

Article originally published in *Educators' Spotlight Digest*: Volume 2, Issue 1 (Winter 2007)

Designing Star Quality S.O.S. Lesson Plans

By Dr. Ruth V. Small

Have you ever wondered what happens to your lesson plan, once it has been submitted to S.O.S.? You may be surprised to know that it goes to two independent evaluators, who review every part of your plan, from the title to related standards, using a common rubric.

Each section of the lesson plan is rated as either *Acceptable*, *Needs Improvement*, or *Unacceptable*. The collective ratings of all sections of your lesson plans are then considered when deciding to accept your lesson plan to the database. But don't worry; if some sections need revision, your lesson plan will be returned to you (with feedback) so you can revise it.

This TIPS column is going to take you inside that process, step-by-step, in order to show you what it takes (and share the assessment criteria) to create a star quality lesson plan for the [S.O.S. for Information Literacy](#) database.

Let's start with your lesson plan's **Title**. Each title is assessed on whether it "fits" the lesson plan (appropriateness) and if it clearly conveys the essence of that plan. Titles with a little pizzazz are especially fun because they are more likely to attract more people to them. For example, Nancy Wozniak could have created a title for her lesson plan that simply said "Fitness," But Nancy decided to have some fun with her title and, using alliteration, created a title that is sure to attract other librarians searching for health-related lesson plans. The next time you're searching the S.O.S. database, look for "Free-style Fitness: Fun, Favorite Fat-Fighters!"

The first major section of your S.O.S. lesson plan is the **Lesson Plan Description/Overview**. In this section, you provide the searcher with a brief description of your lesson plan. Evaluators will be looking for descriptions that are clearly written in a way that motivates searchers to view your lesson plan.

The next part of the S.O.S. lesson plan is the **Instructional Objectives**. Evaluators look for instructional objectives that are appropriate and clearly describe what you expect your students to learn during your lesson. An example of a measurable instructional objective, taken from "What Are We Going to Hear? Writing Program Notes for the Spring Concert," a music-related S.O.S. lesson plan by Melissa Ahart, appears below:

Eighth-grade students will use at least one online resource and one print resource to research their chosen piece.

Melissa also listed a number of motivational goals for her lesson which, although not required by S.O.S., definitely enhance her lesson plan.

Whatever materials are needed to successfully teach your lesson are listed under **Required Materials** which include your sources. These materials are assessed for appropriateness and completeness so be sure to include anything and everything you used. For example, in her language arts S.O.S. lesson plan “You Can Be An Author,” Nancy Rand listed her required materials as:

- Books by Laura Numeroff:
 - *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie*
 - *If You Give A Pig A Pancake*
 - *If You Give A Moose A Muffin*
- Art Supplies-construction paper, markers, colored pencils, writing paper, writing tools, crayons, ribbon, and string
- Office Supplies-stapler/staples, tape, glue

The **Procedures** section allows you to describe exactly what you did in your lesson, how you did it, and how long it took. This is one of the most important parts of the lesson plan to your colleagues who may want to teach this lesson. The more specific and detailed you can be, the better. The S.O.S. evaluators will assess your procedures on the appropriateness of the content, how organized your procedures are and how clearly you have described them. To see an exemplary lesson plan procedures section, check out Cynthia Tidd's S.O.S. lesson plan “Plants: The Life Cycle of the Saguaro Cactus” on the S.O.S. database.

Your methods for assessing your learning objectives are specified in the **Assessment** section of your S.O.S. lesson plan. You should have an appropriate assessment specified for each of your instructional objectives. For example, for the instructional objective by Melissa Ahart discussed above, Melissa chose to assess that objective by specifying the following:

The students will complete a three-part worksheet guiding them through the three research stations: reaction to the music heard at the listening station; relevant information from, and at least one print reference to, a music dictionary; and relevant information from, at least one online reference to, a music-related web site.

Another section gives you the opportunity to attach any **Supporting Files and Related Media** that you have used (e.g., videos, PowerPoints, still images, handouts). These media will be assessed as to their appropriateness for the lesson and their quality. If possible, adding at least one image to represent the content of your lesson plan, further increases the attractiveness of your lesson plan overview. In her science-related lesson plan, “Postcards from the Solar System,” Marilyn Teicher included an image from her lesson’s PowerPoint to represent her lesson and included the PowerPoint to illustrate her lesson’s outcomes.

The final sections of your S.O.S. lesson plan list the **Skills & Standards** for your lesson plan. Simply choose the appropriate information skills (e.g., Definition), information literacy standards (e.g., Accesses information efficiently and effectively) and content standards (e.g., Science) for your lesson from drop-down menus. If you wish, you can provide even more detail to this section by choosing information subskills (e.g., Determines amount/type of information needed to complete research task) and indicators (e.g., Formulates questions based on information needs; Understands the structure and function of cells and organisms), but this is not required.

You will also find a section that allows you to give credit to each person who may have collaborated with you on this lesson. When the new version of S.O.S. is released, it will also allow you to organize your lesson plans into units and have a space for collaborative teams.

We hope this TIPS column will help you as you design your S.O.S. lesson plan. We look forward to seeing it!

About The Author



Ruth V. Small is Laura J. and L. Douglas Meredith Professor and director of the iSchool's (School of Information Studies) nationally-ranked school media program. She is director of the Center for Digital Literacy at Syracuse University and Co-Principal Investigator for the S.O.S. for Information Literacy project.