



World Society for the Protection of Animals

Tips for Animal Welfare Educators

Aim: This top tips document is intended to aid all Animal Welfare Educators in their work. It includes information on planning, selling and delivering your education work.

Different parts of the document will have greater or lesser relevance depending on the nature of your education programme, however many parts will be applicable to all.

www.wspa-international.org

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1. Planning Your Education Work

As with most things this is the most important stage: if you get this right then the rest will hopefully follow. So, before you even think about making a presentation, designing a poster or setting foot in a classroom make sure you can answer these questions:

- What is the aim of your programme, lesson or resource? You should be able to state this clearly and simply without using many words.
- Who are you targeting? Think about age and factors that would affect background knowledge.
- What are the learning outcomes? This is often expressed as “After.....people should.....” E.g. After participating in this class, students should be able to demonstrate ways to avoid dog bites.
- What method will you use? Will it be passive or interactive learning?
- What resources do you have available?
- How will you check if your teaching has been successful? What evidence of learning can you collect? Are you testing knowledge, attitudes or skills?

Focus

When planning your education work don't try and do everything. The chances are you will fail. When you are designing a lesson, poster or presentation be clear in your own mind what you want it to achieve, set your objectives and stick to them. Ensure your objectives are SMART, see below:

Specific: don't be too general. For example “get support for our education programme” is general and could be replaced by “By the end of the year receive at least three letters of support for our education programme from relevant teaching authorities”.

Measurable: ensure that your objectives can be measured, therefore “Increase the number of schools visited” is better than “extend the education programme”.

Achievable: can you achieve your objectives with the resources you have available? If every step is requiring you to acquire funding, extra volunteers or more equipment, it is possible your objectives are not achievable.

Realistic: this doesn't need much explanation! Steer clear of objectives which are not realistic, they can create a sense of failure and cause a loss of enthusiasm.

Timed: there needs to be an end date. If you allow your organisation to aim to complete an objective “one day” it is likely it will never be achieved. For example by adding “By the end of June 2010” to the goal “Create a teaching pack suitable for community groups” it gives everyone involved a stronger impetus to get working on the project.

Also think about how your education programme fits with your organisation's overall vision and mission. If your vision is to create a country where no wild animals are kept as pets, then why are you making a plan for lessons about factory farming?

Plan the delivery

How you deliver your education work will depend on your target, resources and aims. Below is a list of some possible activities with examples and points you should consider. There are many more considerations but these will start you thinking.

One-off lesson in a school

Example: To teach 8-11 year olds how to avoid dog bites.

Considerations: Will the message be forgotten as soon as you leave? How can you reinforce the message?

Series of lessons in a school

Example: To cover different aspects of humane education as part of Ethics lessons.

Considerations: How will you prevent boredom or complacency? How many schools have schedule space to allow a series of classes?

Visit to an animal establishment

Example: To guide a local Scout group around an animal rescue centre.

Considerations: Is it possible visitors will be left to look at animals without any guidance? How will you ensure visitors come away with the right message?

Day(s) long activity camp

Example: To hold a 2 day wilderness camp for 11-13 year olds.

Considerations: Will participants pay to attend? How will you ensure the animal welfare focus of the camp isn't lost?

Vocational training

Example: To train someone to be a vet nurse.

Considerations: How will you assess competency? Will you do the training or source an external course?

Training teachers

Example: To train volunteers to teach at an after-school club.

Considerations: Do you have someone with the necessary skills to be a trainer? Will you have any follow up and continuing support after the initial training?

Poster

Example: To inform shoppers of the inherent problems in factory farming and encourage them to make humane choices.

Considerations: Will people read the poster? How can you address any questions people may have?

Leaflet

Example: To explain to potential purchasers the issues surrounding farming bears for bile.

Considerations: How will you ensure it isn't thrown away unread? How much text are people willing to read?

Lecture

Example: To present a talk to university students on being a compassionate traveller.
Considerations: How can you encourage people to attend? What type of visual aids will you use?

