

# PLANNING FOR SUCCESS

***A Proactive, Multi-Dimensional Look at Group Lesson Planning***

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>Welcome!

*Introductions*

*Sort Game*

## Why Teach a Group Lesson?

- Required for PATH International certification
- More cost effective
- Better use of time – accommodate more riders
- Creates opportunities for social interaction
- Allows for longer ride time

## When Not to Use a Group Format

- Rider needs to be 1 on 1 with a therapist.
- The rider's needs are not able to be met by volunteer support.
- The right horse match is not available – Ex) 2 riders need the same horse).
- The right equipment is not available Ex) only 1 child sized western saddle).
- When a longer lesson time is not appropriate Ex) Rider with Multiple Sclerosis in summer heat.

# How to Determine Group Size

- **What is the right size group for your center?**
  - **Number of Horses**
  - **Size of Volunteer Corp**
  - **Size of Arena**
  - **Skill of Instructors**
- **What is the right group size for the rider characteristics?**
  - **Physical Needs**
  - **Social Needs**
  - **Behavioral Considerations**
  - **Level of Independence**
  - **Ability to focus**
  - **In general, the more involved the riders, the smaller the group**

# Which Riders Go Together?

- Cognitive age versus chronological age
- Riding skill level
- Horse, volunteer and equipment needs
- Scheduling availability
- Goals of the riders
- Behavioral considerations
- Groups outside of riding (school, sports, group home etc.)

# The Importance of Having a Plan

- Lots of moving pieces – need to organize the chaos!
- Allows volunteers to have an accurate briefing.
- Ensures progression with students at varied levels.
- Can be used more than 1 time.
- Good practice for those that mentor instructors in training.
- Tool to communicate with parents/guardians, teachers or case workers.

# Lesson Plan Components Defined

- Lesson identification information (group, day, time, instructor)
- Statement of the goal for the group
- Statement of the objective for the group
- Lesson assignments (rider, horse, volunteer, equipment matches)
- Teacher preparation
- Arena set up
- Mounting order
- Pre-lesson activity



# Lesson Plan Components Continued

- Warm-up
- Skill Review
- Introduction of new skill
  - What
  - Why
  - How = task analysis
  - Where
- Practice activity
- Progression plan
- Wrap up/Cool down
- Dismounting order
- Progress Notes

# Riding Skill Selection

- What if the group is not cohesive?
  - Pick a skill in the “middle”
  - Vary expectations and layers of support
  - Example – Posting Trot
- Creating a road map to ensure progression
  - Start with a comprehensive rider assessment.
  - Determination of goal (riding skill focus).
  - Lay out skill progression to reach goal.
  - Write objectives for each step in the skill progression.
  - Design a lesson plan around achieving the objective.
  - Complete progress notes that reflect on why or why not the objective was achieved and recommended next steps.

# Layers of Support

- **Size of group**
- **Visual supports available – Ex) arena set up**
- **Number and role of volunteers**
- **Horse match**
- **Equipment choice – Ex) bridle versus reins on halter**
- **Location of lesson**
- **Amount of sensory input**

# Promoting Independence in the Group

- Utilize the concept of a “Ride”
- Strategic placement of spotters
- Know the horses – who tries to play “catch up” and who needs a “motivator”
- Use visuals
- Teach group spacing and how to pass another rider as a skill

# Managing Traffic Flow

- Use global instruction
- Use names to give individual supports
- Do tack checks and provide individual support at “X”
- Remain in central location – which might change!
- Keep horses in a “ride”
- Change direction across the diagonal rather than with a half circle to maintain horse order
- Empower riders and volunteers to monitor spacing

# Behavior Management

- Behavior is language!
- Be proactive versus reactive – understand the A, B, Cs!  
Ex) Throwing helmet
- Common functions of behavior:
  - Attention
  - Discomfort
  - Confusion
  - Boredom
  - Lack of social skills
  - Sensory needs not being met
- Time management and autonomy!
- Empower your volunteers

# Volunteer Management

- Provide on-going training – a group lesson is only as strong as its weakest volunteer!
- Give global correction even if it is for 1 volunteer.
- Make the time to meet with all volunteers both before and after the lesson (may need to look at lesson schedule differently).
- Keep the same teams together when ever possible.
- Be clear about volunteer roles and responsibilities.
- “Overschedule” so there is always extra help around.
- Train volunteers to do stirrup adjustments and fit helmets.

# Callee and Liz

## *Case Study*

- Callee is a 13 year old girl with ADHD and DD. She has been riding independently at the walk and trot in a private lesson for the last 2 years on a variety of horses.
- Liz is a 20 year old girl with Asperger's Syndrome. She has been riding independently at the walk in a private lesson for the last year on Buddy.
- The therapeutic riding program has grown and created scheduling limitations.
- Both riders were ready for additional challenges and their parents were interested in having more peer interaction at the farm.
  
- Callee and Liz are riding in a 45 minute semi-private lesson this spring.
- A volunteer spotter has been added to help during the lesson.
- Callee is riding Tigger, a slow and steady horse.
- Initially, the objectives for the lessons are at the walk, focused on spacing.
- Liz is typically in the lead as her horse goes more willingly forward.
- Lessons happen mainly in the arena versus on the trail.
- Global, simplified instructions are provided to the group.



# Residential School Group *Case Study*

- A group of 6 teens with a mix of disabilities wants to begin riding.
- The disabilities are all cognitive in nature.
- Many of the riders have behavioral challenges.
- The center has 4 horses and a small volunteer corp.
  
- The group is split into 2 groups of 3 and rotates between mounted and unmounted activities.
- The group comes for 1 hour and 15 minutes to allow transitions between activities. No other lessons are schedule in the 15 minutes before or after this group.
- 2 more volunteers than typically needed are always scheduled to help in the barn at the same time as the group rides.
- The staff that comes with the group has completed the required paperwork and gone through volunteer training.
- The riders typically start each lesson with some off lead work at the walk to increase challenge and decrease disruptive behaviors.

# Chris, Amanda and Owen *Case Study*

- Chris is a 40 year old man with Down Syndrome who has a long processing time. He has been riding for 2 years on Geyser with a leader and a sidewalker.
- Amanda is a 35 year old woman with Intellectual Disability and high muscle tone. She has been riding for 1.5 years on Geyser with a leader and a sidewalker.
- Owen is a 25 year old man with autism. He has been riding for 5 years with a spotter for walk and trot on either Buddy or Tigger.
- All 3 riders are only available on Mondays at 4:30pm
- The horse matches for the riders are adjusted. Chris moves to Tigger, a larger horse with more movement, so Amanda can remain on Geyser because he is the narrowest horse in the herd. Owen is assigned to Buddy who is the most cooperative off the lead line.
- Owen is assigned a horse leader to be clipped on as he gets accustomed to riding in the group.
- When working on trot skills, Owen is working on posting rhythm; Chris's sidewalker does an ankle hold and counts the rhythm to him; Amanda sits the trot while her sidewalker does an arm over thigh hold.

A red speech bubble with a white outline and a white drop shadow, pointing downwards. The background features a pattern of concentric circles and dashed lines in light gray.

Let's Brainstorm Your Group  
Lesson Challenges!

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**Thank you!**