

## Podcast on Learning Menus



Shalom & Hi everyone - welcome to the UnitEd-Herzog Podcast!

We assume you have familiarity with educational ideas such as Collaborative learning, Jigsaw method, Self-directed learning, and Active learning. Sometimes these these methods and techniques seem a little bit vague

UnitEd-Herzog has prepared a series of short and focused podcasts on a number educational approaches. The podcasts are workshops for building lesson plans based on diverse, inviting, and engaging learning practices that encourage students to take an active and meaningful part in their learning. We've also prepared accompanying materials for you and your students that help improve their learning using these practices. These practices may be adapted to any content and any age group. So go ahead, take the material you've planned to teach, find a quiet place, put on your headphones, and join us!



Sometimes the classroom can have an industrial feeling, as though you are in a factory. A bell was sounded for the end of the break. All the students go inside, sit in front of the teacher and have to move at the same pace in a group. Naturally, there is often a distribution, on the one hand, of students who understand the material and manage to keep up with the teacher and advance, and on the other hand, another group who fail to follow and sometimes also make it difficult for the other students to learn. There is a third group which fluctuates between the extremes. It is not easy for the teacher to give attention to each student in a heterogeneous class and enable them choice and ability to make personal progress so that they feel involved in learning.

A learning menu is a practice that enables differentiation by providing flexibility and choice in learning methods. Learning menus provide students with a personal choice between different learning activities. The teachers who plan the learning menu can decide how many activities need to be completed at any given time, which activities are mandatory, which activities involve individual or group work, which activities have a creative mode or an exploratory task. Learning menus allow students to learn at their own pace. Learning choice is also a significant factor in encouraging motivation to study and when students are given a choice of learning methods, they take responsibility for their learning processes.

In this podcast I will guide you through the process of building a lesson plan based on learning menus and at the end of the segment you will have a lesson ready to use in class. Let's start. Are you here? Great. You can put on headphones and prepare a device for documenting the structure of the lesson: it can be a notebook, a sheet of paper, or a computer.

You can also use the page we have prepared for you. Companion page for listening to the podcast – learning menus.

There are five stages to preparing the learning menus. I will explain each step and give you time to work while listening to pleasant music. If you feel you need more time, stop the recording, finish your work, and get back to us.

**First step - think about the academic subject you want to teach in the near future. This can even be a unit of several lessons and not necessarily a single lesson. In learning menus you can prepare assignments that will last for several lessons and the students will open the learning menu each time and progress in learning.**



After you have thought about the study topic, think about learning activities that students can do on their own. Sort them into the following categories: individual assignments, group assignments, assignments with a creative product, publicized assignments, research assignments.

 **Take 3 minutes to think about educational assignments according to the categories.**



### **Have you got a topic?**

Have you got an initial list of activities? Excellent. Previously we suggested that you have five categories and three activities in each category. This means that you have about 15 ideas for activities. Now we want to cut down the number of activities to about 6-9 activities from different categories. Try to eliminate activities while maintaining diversity in the categories. I recommend that you keep one activity from each category, i.e. one individual activity, group activity, research, etc. Also think about the level of the activity. Some of the activities will be more complex for advanced students and simpler for students who have not yet reached this level. This way you can give answers to a heterogeneous class.

 **Spend 2 minutes on this stage. You can pause the recording and return when you are ready.**



Now you should be focused on a clear number of activities you want to promote. It's time to give a few more details about them. Write the name and a short description on each activity, to help the students to choose the activity they want to do. Then detail the steps involved in each activity. Remember that we want the instructions to be as clear as possible, so write in a simple language for the students to understand and handle on their own. In addition, if the students need links to read, view or listen to certain sections, don't forget to attach them. You should have the activities defined by the end of this stage.

 We will spend 3 minutes on this stage, although it is likely that you will need more time.



We are nearly at the end. You have already done most of the work and it is very impressive. Now we are going to address evaluation, in other words, how to evaluate the various assignments. We will not discuss all possibilities because there are many, but we will offer some points to think about during the evaluation: first, assess the amount of assignments performed, refer to the process of undertaking each assignment, think about giving a personal sense of achievement when a student finishes each assignment.

Try not to create competition between the students on the number of assignments they complete. Regarding the assignments themselves, try to assess the knowledge itself, but also refer to the process and skills the students had to demonstrate, such as reflective questions that emphasize skills. These could be: How independent did I feel in performing the assignments? Did I complete the assignment in full and on time? If the student needed to learn some creative tool, such as videos, you can examine creative expression. It is important that the students know in advance how they will be assessed on their learning.

 Use these suggestions to review your process of work. Take 3 minutes to think about this.



Now that we have clearly defined the assignments and evaluation methods, we have to organize the assignments in a tool that is accessible to the students. There are various tools such as tic-tac-toe, selection board, digital accessibility in Google Classroom, and more. Think about which tool is most convenient for you. You can research the various resources on the website or the Internet in general and include the assignments into the tool to make it accessible to the students. This will take some time.

 We have 3 minutes of work music here but feel free to stop the recording as you need and return when you are ready.



If you have gone through all the stages, then you have prepared a really good study unit which the students can access. The important thing now is to decide how you are going to tell the students about the unit, what the instructions are and how much time will be devoted to the learning process. Also think about your position in the class. You are not actively teaching and you have a special opportunity to observe the students in their work. Walk around the classroom and see the progress of each student who is working independently, regardless of which task they have chosen or how well they are coping. You can also take note of their social interactions. This is a perfect opportunity to spend more time focusing on specific students that you feel might need help if they are struggling, advanced students that you can challenge more, and also those that you haven't had many opportunities to talk to and get to know them better.

**So. I wish you the best of luck in class!**



We hope you found this podcast to be helpful.

Don't forget to also visit the [UnitEd](#) and [Herzog College](#) websites.

There you will find additional materials about the practice and other useful resources for future lessons, inspiration, and enrichment.

Good luck!

You can also listen to  
the podcast here:

