

The Authentic 5E Lesson: A Cycle of Learning

Authenticity is a conceptual framework for meaningful, student-centered learning as individuals build on what they already know to create deep knowledge. Students engage in relevant learning tasks, problems, and challenges. The characteristics of authentic intellectual work are construction of knowledge, through the use of disciplined inquiry, to produce discourse, products, or performances that have value beyond school. The 5E lesson format is a way to deliver more authentic instruction.

In the 5E model, the role of the student and teacher are reversed. The teacher acts as a guide: raising questions, providing opportunities for exploration, asking for evidence to support student explanations, correcting misconceptions, and coaching students as they apply new concepts. This model differs from the traditional format of lecturing, leading students by a step-by-step sequence to a solution, providing definite answers, and testing isolated facts. The 5E format is a planned sequence of instruction that places the student at the center of the learning experience.

Engage the Learning/Assess Prior Knowledge

These activities engage and present students with an event, problem, or question. Engagement activities capture students' interest, are often relevant to the students' current experiences, and help to make connections with what they already know to what they will learn.

Explore the Concept

Students encounter hands-on or discovery experiences in which they explore the concepts further. They receive little explanation and few terms at this point because they are to define the problem or phenomenon in their own words. The purpose at this stage of the model is for students to acquire a common set of experiences from which they can help one another eventually make sense of the concept. Students must talk about their experiences, both to articulate their own understanding and to understand another's viewpoint.

Explain the Concept/Define Terms

After students have explored the concept, they summarize and articulate what they have observed or learned during the explore section, share and compare their new knowledge with other students. Only after students have substantive conversations and reach some common understandings, does the curriculum and/or teacher provide content explanation and terms for what they are studying. The teacher may confirm, support or further present learning concepts through a variety of delivery methods. Students then use the terms to describe formally what they have experienced, and they begin to examine how this explanation fits or doesn't fit with that they already know.

Extend/Expand the Concept

Students expand on their understanding of the concept. They are given opportunities to apply the concept in unique situations, or they are given related ideas to explore and explain using the information and experiences they have learned so far. Through substantive conversation and interaction with each other, students expand and apply the information to new situations in order to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts.

Evaluate/Elaborate Students' Understanding of Concepts

The final stage of the lesson is designed for students to continue to elaborate on their understanding, evaluate what they know now, and determine what they have yet to figure out. Students are given the responsibility of reflecting on their learning, and demonstrating their understanding in some way. While formative assessment of student understanding should take place throughout all phases of the instructional model, the evaluation stage is also when the teacher determines the extent to which student have developed a meaningful understanding of the concept.



