

**Using Lesson Study to Examine Significant Historical Events:  
A Focus on Foreign Policy  
Planning Guide and Protocol (2006-2007)**

Improving something as complex and culturally embedded as teaching requires the efforts of all the players, including students, parents, and politicians. But teachers must be the primary driving force behind change. They are best positioned to understand the problems that students face and to generate possible solutions.

**-James Steigler and James Herbert, *The Teaching Gap***

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**I - Background and Context of the Lesson to Be Studied**

**1. Lesson Topic and Rationale**

- How does this lesson support student understanding of the specific foreign policy issues raised by the event you are studying? In terms of U.S. foreign policy, how does this lesson help students understand the historical significance of the event you are studying?

**2. Preparing the “Lesson Study” Lesson**

- What is the lesson plan? What activities, readings, and questions, will help students achieve the goals you set for this lesson?

*Questions to consider:*

1. What do you want students to know and understand about the event you are studying?
2. What do you want students to know and understand about the relationship between this event and the history of United States foreign policy?
3. What do students currently understand about this topic and about the history of U.S. foreign policy?
4. What academic skills, historical thinking skills, and understandings are essential to this lesson?
5. What source document(s) will be used to focus the lesson?
6. How might students respond to the questions and activities in the lesson? What problems and misconceptions might arise? What might be the response?

**What question, about the topic of your lesson, do you want your students to answer?**

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**What question about teaching and learning will you investigate through the lesson you are teaching?**

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**2. Before the debriefing discussion:**

- The entire group should take a break to relax and gather their thoughts, instead of beginning to immediately discuss the lesson.
- The group who taught the lesson should assign roles among themselves in order to keep the discussion focused and on track. These roles include: moderator/ facilitator, timekeeper, and recorders.

**3. Discussing the lesson:**

- (5 - 10 minutes) The moderator/facilitator outlines the agenda for the discussion.
- The teacher who taught the lesson should have the first opportunity to comment on his/ her reactions to the lesson, followed by the other planning group members. This format allows the teacher(s) who taught the lesson to begin by sharing insights about what was being studied, what worked, what did not work, what they would change about the lesson, etc. He/she will try to answer three questions
  - 1) What happened that you expected?
  - 2) What happened that you didn't expect and
  - 3) To what degree were the goals achieved?
- (15 - 20 minutes) The observers discuss what they saw happening in terms of the same three questions, using evidence they collected during the lesson. Each observer should give other observers the opportunity to comment on similar or related aspects of the lesson, so everyone who would like to comment has an opportunity to share their insights.
- (15 minutes) All participants read whatever student writing was collected during the lesson. For example, if the teacher asked students to write a log at the end of the period stating what they had learned that day, all participants would read the logs. During the reading, teachers should look to find evidence of the goals being achieved, or evidence that shows where students had problems in achieving the goals.
- (15 minutes) Discuss what everyone saw in the student work. Does reading the writing of students' change any of the original impressions of whether or not the goals of the lessons were met?
- (5 - 10 minutes.) The teacher who taught the lesson should wait until all feedback about a particular aspect of a lesson has been received before responding to the observers.
- (5-15 minutes) The group discusses how the lesson might be revised to be taught in another classroom. In this discussion you want to address these four questions
  - 1) What specific problems occurred in the lesson?
  - 2) Did the "flow" work? (For instance, did the sequence of reading, writing, speaking, seem to go in the right order?)
  - 3) How would you revise the lesson?
  - 4) What would be helpful to you in this revision? (For example, you would need to know more about reading strategies to do a better job.)