



## Getting High School Students Ready for a Whole-Class Peer Teaching Assignment: A voice of experience

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This project was conducted in my 10th grade English class in the second semester. The class needed a grammar review and I wanted to engage the students with the material by having them teach it to the class. I developed some materials and guidelines based on an instructional process model developed by The Hoenny Center called POLAR+: P=planning, O=organizing, L=leading others through the learning process, A=assessing learning, R=reflecting and developing new plans. The + accounts for the way that teachers synthesize and integrate the POLAR actions with their own personalities. I developed a five-level rubric on the POLAR framework and summarized the rubric for the students.

I developed several support handouts for the students to use to begin the project. The POLAR Traits Rubric was given to them along with another document that went through those same steps and stages but used more of an inquiry process for each box in the rubric. We went over these briefly so the students were familiar with them, but I did not expect them to fully understand that much information immediately. We revisited them a few times while the students were planning their units. The most pivotal resource they received was a Lesson Plan worksheet that I expected them to fill out while they were planning their lesson, use while they were executing their lesson, and complete while reflecting on their lesson. It asked them questions that were designed to help them plan their time and work space, gather their materials, design the lesson, develop an assessment tool, and reflect on how the lesson had gone. This worksheet was due the day after they taught their lesson along with any handouts or assessment tools they had generated.

To determine what lessons were to be taught and who would teach them, I went through the grammar book and listed all the lessons I felt a student could teach. I gave each student a list and asked them to indicate their top three choices and to rank them. I then made the assignments based on their input. It was a good way for me to differentiate the lessons somewhat and also honor their preferences.

Once they received their content selection, I went back over the Lesson Plan worksheet to explain how to use it. They were required to prepare a 15 to 20 minute lesson on the grammar skill they were given. It needed to include a visual element, an activity, and an assessment component. Their grammar book was to be their primary source book. Because I wove these lessons around other classroom activities, I usually gave the students about a week's notice before it was their turn to present. They were told from the beginning, however, that they needed to look at their assigned grammar skill immediately and be sure they could master that grammar concept well enough to teach it and to come to me for help if they needed it. As soon as the students received the date of their presentation they were reminded to record that information on their Lesson Plan worksheet.

The presentations spanned a period of about six weeks. If I had done this project earlier in the school year I could have done much more follow-up than I was able to in the spring. Their respect for me and what I do as a teacher definitely went up after they had taught their lessons! In the future I will do this earlier in the year and build on the insights I gain from evaluating the surveys.

What follows are

- a) **Lesson Plan Worksheets:** a multi-page assignment outline to help the students prepare for teaching their lesson and reflect on its success.
- b) **POLAR Traits Rubric:** a one-page, five-level rubric for helping students reflect on and learn from the experience of whole-class teaching. It is based on a simple sequence for teaching a class that uses the acronym POLAR: Plan, Organize, Lead, Assess, Reflect. See the rubric for more. In addition to the POLAR dimensions, a "+" dimension was added to account for the extent to which the students made the project their own, using their personalities and creative abilities to make their teaching authoritative and confident.

## Lesson Plan

### **Overview:**

Lesson Objective:

Planned Activity:

Materials needed:

Estimated Timing:

Assessment tool:

Reflections on Lesson:

Lesson Plan

**Planning:**

Date of Lesson:

Time allowed:

Place:

This lesson will cover:

The Essential Question for this lesson is:

At the conclusion of this lesson I expect the students will be able to:

The learning activity the students will participate in is:

I am including the following visual elements:

I am including the following auditory elements:

I will find out (assess) how much the students learned by:

## Organizing:

Setting:

The room arrangement will be:

Materials needed: Check off items as gathered.

\_\_\_ 1.

\_\_\_ 2.

\_\_\_ 3.

\_\_\_ 4.

\_\_\_ 5.

Technical equipment I need is:

\_\_\_\_\_ I have signed up for it and/or notified my teacher that I need it.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am very familiar with how to use the equipment.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have a back up plan in mind incase there is a technical malfunction.

Jerri Davenport, Principia Upper School, St. Louis, Missouri  
(lesson outline and timetable)

**Leading:**

**(Notes to self)** Basic points to remember while teaching the lesson are:

## **Assessing learning:**

Behaviors of students I observed during the lesson are:

As I read the lesson evaluation forms from the students, I am noticing:

As I grade the work turned in I am noticing:

## **Reflecting and developing:**

After teaching the lesson I realize I should have:

After reading the lesson evaluation forms from the students, I would change:

An activity I could do in the next couple of weeks that would help reinforce the learning is:

## Peer Teaching Rating Scale

Trait	Emerging (1)	Basic (2)	Developing (3)	Proficient (4)	Fluent (5)
<b>P</b> lanning	Determines content and has some idea of an activity, but no clear assessment criteria	Determines content, plans an specific activity and has some idea of assessment	Determines scope of content, plans a specific activity, considers varied learning styles, and develops an assessment tool	Determines scope of content with goals, plans an assessable activity, considers varied learning styles, and designs an assessment tool	Determines scope of content with goals, plans a clearly assessable activity, considers varied learning styles, designs an assessment tool, and has a backup plan
<b>O</b> rganizing	Has some idea of what needs to be done for the presentation, has an outline of the lesson plan, has some materials ready	Prepares the lesson for presentation, has a lesson plan written out, has the materials needed	Prepares the lesson for presentation, makes a detailed lesson plan, creates and/or gathers all the needed materials	Prepares the lesson for presentation, makes a well developed lesson plan, creates and/or gathers the materials, and makes sure the timing works	Prepares thoroughly for the presentation, makes a well developed lesson plan, creates and/or gathers the materials, makes sure the timing works and has an evaluation form
<b>L</b> eading	Leads the activity, comes close to completing the activity, and does most of the talking	Leads the activity, while encouraging interaction with learners, accomplishes the task, and uses the assessment tool	Leads the activity, encourages interaction with and among learners, accomplishes the task, and uses the assessment tool	Shares the lesson objectives, leads the activity, accomplishes the task, encourages interaction with and among learners, and models strategies	Shares the lesson objectives, leads the activity, accomplishes the task, encourages interaction with and among learners, models strategies, communicates clearly and empathetically
<b>A</b> ssessing Learning	Grades the students based on own observations – no clear assessment criteria	Grades achievement of low-level skills and/or knowledge; informally observes student reactions to the activity	Grades achievement of higher-level skills and/or knowledge; uses evaluation form to get student reactions	Grades achievement of higher-level skills and/or knowledge; uses evaluation form to get student reactions, journals student behaviors during activity	Grades achievement of low- to high-level skills and/or knowledge; uses evaluation form to get student reactions, journals student behaviors; give evaluative feedback that helps improve learning
<b>R</b> eflecting and Developing	Wonders how the lesson might have been better – or not	Reflects on how the lesson might have been better and looks over the assessment tool for ideas	Reflects on how the lesson might have been better, looks over the assessment tool for ideas, reflects on the evaluation forms and makes notes for future use	Reflects on how the lesson might have been better, looks over the assessment tool for ideas, reflects on the evaluation forms, makes changes to the lesson plan to reflect the suggestions	Reflects on how the lesson might have been better, looks over the assessment tool for ideas, reflects on the evaluation forms, changes the lesson plan or objectives to reflect the suggestions, and designs a follow-up activity