruction as Virtual Fieldwork

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Video Analysis of Teaching Task (as Virtual Fieldwork): Lesson De/Reconstruction

Like the teaching of writing which often begins with deconstruction of a model text before asking learners to construct their own, this activity uses an inductive approach.

Purposes:

- Lesson planning supports the design of high-quality practices, tasks, and materials that need to be developed in advance.
- Lesson plans are windows into teachers' pedagogical reasoning. Teachers' fully-developed lesson plans should give a strong indication of their beliefs, knowledge, and professional vision.
- Lesson planning is often a challenging skill to master for novices, as it requires a detailed, step-by-step visualization process that depends on prior experience working with learners. By allowing teachers or students of teaching to deconstruct a lesson based on the video of its implementation before asking them to construct it, facilitators can activate teachers' drawing connections between the plan and the action.

Materials:

- A full-length lesson on video (available from some of the resources in [Virtual Fieldwork Brief #1](#))
- This assignment can also be practiced using [this video](#), which is of a fourth grade science lesson, and it is about thirty minutes long. When using videos retrieved from online sources, make sure to begin the video analysis task after any introductory text or commentary so as not to bias the viewers. Allowing participants to watch "raw" video is essential to all of these tasks. Downloading them from their source enables facilitators to edit them or trim away text and commentary, and allows viewing without the labels or comments that might be found next to the video on the host site.

An Example:

Step 1. The purpose for the video analysis is set. Participants are told the focus of the VAT activity is to understand how lesson planning relates to instruction.

Step 2. Viewers are asked to watch an entire lesson on video. This video should be no more than 30 minutes and show key lesson elements such as an opening, teacher modeling, student work, and closure, while certain parts like quiet working period can be edited out. The subject area, grade level, student population, etc. can be selected to be relevant to the viewers. (As with all of these activities, the facilitator should try the complete activity first on their own with the video clip they plan to use to ensure it will be workable for the task.) Viewers watch and take descriptive notes along with time stamps, to indicate the different phases of the lesson and what is taking place in each.

Step 3. Teachers are then asked to compare their "deconstructed" lesson video with a partner. The facilitator can ask teachers to note where they were similar or different. Using their notes, the partners fill in a lesson plan template—one that is locally relevant.

Step 4. The partners then share out to the whole group and a "master" lesson plan is developed based on the observed teaching. Essentially, viewers are working backwards from the lesson itself to discover what the

original lesson plan might have contained. If the original lesson plan from the teacher featured in the video is obtainable, that can be an interesting further extension, and participants can compare what the group developed vs. the actual lesson plan. Where the teacher deviated, why they might have, and how it impacted the lesson can all be discussed.

Step 5. Teachers then discuss the plan in small groups and determine what they might reconstruct or change in the lesson plan based on what they viewed in its implementation. Pairs come up with possible alternatives.

Step 6. Teachers are given a chance to reflect on the entire task.

Template
<i>Lesson De/Reconstruction: Focus on Lesson Design</i>
1. Quick-write: To what extent do you think lesson plans should mirror the actual teaching that happens?
2. Watch the video and use time stamps and descriptions to capture in your notes the lesson phases and activities that you see.
3. Using your observation notes, fill in a lesson plan template that you use in your school. Were there any parts you could not fill in based on the observation of the lesson? What does that signify to you?
4. Share your lesson plan with the group and create a master lesson plan that seems to have been the one this teacher made for this lesson.
5. How might you “reconstruct”, or change this lesson plan based on what you viewed in its implementation?
6. Reflect on this Video Analysis Task. What do you think you learned or reinforced from participating in this activity?

Optional Variations and Extensions:

- a) Teachers observe for lesson plan design across other subject areas, grade levels, or student populations. Repeated sampling often results in teachers discovering similar patterns as well as important differences.
- b) Teachers share lesson plans that they felt went very well, and the videos of those lessons where possible.
- c) Teachers examine lesson plans that are not clear and create criteria for their design that the community agrees on.
- d) Teachers create an ongoing focus for sharing practice around lesson design, for instance working on lesson closure with their learning community over several sessions.