

THE BLUEPRINT FOR CTE LESSON PLANNING

A PRACTICAL MODEL FOR HANDS-ON,
HIGH-IMPACT TEACHING

By Tempestt Adams, Teena Coats & Nakesha Dawson

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esson planning remains one of the most crucial tasks for teachers. Its purpose is to help instructors translate content knowledge into meaningful and intentional learning experiences, organize and prepare materials, and ensure alignment between learning goals, activities, and assessment. In traditional teacher preparation programs, lesson planning activities and expectations allow preservice teachers to showcase their content and pedagogical knowledge. But traditional lesson-planning conventions can feel mismatched in CTE settings, where instruction is procedural, safety-driven, and performance-based.

The challenge is not that these planning tools are irrelevant; rather, CTE instructors are not always taught how to transfer them into spaces like labs, shops, kitchens or clinical environments. Lesson planning matters for all teachers, but the application naturally shifts when the work is hands-on and skill-focused. Without explicit guidance on adapting common planning structures to these contexts, instructors may feel frustrated or assume that traditional tools do not apply — even when they do.

Our Experience With the Transferability Gap

As a group of CTE teacher educators, we have largely supported pre- and in-service teachers in business, marketing, and family and consumer sciences. These are common areas where traditional lesson planning structures may feel natural and easy to apply. For a long time, we assumed those same tools would translate seamlessly across all CTE contexts.

That assumption was challenged when Dr. Adams supported one of our first welding preservice teachers in the undergraduate CTE teacher preparation program at Appalachian State University. She brought it back to the team: The planning routines we had relied on for years did not transfer well. We had not fully considered the need to adapt our traditional planning conventions to technical skill development.

As more industry professionals (such as chefs and nurses) entered our teaching program, our shared reflection made the pattern clear. Our teachers could plan, but they did not yet know how to translate familiar lesson planning structures into hands-on, skills-based instruction. Recognizing that gap pushed us to search for an approach that made that transfer explicit, which led us to the Walker-Peyton model.

PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE

The purpose of this article is twofold:

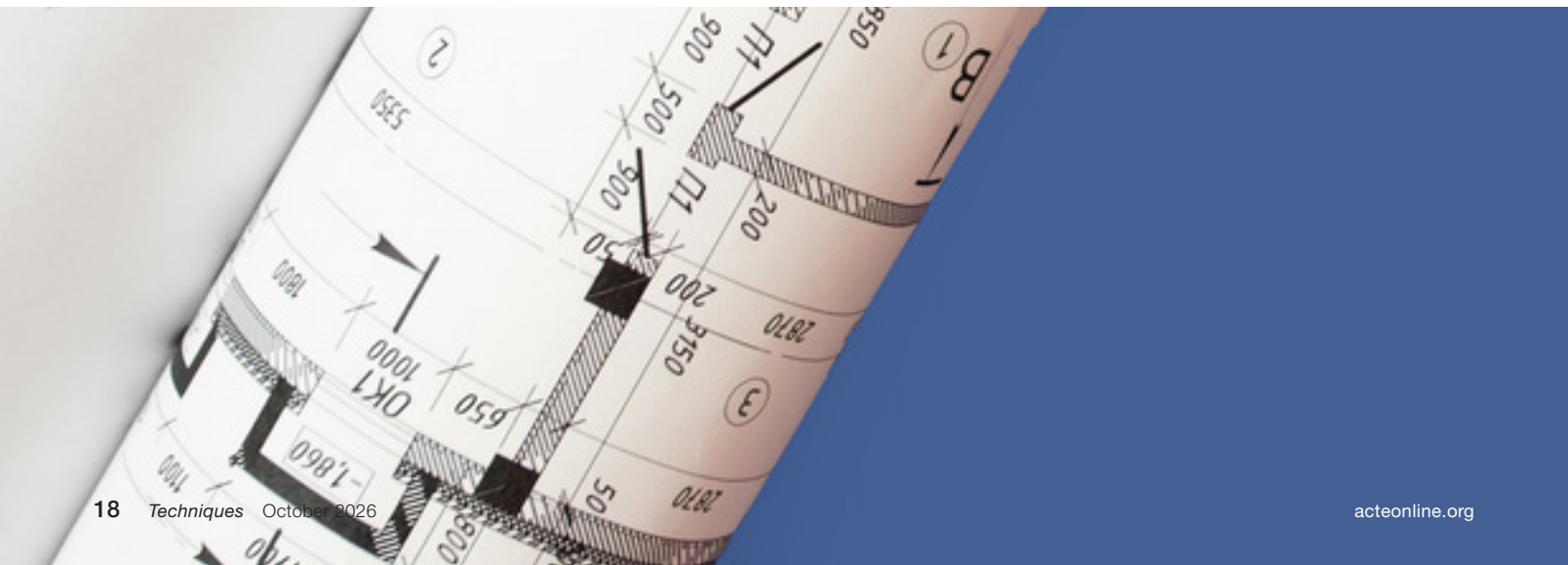
- (1) To introduce the Walker-Peyton model to CTE teachers so they have language and structure to guide procedural, skills-based instruction
- (2) To help CTE instructors understand how traditional lesson planning elements transfer into hands-on, technical teaching using a crosswalk that makes those connections visible

Lesson Planning Overview

Because many CTE instructors enter teaching through alternative pathways, such as residency licensure, their preparation experiences can vary, making it helpful to establish a shared understanding of what lesson planning usually entails before moving into the Walker-Peyton model and the crosswalk resource. In most preparation programs, lesson planning simply refers to organizing instruction through familiar elements.

