

8: CRITIQUE

Review and evaluate the lesson plan by exposing it to common classroom scenarios, then act on the insights.

THE
LESSON
DESIGN
TOOLKIT

THE SIX CRITIQUE HATS

Concrete, quantifiable evidence can make decisions easy, but designers seldom have the luxury of certainty. When moving forward in ambiguous circumstances, many insights can come from subjective evaluation methods.

One subjective evaluation method is critique. By combining personal experience and rules of thumb, critique can rapidly identify issues in a plan and generate superior alternatives without the burdensome process of quantitative evaluation.

One form of critique is the "six thinking hats" method. By using six different "thinking hats," many different kinds of feedback can be generated, each useful in improving a lesson plan.

Use the questions below to evaluate the plan and discover issues by exposing it to common classroom challenges.

White hat: Are the different parts of the plan clear to you?

- When are students moving, making, or working with to each other?
- When is the bathroom break?

Yellow hat: What are the benefits of this plan?

- What's the strongest aspect of this plan?
- What will students say and think as they leave the class?

Black hat: What are the risks and weaknesses of this plan?

- If this lesson goes poorly, why will that be?
- What if a student hasn't done the reading? How might they still participate?
- What if a student won't engage in the activity? How might they become reengaged?

Red hat: How will students feel during this lesson?

- What will this class have done to build relationships between students?
- Is there a part of this lesson that you don't feel good about?
- What's the most boring part? The most engaging?
- When is student energy at its lowest? Why is this the case? How might these issues be mitigated?
- If someone falls asleep, when will that be? What can you do to prevent this?

Green hat: What are other ways to accomplish these outcomes?

- What alternatives haven't been adequately explored?
- Is there a less conventional way of teaching this?

Blue hat: Has a planning process been followed?

- Can you articulate the main parts of the plan without checking your notes?
- Is there a part that you will improvise? Have the main ideas of that activity been adequately considered?

Ready? Share the plan with someone else and ask for their thoughts. This can be with colleagues, a subset of your students, or anyone available. Try teaching a portion of your lesson, even if it's not completely finished.

Teach your lesson. After class, continue to workbook 9 to reflect and leave notes for next time.

Six thinking hats method adapted from De Bono, E. (1999). Six thinking hats (1st Back Bay pbk. ed., rev. and updated. ed.). Boston: Back Bay Books.