Monitoring and Evaluating

When planning your education work, it is important that you try to find out and show that your education initiative is succeeding. Monitoring and evaluation is therefore a vital part of your education programme.

For each of your objectives you should set indicators – the changes/things you expect to observe. Plan in advance what all your indicators will be and make sure everyone involved knows what they are and how to collect them. Be careful to choose indicators that are unambiguous, linked to the objective and easy to collect. For example, 'people being kind to animals' is going to be difficult, what will you actually measure?

Process indicators signify what was done, with whom and when. Record as many of these as you can; you never know when the extra information may prove useful. Outcome indicators signify what change has been achieved.

Please read the document Monitoring and Evaluation of Your Education Programme for more information.

2. Selling your plan

Once you have devised a good programme, resource or lesson, it is important to test it on a small group of your target audience. Any feedback can be used to improve your material.

After this pilot, you can then start to extent the programme to reach more people. In many cases this will involve first selling your idea to the relevant person or organisation. It doesn't matter how well your primary school lesson is designed if schools don't give you an opportunity to present it.

One possible way of selling your idea is to produce a proposal document. This document should include these points:

- Some background of your organisation.
- The reason for the event, programme, resource etc.
- A description of the event, programme, resource etc.
- The expected learning outcomes. If your programme is for school children, link the expected outcomes to points on the national curriculum, to increase interest from teachers.
- The evidence of learning.
- The benefit of your event, programme, resource etc. to the people you are selling to.

Who to contact?

This section applies to taking animal welfare into schools; however the idea of getting the appropriate person's permission and agreement is applicable to all programmes. Precise requirements will vary from country to country.

Write an introductory letter to the head teacher of the school. Although they may not make the decision as to whether your programme is suitable for the school it is a polite gesture. Ask them to pass the letter on to interested teachers. For secondary schools you can also write to the subject head, outlining how your programme links to their subject.

Write to the local education authority to let them know your plans, usually you will not need their permission to go into schools but it is good practice to keep them informed. It is also a good opportunity to ask for their support.

If you offer teacher training be sure to contact the relevant training body, usually part of the Ministry of Education. They should be able to give you information on the current training system and whether your training could count for training credits, if this system is in place.

Getting teachers' interest

Teachers are busy people so will often be looking for resources that can save time. A ready prepared lesson with all necessary materials and clear learning outcomes will be more enticing than a single worksheet or poster.

Link to existing syllabi and demonstrate where it fits specifically. For many teachers it can be a struggle to cover all of a syllabus in the allotted time, therefore leaving no time for extra activities. If your resources fit in with what has to be taught they are much more likely to be used.

Learn the terminology. If you can communicate with teachers using the current key words from the curriculum or teaching theory you are more likely to grab their attention. Often local education authorities or the Ministry of Education will have websites explaining current themes or areas of focus.

Subject matter

Animal welfare, despite our best efforts, can have a bad reputation – bringing to mind the words activists, protesters and extremists. For this reason it can be important to present your subject matter carefully.

Take care to balance negative information with information about how your participants can help, and do not limit this help solely to fundraising. You want the participants to leave motivated not depressed.

When describing your programme talk about the benefits to the participants as well as the eventual benefits for the animals.

Be careful to not alienate groups of people by making generalisations, such as “Farmers are cruel”. Be clear you are talking about procedures or conditions not specific people.

Remember people making small changes will also be beneficial; for example you may have a better success rate talking about the benefits of cutting down meat consumption rather than not eating meat at all.