“Traditional” instruction will typically follow a sequence in which:

1. The instructor prepares students for the learning by engaging them, piquing their interest and stating objectives. *Example: A quick scenario, question or hook that connects to the lesson*
2. The instructor provides direct instruction, often through presentation or demonstration. *Example: A lecture with accompanying slide deck*
3. The instructor guides student practice with the new content in a low-stakes manner to quickly assess learning and reteach as needed. *Example: A group matching activity*
4. The instructor assesses student learning through some form of independent practice. *Example: A worksheet to be submitted for grading*
5. The instructor offers lesson closure to review what was learned and conduct a final check for understanding. *Example: An exit ticket reflecting on their learning*





This lesson flow is designed to help teachers make learning intentional, sequenced and rooted in ensuring student understanding. But strong plans for instruction also require clarity around learning objectives and assessments. Objectives describe what students should be able to do by the end of a lesson or unit, and they must be measurable and observable. Assessments provide evidence of whether students met those objectives. For CTE instructors, this alignment is essential because preparation for skills-based instruction depends on first clearly defining outcomes and assessments that match the skill being taught.

Walker-Peyton Four-Step Method

The Walker-Peyton four-step method for skills-based instruction is a common instructional practice in medical education (Walker & Peyton, 1998). Borrowing this approach across rele-

vant CTE instruction has the potential to improve the teaching and learning process. The chart below provides an overview of each of the four steps.

This four-step approach allows the teacher to break down instruction into manageable steps. Furthermore, it incorporates guided instruction, focuses on comprehension, provides space to correct errors and utilizes the value of repetition in learning (Lake & Hamdorf, 2004). The third step, comprehension, has been noted as a critical component of the process because it requires the student to process what they learned in the first two steps and to use knowledge recall to guide the teacher (Giacomino et al., 2020). This not only supports student learning but also reaffirms the safety goals within a safety-critical space, such as a welding lab, by confirming the student knows the procedure before allowing hands-on practice.

STEP	PURPOSE/GOAL
Demonstration	The teacher demonstrates the skill/procedure normally for students to watch (without commentary).
Deconstruction	The teacher repeats the process slowly for students, with commentary. Each element of the process is described to show how the individual parts make up the whole.
Comprehension	The teacher performs the process again under the direction of the student.
Performance	The student demonstrates the process while describing the steps.

Traditional Components	5E Components	Walker-Peyton Components	Goals/ Shared Purpose
Focus and Review/Lesson Launch/Anticipatory Set	Engage/Explore	Demonstration	Prepare learners for instruction; help them see what they will learn; activate prior knowledge.
Teacher Input	Explain	Deconstruction	Build understanding of the concepts or process being taught.
Guided Practice	Elaborate	Comprehension	Formatively assess; provide support and/or corrective instruction.
Independent Practice	Evaluate	Performance	Assess student learning.
Closure	Evaluate	No formal step but reflection strongly recommended	Summarize learning; gather final evidence of understanding and readiness for next steps.

A Brief Look at the 5E Model

The 5E model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) is another common planning structure. While most popular in science education, it is common in CTE (especially technology, engineering and design) because it was originally developed for inquiry-based learning and has been identified as an effective instructional approach for active learning (Garcia et al., 2021). Including the 5E model in the crosswalk can help instructors see how its familiar phases align with both traditional lesson planning and the procedural steps of the Walker-Peyton model.

A Lesson Planning Crosswalk

To help CTE teachers a bit more, we now cross-reference three approaches to planning for instruction. The table above shows the alignment of our traditional lesson plan elements, the 5E lesson plan elements and the Walker-Peyton four-step method. To further emphasize the alignment, the final column in the chart (goals/shared purpose) showcases the instructional intent of each step. The steps in each model may not align by sequence; instead, the crosswalk shows that their instructional function corresponds across models.

Conclusion

The comparison across traditional lesson planning, the 5E model, and the Walker-Peyton method reveals something important. Even though these frameworks differ in language and structure, they are all driven by the same instructional logic. All three models ultimately serve the same instructional purpose — to help students meet clearly defined outcomes.

By making these connections visible, the crosswalk helps instructors see that they already possess the foundational thinking needed to plan effective skill-based lessons. The models are not competing approaches. Instead, they are complementary tools.

For CTE educators this crosswalk offers a practical way to transfer what they know about organizing learning into the hands-on environments where their students thrive. The goal of this article has been to make that transferability clear, accessible, and immediately usable. ■

GOOD INSTRUCTION:

- (1) requires intentional support for students
- (2) is strongly sequenced to maximize learning
- (3) is outcome-driven

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To support CTE instructors in applying the Walker-Peyton four-step method to their own skill-based lessons, the following template offers a clear, ready-to-use structure.

DOWNLOAD THE TEMPLATE!



Walker-Peyton Lesson Plan Template

Course: _____

Topic: _____

Date: _____

Industry/Course Standards:

Learning Objectives – Students will be able to:

Materials / Tools / Safety Requirements:

Instructional Sequence

1. Demonstration	
2. Deconstruction	
3. Comprehension	
4. Performance	

Assessment Method(s):

Lesson Reflection:

Next Steps:

Techniques

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