

Lesson Plan Explanation

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IN627 Contemporary Learning Theory for Diverse Learners

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August 22, 2021

Caine et al. (2016) define natural learning as a means of making sense of experience and developing new capacities to act in the world. It is my job as a special education teacher to take the experiences my students have and help them interpret and learn from them. I need to teach my students in a way that helps them to grow and make decisions based on their expanding knowledge. This lesson plan was created with what Caine et al. (2016) say are the three critical elements of instruction: relaxed alertness, complex experience, and active processing. I have used these three different concepts to plan a lesson for my ninth-grade special education class.

Relaxed alertness is a state of mind where students are at their best for learning. Caine et al. (2016) explain that learning in a pleasant environment actually can have an effect on the brain. Students who are comfortable, confident, and happy are ready to learn. For students to be in the best headspace to learn, they need to be relaxed and feel comfortable in the classroom. I will start working on relaxed alertness on the first day they walk into the classroom with shared procedures and expectations. I will also do this by spending time making personal relationships with my students. Over time, they will see that our classroom is one that they can be free to be themselves and a place where they can make mistakes and learn from them. The classroom environment will be one that they can be heard, seen, and respected.

When the students come into the room the day of the lesson, relaxing music will be playing softly. I will greet each student by name and ask them to sit quietly and start reading the messages around the room. I will speak to any students who need to talk to me and give them my time and attention. I will make sure there are no distractions while the students are reading the inspirational messages placed around the room.

The second element of the lesson plan will be a complex experience. Caine et al. (2016) state all students learn more effectively when involved in experiences that naturally call on the

use of their senses, action, movement, and decision making. In the lesson, students will be given an ice cube with a frozen penny inside. They will race against each other to be the first person to get their penny out. They cannot use their mouths and cannot use something to smash it. This hands-on experience will make the students have to think about their prior knowledge of different states of matter and problem solve how to get the penny out of the ice.

There is a second complex experience where the students will watch the short film *Caminandes 3: Llamigos*. Enriched environments should be stimulating, complex, and challenging, with elements of novelty and variety (Caine et al., 2016). In this lesson, I am having the students watch a video that would appeal to them, is short and to the point, and sends a good message. This is a visual experience for students that will appeal to their interests and emotions.

The third element of instruction in the lesson plan is active processing. This is where students process each complex experience and consolidate it into their memory. Caine et al. (2016) state that active processing is the art of digesting, thinking about, reflecting on, and making sense of experience and of consolidating learning. Students will generate questions with guidance from the teacher about the experience they just had. Together, the class will connect their prior knowledge (of goals) with the new element (perseverance) that the teacher presents. The teacher will guide the lesson about goals and perseverance with student feedback and will write down their answers in charts to be hung in the classroom for use later by the students.

Continuing to actively process the lesson, students will partner with each other and will discuss goals they want to work on and how they will accomplish them. Students will collaborate and help each other work on the Never Give Up Worksheet. Together they will also create motivational posters about perseverance.

For further study, students can work on extra credit opportunities where they can learn more about goals and perseverance and share their research with the class.

I put this lesson together because the Applied Studies Curriculum works on making and pursuing goals. The ninth graders in the special education classroom have had previous lessons on how to create goals. They needed to still learn about attaining goals and the challenges that might happen. I introduced the trait of perseverance in this lesson so they could understand its meaning and how it relates to making and pursuing goals. I hope that after this lesson, students will understand that working towards their goals might be challenging, but now they have strategies to help keep them motivated to reach their goals.

I used the three critical elements of instruction: relaxed alertness, complex experience, and active processing because they are fundamentals to good teaching. I wanted to deliver the lesson in a way that would have the most impact on my students. I want the students to be able to use this knowledge to connect to new learning and to use it in the future while working towards their goals.

References

Caine, R. N., Caine, G., McClintic, C., Klimek, & Klimek, K. J. (2016). *12 Brain/Mind Learning Principles in Action: Teach for the Development of Higher-Order Thinking and Executive Function* (3rd ed.). Corwin.