

Wisdom Projects

Peace, Healing, and Justice For All



Structured Learning

At Wisdom Projects, we value structured learning and engagement as a cornerstone of community organizing and community educating. Creating well-structured learning places, spaces, content, and engagement is the foundation on which all of our organizational, educational, and healing work for peace and justice rests.

Rooting and Branching in Peacemaking

At the beginning and end of every learning experience (and, if needed, at key moments within the experience), we take at least ten seconds to observe comfortable, easygoing quiet and stillness to reset and prepare for or find closure from the learning experience physically, mentally, and emotionally.

This is the work of integrating **mindfulness** for peacemaking in all that we do to create platforms to discover, recognize, and practice calm, focus, and awareness in the present moment continually and constantly.

Creating Senses of Home

We carefully create senses of home in the environments where learning takes place (such as community centers or recreation centers) and we advocate fiercely for the safe, caring maintenance of these spaces and places.

Senses of home involve making learners feel welcome, safe, and cared for so that they can develop trust and belonging.

Building on this sense of trust and belonging, senses of home also involve encourage learners to develop and grow by listening to, embracing, and implementing knowledge, training, criticism, and feedback.

We also create learning spaces as home spaces by consciously reimagining elements of the space as emotional supports. Every couch, seat, chair, table, blanket, and plush stuffed animal is an emotional support apparatus on which youth and families may feel a sense of comfort, safety, calm, and positive and connective emotions. Creating home spaces for learning also requires managing lighting, odor, and bathroom facilities so that the way in which learners encounter each element of the place fosters well-being and healing.

A STEM, art, or athletic learning environment can have elements (like lab equipment, art supplies, or athletic equipment) that foster a supportive emotional environment in how the elements are organized. This place-based (or place-centered) approach to healing is essential to our programming.

Lesson Planning

The Planning

We carefully plan individual educational and health activities to ensure maximum, measurable impact within an overall semi-emergent curriculum. This requires detailed attention to lesson planning, adherence to the template for the writing of our lesson plans, and scrupulous crafting of goals and outcomes for each part of learning experiences in the lesson plan—the academic, policy, or artistic outcome and the healing, health, or holistic outcome.

Our approach to structured learning applies to all adult learners in age-appropriate ways. The exactitude of our planning helps us “think-on-our-feet,” as the saying goes, and be flexible on the days of in-person and/or virtual organizing, teaching, and healing within pre-determined structures.

The Big Picture

An individual lesson plan for a specific time-period (or several session) is just one part of the big picture of curricular outcomes.

We try to share the big picture to teachers and organizers so they are always rooting and branching their structured learning experiences within the overall context, impact, and transformations that we are aiming to achieve.

We also develop the big picture of curricular goals and outcomes for ongoing, extended critical discovery.

Imperatives

A lesson plan is about what learners will gain and what they will do.

A lesson plan is not about how the teacher will teach, which is called “instructional delivery.”

After we plan the lesson, we must keep these imperative in mind when working on instructional delivery.

Time Management

Timing is important. We do not do too much or too little. We try only to do what is required in the times and places designated for discovery in order for the learning experience to be substantial within a specific time frame.

Take in mind that organizational and educational discoveries and transformations—and behavioral management (also called classroom management)—may take time when working with youth and adults. We must give ourselves time to call the proceedings to order, to work through the learning content, and to stay on task and on time as we complete our planned lesson.

Instructional Delivery

Interaction and Engagement

Rather than merely lecturing, we create interactive learning experiences in which participants connect with each other and the teacher or facilitator on intellectual, emotional, and social levels.

We clearly state the learning aims and objective at the beginning of the lesson.

We return to the learning objective at the end of the lesson and ask how the learners achieved the objective.

Or we clearly state that we will be continuing to achieve the goal and/or outcome in another lesson.

We prompt lively discussion.

We devise illustrative, hands-on learning experiences with experiments, multimedia, or demonstrations.

We ask open-ended questions that stimulate inquiry and inquisitiveness.

We listen patiently to responses and questions.

We avoid over-correcting in favor of affirming, concrete feedback.

We avoid shaming and blaming learners.

We are affirming and peaceful yet we do not shrink from providing the criticism needed to grow, transform, and have high impact.

We stick to work that reflects our specific training, the specific lesson, and what we are charged to do.

Behavioral (or "Classroom") Management

Created learning spaces where participants are focused and attentive is always challenging, especially with youth and young adults under 25.

We meet the challenge with verbal prompts that call learners to attention in holistic, affirming ways.

During the learning session, we avoid negative yelling and potentially toxic engagement like “Shut up, everybody!” or “I need you all to shut up!”

Oftentimes, we ***do*** project our voices loudly in a commanding, authoritative, and supportive ways and we foster an environment of accountability, responsibility, love, safety, and respect.

We call the affirmative, non-toxic projection of our voices, going “big time.”

We value using the following antiphonal “big time” vocal structures in American English language to call learners to order if they become boisterous.

On first mention, prompt the learners by saying,

“If I say _____, then you say, _____.”

Then vocalize these antiphonal chants:

Teacher: Bring it!

Learners: Back!

Teacher: Power!

Learners: Up!

Teacher: Let it!

Learners: Go!

Teacher: Listen!

Learners: Up!

Teacher: Gentle!

Learners: Now!

Teacher: Take your!

Learners: Time!

Teacher: Love your!

Learners: Neighborhood!

Teacher: We!

Learners: Got this!

Or, engage learners with movement-centered or musical calls-to-order like this:

Teacher: Clap once if you hear me. Clap twice if you're listening. (Etc.)

Objectives

A learning objective is what the teacher wants the learner to have achieved by the end of the lesson.

Objectives are different from learning activities.

We use a one-page template to plan every lesson.

Because holistic learning is equally as important as academic inquiry, we have objectives for each area.

We carefully write the lesson's objectives in the required areas on the lesson planning template.

Again, during the class session, we clearly state the learning objective at the beginning of the lesson.

Then we return to the learning objective at the end of the lesson and ask how the learners achieved the objective.

Or we clearly state that we will be continuing to achieve the objective in another lesson.

We create objectives that are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relative and Timely). Effective objectives are statements that have the following components:

- An action verb (see the action verb handout).
- A noun or noun phrase that articulates what will be learned.
- A word or phrase that indicates the level or kind of learning.
- Context that explains the learning situation.

Example of a learning objective:

At the successful end of the lesson on sustainable agriculture, learners will be able to construct the soil base for their terrariums after foraging for plant matter to recognize and practice their own capacity to develop indoor, urban growing techniques.

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