

Creating a Course Syllabus

When you meet with your cooperating teacher and you begin observing students in the classroom, you will undoubtedly talk about the kinds of activities that you will be doing and get to know how the students and teacher interact with one another. However, the goal of this assignment is for you to have a much richer understanding of the learning environment that you will be participating in over the next semester. You need to become familiar with the goals of the courses you are observing as well as understand how these goals will be accomplished, what routines and procedures are in place in the classroom, and where and how you fit in to the daily activities and the "bigger picture" of teaching and learning.

Often teachers prepare a syllabus to help students understand the nature of the classroom in which they find themselves. But, creating a syllabus also benefits the teacher because it forces one to think about not only what they are doing day to day, but also how those practices fulfill the course goals and contribute to the overall picture of learning throughout the school year. The syllabus sets the tone for the class and lays out expectations. The syllabus also serves as documentation about the course for those outside the classroom (e.g., the principal, parents, other teachers).

Your first major assignment will be to **create a course syllabus** for a class in which you are doing your field placement. The audience for the syllabus is your own students. Your purpose is to provide information that will help the students to understand the goals for learning, the routines and nature of the class, your expectations of the students as learners, and the activities and general subject matter of the course of study occurring this term. In the process, you should come to a better understanding of the nature of your field placement. **Follow the format for the course syllabus provided.** Also, **include a reflection** that addresses the process of creating the syllabus (What sources did you consult? How difficult was the task?) and what role you will be taking as a student teacher to achieve the goals set forth in the course.

It may be helpful (but not necessary) to conduct a **brief** interview with your cooperating teacher. Use the format provided for the course syllabus to structure at least part of your conversation. It may be that your teacher has not planned ahead for the term very specifically. Even so, there are probably some general plans so try to tease these out. Ask if there are district goals or a scope and sequence available that you may see to aid you in this project. Also be sure and ask about getting a textbook on loan--don't be discouraged if this is not possible. Not everyone will have equal access to information and this will be taken into consideration. So, *DON'T PANIC!!* Do though, be a thorough investigator and provide **a list of resources** (titles and descriptions are sufficient) you have consulted in order to develop your syllabus. **NOTE: This is NOT an assignment for the cooperating teacher to complete for you and is not intended to create a stress on your cooperating teacher.** If you find that you are having difficulties with the assignment see me as soon as possible. You will be expected to complete the project even with minimal assistance from your cooperating teacher. You may not copy your cooperating teacher's syllabus and turn that in either. Make this your own ideal of teaching this class.

Finally, try to have fun with this assignment and be creative while keeping in mind that there is something intellectually stimulating about this inquiry--**if you allow it to be.** Do not approach this as a set of motions people go through with the thought that just anyone can achieve. Let this be your first representation of yourself on paper in this course.

Course Syllabus Format

You will be assessed on the thoughtfulness and comprehensiveness of each section description, the creativity and presentation of the formal document, and the quality and depth of the written reflection included separately at the end of the syllabus.

Include *at least* the following information in your course syllabus. If you are more comfortable using different headings for your syllabus or arranging the items differently, please do so but be sure to include all of the information requested below so the assignment can be considered for full credit.

General information about the course: The teacher's name (you), course title, class period, beginning and ending times, and room number. This may include times when you are available for a conference, and perhaps the school phone number or other contact information.

Course description: Describe the course, and mention how students will profit from it. This would be similar to a catalog description of the course.

Course goals and expected outcomes: List the content knowledge and skills that you expect students to have when completing this course.

Materials required: Mention the textbook, notebook, or other supplies needed by the student. Indicate what the school and what the student should provide. Mention what students must bring to class each day.

Instructional approaches and activities: Indicate the type of instructional approaches (teaching methods or classroom routines) you plan to use during the course, and also mention any special events or activities that may be planned (field trips, experiments, guest speakers, special projects, cooperative groups, etc...).

Course requirements and evaluation procedures: Indicate the means of evaluating student learning: tests, quizzes, homework, projects, group work, work samples, etc. Indicate the point value or relative weight for each of these items when the report card grade is determined. What is an A? B? C? etc.?

Classroom Rules: Include your rules for classroom behavior.

Policies on various issues: Include your policy on late homework or papers, tardiness, absenteeism, extra credit, make-up work, plagiarism, procedures for completing classroom tasks, and others.

A semester outline and timeline of content: Provide an outline of the content to be covered in the course this semester. This should include some headings to reveal some details about the course, as well as estimates on what content will be covered in each quarter. Consult several resources including the course text for ideas. Specific dates are not necessary but some time frame estimate should be given.

A **Written Reflection** should be attached to the Course Syllabus. See the reverse side of this sheet for questions to address in your reflection

Adapted from: Burden, P.R. & Byrd, D. M. (1999). Methods for effective teaching. Allyn & Bacon: Boston. (pp. 42-43)

Course Syllabus Rubric--45 points

| Section of Syllabus | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1/0 |
|---|---|---|---|-----|
| General Information | | | | |
| Course Description | | | | |
| Course Goals and Expected Outcomes | | | | |
| Materials Required | | | | |
| Instructional Approaches and Activities | | | | |
| Course Requirements and Evaluation Procedures | | | | |
| Classroom Rules | | | | |
| Policies on Various Issues | | | | |
| Semester Content Outline and Timeline | | | | |

TOTAL = _____/36

4 points will be awarded for an exceptional description

3 points will be awarded for a good description

2 point will be awarded for an adequate description with essential elements missing

1/0 points will be awarded if section is addressed minimally or not addressed

Document Presentation

| | |
|---|--|
| 4 | Exhibits creativity and has a neat professional appearance |
| 2 | Exhibits some creativity and has a somewhat neat professional appearance |
| 0 | Exhibits no creativity and does not have a neat professional appearance |

TOTAL = _____/4

Reflection

| | |
|---|--|
| 5 | Addressed all of the following topics well and with much thought: process of creating syllabus; your role in this classroom; challenges the class will face; thoroughly cited references that were helpful in creating the syllabus; several ideas and thoughts outside of required questions were addressed |
| 3 | Addressed most of the following topics in an average manner and with some thought: process of creating syllabus; your role in this classroom; challenges the class will face; cited one or two references that were helpful in creating the syllabus; topics needed to be covered in EDSS 530 that will help you to become a good teacher |
| 0 | Reflection not present or topics addressed minimally |

TOTAL = _____/5