3. Delivering Your Education Work

Low cost methods

Often insufficient funds are cited as a reason to not carry out an education programme and evaluation. While money can make things easier it is not essential to have lots of it to carry out an effective programme. Here are some low cost tips:

- In place of an expensive projector, laptop and screen why not print out your slides on A3 paper and laminate. Gather the students in closer for a more intimate presentation style.
- There is very little need to supply every child with a poster. A poster displayed in the classroom is likely to be seen just as often, if not more so, than one sent home.
- It is not always necessary to produce your own materials from scratch; many other animal welfare organisations have materials that they are happy to share. You can search for resources on www.animal-education.org.
- If doing a questionnaire for evaluation or research, you can ask questions orally, or write them up on a board, and ask participants to write answers on a slip of paper to save photocopying costs.

Classroom Management

Hopefully if you are conducting lessons in a school there will be teachers available to help with classroom management, however it is a good idea to know a few things about class control:

- Don't start teaching until you have the attention of all the students. If at all possible do not attempt to talk over student's chattering - it gives the impression you don't mind them not giving you their full attention.
- With younger students a 'be quiet cue' can be beneficial; it's more pleasant than repeating "please be quiet". It can be as simple as holding your finger to your lips but why not be more fun and use a puppet or play an animal noise. Remember to introduce the cue at the beginning of the lesson.
- It is worth having a few energizing activities and calm down activities on hand if the mood of the class becomes unsuitable for teaching. A few minutes of animal impressions or quick song can enliven a sleepy class.
- Remember that a class will be influenced by your behaviour. If you want to keep the class calm and quiet keep your own voice level and soft, although make sure you can still be heard!

Structuring a lesson

The best lessons have a starter activity, a middle (broken into episodes) and then a plenary (a review activity).

When devising activities for the lesson bear in mind that students' average concentration span in minutes equates to their age in years plus one or two.

Remember to set learning objectives for any type of education activity, not just those within a formal education setting. They are good to focus both yourself and your participants. Display them at the beginning of the session, lesson or presentation.

To help you write learning objectives use variations of this sentence "By the end of the lesson students should....." plus "know that...", "understand...", "be able to...", "develop..." or "be aware of.....".

Rather than asking participants "Do you understand the objectives?" ask a participant to explain them back to you. This will usually highlight any common misunderstandings.

At the end of the session review the objectives. All participants should feel as if they have accomplished them.

Learning styles

It is important to recognize that students, of all ages, have different preferred learning styles. Where possible include a mixture of activities suited to different styles to maximize learning. See below for a list of nine different learning styles along with their associated activities:

Interpersonal: Activities involve dialogue and working with others.

Intrapersonal: Activities involve working independently, devising own strategies for formulating questions, applying the concept or issue to personal experience and prior knowledge.

Kinaesthetic/practical: Activities such as cutting, pasting, improvising and role play.

Linguistic/Literary: Activities such as writing, reading, discussing.

Logical/mathematical: Activities such as calculating, using data, looking for patterns, applying informal logic.

Musical/auditory: Activities using music, sounds and words to stimulate ideas; making up rhymes, raps, songs; singing and using music to affect one's mood.

Visual/spatial: Activities involving diagrams and maps, designing posters and plans, painting, sketching and drawing.

Naturalistic/environmental: Activities involve ecological thinking, care for animals, plants and the environment

Affective/emotional/intuitive: Activities involve responding with feelings, responding intuitively, aesthetic appreciation, experiencing awe and wonder.

Child-friendly teaching methods

When possible use activity-based teaching, allowing students to learn by doing and experiencing.

Keep age in mind. For example within the primary school age range there are differences that will influence learning and teaching. Here are some examples for activities for each age group:

4-7 year olds	8-11 year olds
Storytelling	Storytelling
Singing songs	Carrying out simple surveys
Puppet plays	Quizzes
Drama	Drama, role playing
Language games	Creative writing
Drawing, colouring and painting	Drawing, painting, clay modelling etc
Simple conversations and discussions	Brainstorming

Students over eight can get embarrassed about expressing feelings and can be sensitive to gender stereotypes. Take care to consider this and create a cooperative atmosphere which does not reinforce stereotypes.

Use child-friendly words but do not patronise.

