MAKING CURRICULUM CONCRETE: LESSON PLANS AND STORYBOARDS

By Robert Weisser

Solid preparation is the foundation of any successful instructional effort. **Preparation is not just listing resources on paper; it is also understanding how to use the resources,** how to captivate the audience, and how to empower students to take control of their education.

It's an age-old truism that you can't get to your destination if you don't know where you're going. This also applies to the creation of engaging curriculum. The most brilliant teachers may not need much time to develop their lesson plans; but for the rest of us, it can seem very challenging. Within elearning, storyboards help bring to life the learning prescribed in lesson plans.

Creating Lesson Plans

Being as detailed as possible in a lesson plan pays great dividends, not only in preparing for the lesson but in carrying it out. And it's essential to have all of the details in one place. The volume of information this requires may seem daunting, but personal experience and knowledge may be supplemented by print and online teaching resources. For example, one section of the Scholastic.com website is the Teachers corner (http://www.scholastic.com/teachers/). Besides Strategies & Ideas, Student Activities, and Books & Authors, you can pull down the Resources & Tools menu and find Lesson Plans for most any subject and grade.

Let's take a look at how a lesson plan is created.

1. **Begin with the end in mind.** What should students learn from this lesson? What do state or national standards require students to know about this subject? How does that fit into the overall curriculum? These three questions will lead to a wide-ranging consideration of the lesson's material, and may well open out onto new pathways of discovery for students. In addition, this sort of brainstorming can reveal new connections with other lessons in the curriculum that can be exploited later.

   Add to the lesson plan:

   - **A list of standard alignments, with the language and clarification statements included.** Not just those of the primary subject, but the related or underlying skills and knowledge as well. For example, a science lesson plan should include the Next Generation Science Standards (NGSS), state standards, and related Common Core Math and Literacy standards.
   - **Concepts, facts, and details essential to complete the comprehension of the topic.** This can be in paragraph or outline form; in fact, it's sometimes best to use a graphic organizer such as a flow chart or concept wheel.
   - **Accommodations needed for students, including ESL students and students with disabilities.** These may include time or staffing adjustments, lesson-specific language instruction, or use of simulations.

2. **Decide the instructional method(s) for the lesson.** Does the lesson work best with independent research, lecture, whole-group discussion, or other options? Or is it a subject that will benefit from a combination of methods: for example, a short lecture, followed by a whole-group discussion to ensure students understand the information, leading to team research tasks and then hands-on projects.

Add to the lesson plan:

- Essential vocabulary list: subject-specific words, technical vocabulary, etc.
- Materials list: individual or group technology, graphic organizers, student tasks
- Resources list: print and online data, documents, and websites
- Notes on how to best present specific information

3. **Determine how students will practice the skill or analyze the information they learn.** If they learn about interconnections between species in an aquatic environment, what will they do with this knowledge to gain a deeper understanding of the world? Will they do independent practice, manipulate an online simulation, cooperate on a hands-on project, or something else?

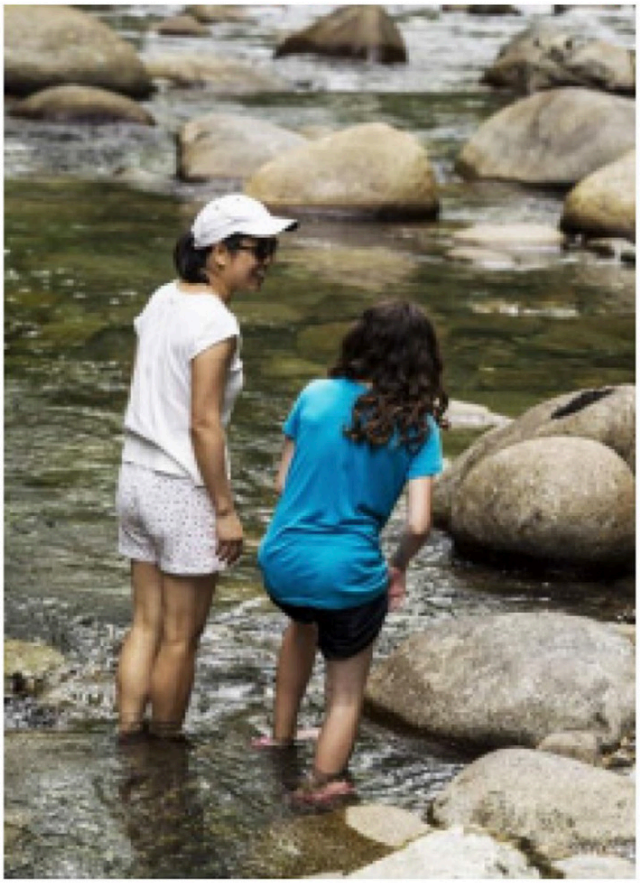
   Add to the lesson plan:

   - Comprehensive, step-by-step instructions for the task
   - Background data or details in appropriate format
   - Guidance for site visits for hands-on work or other non-classroom activities

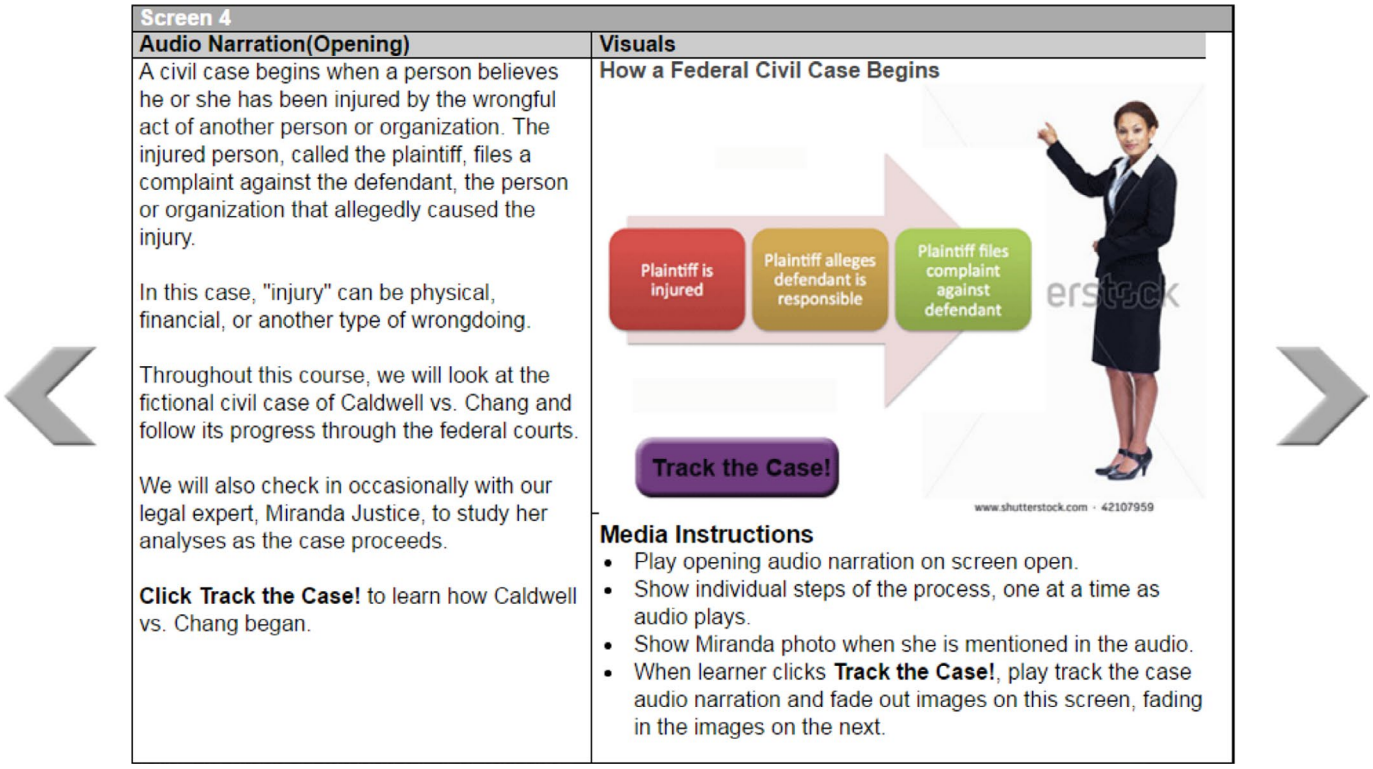
4. **Decide how students' learning can be most effectively assessed.** Assessment is an ongoing matter. Do students need a pre-assessment to establish baseline knowledge, or is that determined by their completion of the previous lesson? What opportunities present themselves for knowledge checks and immediate feedback and correction during the lesson, and how should these be accomplished? What will determine students' mastery of the topic: multiple choice exam, essay, collaborative project?

   Add to the lesson plan:

   - Assessment mechanisms: group or individual, oral/written or digital



For an excellent example of a complete middle-school science lesson plan about stream ecology, click on the picture.



Screen 4	
Audio Narration(Opening)	**Visuals**
A civil case begins when a person believes he or she has been injured by the wrongful act of another person or organization. The injured person, called the plaintiff, files a complaint against the defendant, the person or organization that allegedly caused the injury. In this case, "injury" can be physical, financial, or another type of wrongdoing. Throughout this course, we will look at the fictional civil case of Caldwell vs. Chang and follow its progress through the federal courts. We will also check in occasionally with our legal expert, Miranda Justice, to study her analyses as the case proceeds. **Click Track the Case!** to learn how Caldwell vs. Chang began.	**How a Federal Civil Case Begins** Plaintiff is injured Plaintiff alleges defendant is responsible Plaintiff files complaint against defendant Track the Case! www.shutterstock.com · 42107959 **Media Instructions** • Play opening audio narration on screen open. • Show individual steps of the process, one at a time as audio plays. • Show Miranda photo when she is mentioned in the audio. • When learner clicks **Track the Case!**, play track the case audio narration and fade out images on this screen, fading in the images on the next.

