



International Childbirth Education Association

Writing a Teaching Plan Outline – ICEA Teaching Idea Sheet #16

It is as important to have a detailed plan before you start teaching as it is to have a map before you begin a trip. If you don't know where you are going, there is no hope of getting there.

Step One: Study Available Information

Start by studying teaching plans and topic lists already in use. There are curricula that can be purchased. Other childbirth educators are sometimes willing to share their teaching plans.

It is important to know that you can't simply buy (or borrow) a teaching outline that will automatically work for you. Purchasing a standard outline could provide you a starting point, but you need to design your own personal plan. Your teaching plan will reflect your goals as an educator and the specific needs of your clients and community. It will be built upon your own philosophy of childbirth education and your special strengths. No one else can write such a teaching plan for you.

Step Two: Clarify Your Own Beliefs and Goals

Before beginning with your own plan, you must be clear in your own mind about your personal beliefs. Those beliefs will be the foundation for everything you teach. Carefully consider your

feelings about pregnancy, birth and childbirth education. Think about what you hope to achieve as an educator. Take the time to write down your personal goals and feelings. Then, review them prior to the start of each class series to stay focused on what is really important.

Step Three: List Your Clients' Needs

Assess the needs of the clients you will be teaching:

1. List the information that you consider essential for class members to have, acquire, or be able to access. This will include vocabulary, the physiological process of labor, medical procedures and available resources.
2. List the physical skills your class members need to gain. These skills might include relaxation, breathing, positioning for labor and birth, or pushing techniques.
3. List the changes in feelings and attitudes you hope class members will experience during the class. Most educators expect to see changes such as increased self-confidence, trust in one's body, and willingness to

communicate with partner and caregiver.

This list of what class members need will tell you what to include in your teaching plan.

Step Four: Write Learner Objectives

Write a learner objective for each "need." It will help make your class learner-centered, rather than teacher-centered. It will also provide a built-in evaluation tool for your classes.

Each learner objective should:

1. Be stated in terms of the learners.
2. Be measurable and observable (something you can listen to or see) – verbs like *identify*, *select*, *describe*, *demonstrate*, and *compare* work best.
3. List criteria (behavior and time frame) that indicate when the objective has been met.

Examples of learner objectives:

The learner will be able to state 3 signs of preterm labor by the end of the 2nd class.

The learner will be able to demonstrate 5 positions for pushing by the end of the 4th class.



The learner will verbalize an increase in self-confidence regarding the ability to cope with labor when asked by instructor or labor partner.

When you have a learner objective for each item on your content list, it's simple as you teach to check and see if you are doing the job you set out to do. For example, after teaching about preterm labor, you can ask the class members to list three signs of preterm labor. During a labor rehearsal, you can have the class demonstrate pushing positions. You can do a before and after class assessment regarding self-confidence. If couples have accomplished the objectives, then you have accomplished what you set out to do. Since objectives include a built-in evaluation tool, there is never doubt about your success as an educator.

More information about writing learner objectives is available in Part 4 of the ICEA Professional Childbirth Educator Program as well as the video on the subject by Connie Livingston on the ICEA YouTube channel.

Step Five: Prepare a Chronological Order for Each Class

There are some logical ways to organize material. First decide which of the objectives above should be covered in each of your classes. Start with basic material and move to more complex, move from the beginning of a process to its conclusion.

After you have decided on material for each class, think

about its arrangement *within* that class. You will want to begin each class with activities that will make class members comfortable, and ready to learn. Warmup activities might include asking each pregnant woman the best thing that happened to her since last class or what she definitely wouldn't name her baby or even what traits she hopes her baby inherits from a relative.

Most educators recommend a quick review of material covered in the previous class before beginning new content. Ending each class with a preview of the coming class also enhances learning.

You might be overwhelmed by the task of deciding what should be taught where. If so, use a purchased curriculum or an experienced educator's teaching plan for your first class. Afterward, you will have a better feel for what works for you.

Also, the needs of your class sometimes determine what topic will be covered when. For example, teenagers tend to be more interested in the physical skills than abstract topics like pain theory. A class with several women at risk for preterm labor should begin with information on preterm labor.

Step Six: List the equipment and materials needed

Next to each topic prepare an inventory of every item needed to teach that topic –

audiovisuals, specific handouts, etc. This list will save hours of frustration later. Be certain to include a list of the small things you might need for every class, like pens, name tags, markers, handouts and a receipt book.

Step Seven: List of various teaching methods

Most new teachers rely primarily on the lecture method of teaching, though people only retain 20% of what they hear. More effective teaching methods allow the learner to be a participant in the education. You may want to consider: small group discussion, role plays, handouts, homework assignments, prepared presentations from class members, and guided discussion after a video. You can get excellent ideas from observing experienced educators. In any given class, you will want to use a variety of teaching methods – to appeal to all types of learners and keep class members involved. Continue to expand your list as you teach.

Step Eight: Put it all Together

The building block approach works well for many educators. Each topic to be covered is considered one block. The block includes 5 items:

- **Topic title and teaching method**
- **Learner objectives for the topic**
- **Approximate time it will take to cover that topic**
- **Materials needed for teaching the topic**
- **Topic outline for teaching the topic**

Example

• **Topic Title and Teaching**

Method: pelvic tilt-
primarily
demonstration/return
demonstration

• **Learner objectives:**

- A. Class members will be able to demonstrate the pelvic tilt in hands & knees position.
- B. Class members will be able to state 2 benefits of the pelvic tilt.

• **Time:**15 min

• **Materials:** plastic pelvis & baby model

• **Topic outline:** Pelvic Tilt (or “Rocking the Baby”)

- A. Benefits
 - 1. Strengthens muscles in abdomen, back, and buttocks
 - 2. Helpful for sore back and or moving baby from awkward position
 - 3. Can be used during labor to help rotate baby’s head
- B. Demonstration
- C. Return demonstrations from class members
 - 1. First with partner or checking for flat back and feeling slight tilt
 - 2. Then, with attention to breathing – inhale before beginning; exhale when muscles are tightened.
 - 3. Finally, holding for a count of five to feel muscles stretch, tighten

If you organize your topics in this way you can change the order of topics within classes by simply rearranging the blocks of information. Or, if you want to teach a topic in a different class, move the block to that class. For example, if you don’t

have time to cover an item in one class, you can move that block of information to the next class without rewriting an entire class outline.

Step Nine – Make it User-Friendly for Yourself

Most educators enclose their teaching plan in a three-ring binder. Then class lists, handouts, journal articles and other appropriate material can be included.

Step Ten – Celebrate!

Preparing a teaching plan is an education in itself. It can be difficult and frustrating, but the results are worth the work. With your teaching plan you will always know where you’re headed. In fact you will have a precise and detailed route to follow, and a method to make certain you’re never off course.