Young children find it difficult to sit still and quiet for long - you may have already noticed this! Make sure you build in opportunities for talking, noise making and movement into your lessons.

Teaching adults

Education isn't just about school; you may often be educating adults. Here are some tips for teaching those over eighteen:

- Adults are not so unlike children - you should still allow for a good mix of learning styles and changes of pace to maintain interest.
- Adult learners will normally appreciate a more independent form of learning - guide them to discover things for themselves rather than you telling them. This can apply to younger learners too!
- Don't presume because you are working with adults that your sessions/workshops need any less planning; thinking that as you are all grown ups you can get away with having a 'good talk about the issues' or something similar. Lessons should still be focused, and pre-planning will help you stick to the topic at hand.
- Often more so than school age students, it is important for adult learners to see the learning process as a means to an end, rather than an end in itself. Emphasise the practical and positive outcomes of their learning.

- Adults need to be able to integrate new ideas with what they already know in order for them to be readily acquired and used. Make sure you make links to your adult learners' current experience and knowledge.
- Bear in mind that adults may be less likely than younger learners to risk trying out new ideas or actions in a learning environment for worry of looking 'stupid'. Icebreaker activities can help people feel more comfortable.

Facilitating

In many adult learning situations facilitation is often preferable to teaching or lecturing. In facilitation your role is to help the participants discover new ideas or solve a problem through active learning. Some things to remember when in a facilitator role are:

- As a facilitator you need to clearly outline the objective of the discussion, and ensure everyone understands and agrees on this objective.
- You need to create an environment where everyone feels they can express their own viewpoint. This can be achieved by setting ground rules regarding acceptable behaviour.
- It is important to keep the discussion focused on the topic in hand, even if this means interrupting people, politely of course.
- You should build in time for reflection and self-assessment plus opportunities for participants to share their learning.

Making presentations

PowerPoint can be a useful tool for making presentations. It is important however to use it sparingly and don't confuse making a set of slides with preparing for a presentation! See below for more tips:

- Always time your presentation when you practice, your estimate will often be wrong!
- Use single sentences and keywords on slides rather than paragraphs and keep animation to a minimum. Try not to read what's on the slide – the audience is capable of doing this themselves. Try to use bullet point phrases and expand on them verbally.
- Make sure you know your presentation inside out. Nothing should surprise you and you should be able to link smoothly between slides.
- Stand up! Sitting can be appropriate for discussion but you'll present much better standing up.

Think About You

How you behave, whether in front of a class of 6 year olds or talking with representatives of the education authority, will have an impact on your education programme. Here are some ideas:

- Be positive. Within the animal welfare movement there can be a tendency to dwell on the problems but your education programme is part of the solution - so talk about that!
- In a teaching situation humour is important. By not taking yourself too seriously a more relaxed atmosphere can be created which is conducive to learning.
- However, this does not mean you shouldn't be professional. Lack of professionalism can be translated as you not caring about your programme. If you don't care about your programme, why should anyone else? Show your passion, both for animal welfare and education. Enthusiasm is infectious!
- Be well prepared. Knowing what you are doing will give you more confidence and eloquence. No excuses for not doing your homework!
- Be clear on the unique selling point of your education programme and don't be afraid to promote it. You will likely be competing with other demands on peoples' time.

4. Following up

Once you have completed your, hopefully successful, education project you will need to do some sort of follow up work. What this is and how much time it takes will depend on you and the type of project. Below are a few examples:

A poster was displayed in a shopping centre

Quick follow up: Check poster, replace if damaged or defaced. Remove if time dated.

Involved follow up: Conduct a questionnaire in the area to assess impact of poster.

A class was given to 16 year-olds about animals in farming

Quick follow up: Thank school and invite feedback.

Involved follow up: Send related activities after a month, to measure retention of information.

Remember: this is only a quick guide; it is not intended to be comprehensive, if you need more guidance, please contact us!

Our website www.animal-education.org has more information and a database of animal welfare education resources.