Using Storyboards

In the hands of a skilled educator, a lesson plan by itself is enough to facilitate learning. Still, in the current educational environment, it makes sense to use digital strategies to supplement or replace face-to-face instruction to realize the advantages of blended learning. Well-developed storyboards are extremely useful in this context.

Storyboards are sometimes discounted because many people identify them with static slide presentations in which an instructor stands in front of a group and reads the slides out loud as they are projected on a large screen. Although these presentations still exist, there are many ways of using storyboards to make instruction dynamic, audience-friendly, and user-controlled.

The screen shows part of a storyboard for a college-level government course. You can see that it's not the end-user version, as it has the script for the narrator, instructions for automating the video, and a placeholder piece of art. However, all the important elements are here!

The title of this lesson is "How Civil Cases Progress Through the Federal Courts," and it is part of an introductory US government course. The storyboard is designed to be interactive, and the learners themselves dictate the speed at which they advance through the lesson, using the right and left arrows to move from screen

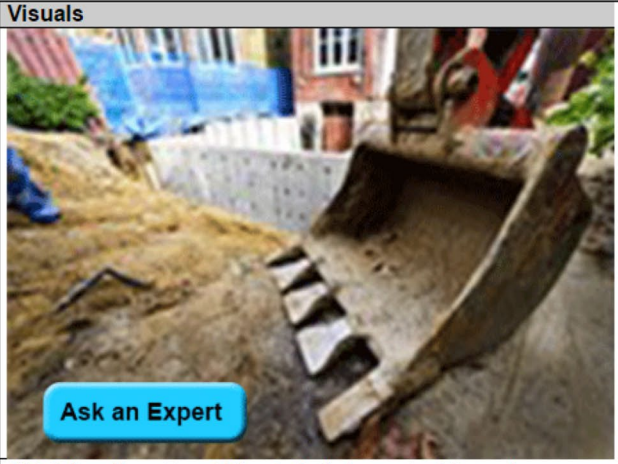
to screen. In addition, other interactive features appear on individual screens to help students better understand the process and access supplemental material.

The Audio Narration on the left side operates in conjunction with the Visuals to present the essential content. Following the Media Instructions, you can see that the Visuals are dynamic, and are timed to match the narration. Thus, as the first paragraph of the audio plays, the three steps in the process of how a federal civil case begins are displayed, one after the other, on the screen. This reinforces the step-by-step nature of the opening of the civil case.

The narration continues to introduce the lesson, and then advises learners that they can click the **Track the Case!** button to learn more about the fictional case. This button will appear several times in the lesson to provide specific details about the case when they are needed. When students click **Track the Case!,** they see the following screen:

This is the first installment about the case of *Caldwell vs. Chang*, and includes the background and reasons for the civil suit. Students can listen to the details, pausing the narration to take notes if desired, or click through to the next phase of the trial and come back later. There is also another button to click: **Ask an Expert**, which is a different narration giving legal opinions about the case.

Screen 5

Audio Narration(Track the Case!)	Visuals
Edwin Chang is a general contractor in southwestern Pennsylvania. Lacey Caldwell is a homeowner in Morgantown, West Virginia who hired Mr. Chang to manage a major home addition project at her home in Morgantown. The total estimated cost of the home addition was $120,000. On May 17, 2012, Ms. Caldwell paid Mr. Chang a deposit of $40,000 to pay for materials, which Chang needed to purchase before beginning on the home addition. Chang delivered a load of materials on June 14, 2012. This partial delivery had a value of around $10,000. On June 16, Chang subsequently requested a project labor fee of $50,000 to hire subcontractors and begin the project. Caldwell delivered the check to Chang on June 17, 2012. Mr. Chang never started the work, and repeated requests to return the $100,000 were ignored. On August 1, Ms. Caldwell filed suit against Mr. Chang in the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Pennsylvania. The lawsuit requested damages in the amount of $100,000 to cover Ms. Caldwell's expenditures and additional punitive damages in the amount of $15,000.	 Click **Ask an Expert** to get Miranda Justice's expert opinion on the case, including why this is a federal case. **Media Instructions** • When learner clicks **Ask an Expert**, open the expert overlay (shown below). • Flash the forward arrow to prompt user to click to next screen.

The content of this course is very intricate and technical, but user interest is maintained by a these features:

- Clear, expressive visuals
- Combination of visuals and narration
- User control over progress through lesson, including review of previous screens
- Interactive screens, buttons, arrows, and assessments
- Creative use of special fades and nested screens

These elements of great storyboard design make the lesson come to life for learners.

(To see the complete version of the storyboard lesson, click on either of the two screens.)

Conclusion

Solid preparation is the foundation of any successful instructional effort. Preparation is not just listing resources on paper; it is also understanding how to use the resources, how to captivate the audience, and how to empower students to take control of their education. Knowing how to use comprehensive lesson plans and creative, dynamic storyboards are keys to inspiring students to learn.

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