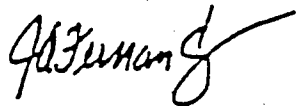


NEW YORK CITY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR

TO: COMMUNITY SCHOOL BOARD PRESIDENTS, ALL PRINCIPALS, UFT
CHAPTER LEADERS, PA/PTA PRESIDENTS, ALL SUPERINTENDENTS,
DISTRICT UFT AND CSA REPRESENTATIVES, EXECUTIVE
DIRECTORS, HEADS OF OFFICES

FROM: JOSEPH A. FERNANDEZ, CHANCELLOR 

SUBJECT: LESSON PLANS

Planning by teachers is a critical element in the education of our students. This planning provides a blueprint for such educational priorities as the implementation of curriculum, the development of long and short-term expectations for student learning, the integration of subject areas, monitoring of pupil progress and modifications of strategies and objectives based upon student performance and need.

A pupil oriented, sequential and self-evaluative approach to lesson planning provides a solid foundation for effective teaching which best meets the needs of students as a group and as individuals. Recognizing the fundamental importance of teacher planning for student learning, and in order to encourage development and sharing of successful instructional practices, the New York City Public Schools and the United Federation of Teachers have incorporated the following into our 1990-91 Agreement:

The development of lesson plans by and for the use of the teacher is a professional responsibility vital to effective teaching. The organization, format, notation and other physical aspects of the lesson plan are appropriately within the discretion of each teacher. A principal or supervisor may suggest, but not require, a particular format or organization, except as part of a program to improve deficiencies of teachers who receive U-ratings or formal warnings.

In line with our belief in the educational value of lesson plans as an instrument developed by teachers within the context of a school's educational philosophy to help students learn, the specifics of each plan will be left to the professional judgment of the teacher. Lesson plans are for the personal use of the teacher. In line with the new Agreement, central, district and school level mandates regarding "the organization, format, notation and other physical aspects of the lesson plan" will not be issued and those established prior to the date of this circular will no longer be in effect.

Furthermore, as indicated in the Agreement, a principal or supervisor may require a particular format or organization only "as part of a program to improve deficiencies of teachers who receive U-ratings or formal warnings" (e.g., a letter in a teacher's file that articulates a deficiency in the planning aspect of instruction).

Within the school community of supervisors, teachers and students, lesson planning is recognized to be a vehicle for furthering instructional outcomes and a way of enhancing professional development. If the development of a school instructional plan is a collaborative effort among supervisors and teachers, as part of that process teachers may be encouraged to share and coordinate lesson planning. Since the mechanical, ritualized collection of lesson plans does not further these goals, it is prohibited.

Professional supervisory practice includes an array of activities, such as time spent in classrooms demonstrating teaching techniques, assuring that professional development occurs and determining that appropriate curriculum outcomes are realized. Supervisors may, as part of a program to evaluate and improve instruction, request an individual teacher to indicate his or her planning strategies and how those strategies involve coordination of curriculum, student progress and outcomes (e.g., as part of a conference prior to or following a formal observation). Furthermore, a procedure must be established in each school to ensure that appropriate instructional activities are conducted when a teacher's class must be covered because of absence or emergency. Such activities should be relevant to the educational priorities for the individual class.

Given the importance of lesson planning for student learning, I strongly recommend that school staff take advantage of the expertise of their colleagues and share with each other different and innovative approaches to planning and instruction. Teachers and supervisors are encouraged to discuss successes (as well as problems) related to planning as part of collaborative staff development programs and faculty conferences. Planning for the needs of unique populations such as our limited English proficient and special education students will be enhanced by this professional exchange of ideas. Teachers new to our profession can also benefit from access to the planning strategies of experienced colleagues and supervisors. School-based management/shared decision-making (SBM/SDM) schools should consider utilizing varied and unique approaches to lesson planning to maximize the student outcomes described in their SBM/SDM plans.

This emphasis on peer interaction and diversified instructional strategies is part of a larger commitment my administration has made to increased student achievement and professional evaluation and development. As the 1990-91 Agreement with the UFT states:

The UFT and the Board of Education are committed to attracting and retaining the most competent staff and will strive towards the creation of an evaluation and professional development plan that gives each staff member choices and a role in his/her own professional growth. This program should enable staff to assist in the professional development of less experienced colleagues.

To this end, the UFT and the Board of Education will establish a joint committee which will undertake a one-year study to seek out and put into place a high quality prescriptive evaluation and professional growth system.

We will seek to enhance and develop skills and knowledge as well as provide a means of identifying those whose teaching competence is in question.

The expanded opportunities for teachers to develop individual planning procedures of high quality in a collegial atmosphere, as well as the establishment of the joint committee to focus on evaluation and professional development, hold great promise. It is crucial that the accumulated talent, experience and dedication found in our public schools be marshaled for the success of all our students.

JAF:dh

c: Deputy Chancellors
Chief Executives
James Vlasto
Lynne Savage