

Script for Making the Most of the Multilevel Class
Podcast 3: The Art of Orchestrating a Multilevel Lesson

NARRATOR

Making the Most of the Multilevel Class. Podcast 3.

Welcome to the third in a series of seven podcasts, entitled *Making the Most of the Multilevel Class*. These audio presentations were developed for the California Adult Literacy Professional Development Project, or CALPRO, by adult education curriculum specialist Jayme Adelson-Goldstein and CALPRO research analyst Catherine Green.

Making the Most of the Multilevel Class was created to serve adult education instructors working in classes with learners of varying proficiency levels. Many of the instructional strategies presented here work equally well with both native and non-native English speakers--in ESL, ABE and GED classes. This series focuses on multilevel ESL classes and draws examples from ESL content.

And now let's join Jayme Adelson-Goldstein for our third installment, *The Art of Orchestrating the Multilevel Lesson*.

JAYME ADELSON-GOLDSTEIN

Hi, again! I'm Jayme Adelson-Goldstein and today we'll look at one of the more challenging tasks associated with multilevel instruction: planning activities for each stage of the lesson. Over the years I've heard teachers refer to the multilevel class as a three-ring circus, but I think the image a colleague of mine uses is more apt. Marjorie Chamberlain compares planning and teaching a multilevel class to conducting an orchestra. Each section sometimes plays its separate part of the score, and sometimes sections play the same part in their different musical voices. But throughout, all musicians play towards the common goal of a beautiful, communicative symphony. So, as we discuss the process of lesson planning for our diverse, wonderful and challenging multilevel classroom, let's make it our goal is to keep listening for the music.

In Podcast 2 we saw that the first step in planning the multilevel lesson is identifying its theme and leveled objectives. Our next step is to identify the lesson activities that work well in multilevel environments and that support each level's lesson objectives. We also need to correlate the activities to the seven stages of a lesson: warm up/review, introduction, presentation, guided or controlled practice, communicative or less-controlled practice, evaluation and application. And we need to consider how those activities make use of the benefits of a multilevel class.

In order to give relevant examples throughout our discussion, I'll continue to refer back to our multilevel lesson on Time, where lower-level learners are identifying times of day, mid-level learners are working with schedules, and higher-level learners are working with time-management strategies.

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So, let's start with the first stage of the lesson plan: the warm-up/review. This stage plays two roles in the multilevel class: to review and/or preview content students will need for the lesson **AND** to build class community.

Because learners in a multilevel class depend on each other during group and pair work activities, it's important to strengthen the connection between learners across levels. The content used during the warm-up/review stage incorporates previously learned (or easily learned) content, so this stage of the lesson is an excellent opportunity for learners to interact with that content and with each other. Some types of activities that work well at this stage of the lesson are corners, surveys, interactive bingo or "find a match."

For our Time lesson I could preview the lesson content by putting pictures of various times of day around the room and directing students to go to the area with their favorite time. Once in these areas, students would introduce themselves and name something they do at that time of day. After the activity, when students return to their seats, I'm easily able to state the lesson objectives and point out the importance of time in the students' daily lives. These are the key concepts of the introduction stage of the lessons: providing the lesson objectives and illustrating their relevance to learners' lives.

The next lesson stage is presentation—and we spent much of the previous podcast examining how to create a whole-class presentation. Let me just remind you that the basic idea is to identify the presentation technique and materials that will make the content comprehensible to all learners. Remember, also, that learners will only be held accountable for practicing and producing the language that supports their level's objective, and because each level in the class (A, B, and C) is accountable for different parts of the lesson content. You'll want to check learners' understanding of their particular lesson content.

In the multilevel lesson, it's important to plan pair and small-group practice activities to help learners use their specific level's lesson content accurately. It's also essential to have pairs or small groups work on practice activities that inspire them to stretch their use of the content in order to communicate with each other.

During the guided practice stage of the lesson, students work in same-level (or like-ability) pairs and groups to develop the skills that will allow them to achieve their level-specific objectives. The activities they do in these groups allow them to focus on the accurate use of the target language. Activities like interactive and written drills, prepared dialogs, editing tasks, and controlled readings with comprehension questions are excellent for this stage of the lesson.

Once students have worked with the target language at their level, they are ready to put their newfound skills to use by working in mixed-level (or cross-ability) groups in order to complete a communicative practice activity. Read-and-share

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activities, role-plays, and team projects encourage fluent use of the lesson language and content. Because learners in mixed-level groups are at different proficiency levels, there is an authenticity in their exchanges that mirrors what learners will face outside the classroom.

Read-and-share activities use texts on the same general theme, but at different levels. This type of activity allows members of cross-ability groups to read texts at their own level and use questions about that text to share what they've learned with their group. For example, pair A reads a few simple sentences about ways to be on time. Pair B reads a short paragraph about one way to save time, and Pair C reads a slightly longer reading about a different time management strategy. Each reading also has a set of questions that helps the reader identify the most important points of the text. Once each pair has read their level's text and answered their level's questions, they come together with their group (A, B and C pairs) and "teach" what they've learned from their reading.

Role-plays are another good, mixed-level, communicative practice activity. Roles can be assigned that are appropriate to the different language levels in the group. For example, in role-playing a situation at an office, a boss (student C) can give a worker (student A) advice about time management, while a clerk (student B) tries to tell the boss about the appointments on her schedule.

Team projects such as posters or booklets are also a great way to provide communicative practice for mixed-level groups. Each team member can participate in the project, working on the task that is best suited to his or her language level. When the projects are completed, they serve as a snapshot of what students have learned and can do.

In fact, each lesson should provide you and your learners with a snapshot of how well the lesson objective has been achieved and whether you need to spend additional time on the topic. The evaluation stage takes that snapshot for you. In planning this stage for a multilevel class, think about using one general testing tool (a picture, an audioscript, a quiz) and assigning your A, B, and C levels different tasks to do with the same material. If you show students a simple picture story that depicts a worker with time-management issues, A-level learners could answer questions about the times, B-level learners, could write sentences about the worker's schedule, and C-level learners could write a short paragraph about how the worker should manage her time.

Because multilevel lessons usually require more time at the practice stage to accommodate group management and transitions between same-level and mixed-level activities, the application stage of the lesson is often a "take-home task." Learners can conduct surveys or interviews of their friends or family members, use a checklist to listen for the target language outside the classroom, try out a strategy or competency on their own and write about the experience, or even bring in items that relate to the lesson content.

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Planning multilevel lessons can be more difficult than planning for single-level lessons because of the need to create and coordinate activities at different levels. However, with experience, a set of multilevel instructional strategies and a repertoire of activity types you may well feel inspired by the art of orchestrating the multilevel lesson.

We began our discussion of lesson planning in Podcast 2 with themes and objectives and continued the discussion into this podcast, orchestrating a seven-stage lesson. Our next two installments will look into the role of group work in the multilevel lesson, exploring ways to create and manage successful same-level and mixed-level group activities. Until then, this is Jayme Adelson-Goldstein wishing you time to breathe and laugh!

NARRATOR

You have been listening to *The Art of Orchestrating the Multilevel Lesson*, the third installment in CALPRO's series of podcasts, *Making the Most of the Multilevel Class*. In the Lesson Planning area of the Virtual Workroom, be sure to check out the sample activity types for different stages of the lesson. We hope you'll join us for our next podcast, *Group Work that Works! Part 1*.

I'm Catherine Green and this has been a CALPRO podcast, produced in association with OTAN, the Outreach and Technical Assistance Network.

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