



The Specific Objective Disaster

In this scenario, examine the individual thoughts of each student as they respond to the teacher's specific objective for the class. Consider what the teacher might do differently next time.

A grade 5 Social Studies class has been researching the Second World War and is well into the unit of study. Each student has been assigned an essay topic. The class has been working on the research and was introduced earlier to the process of making notes into a formal outline. Mrs. Jensen, the teacher, has been guiding their work each day. Today she begins the class by telling students that by the end of class their outline for the essay is due to be handed in.

Students had various responses to the announcement:

- **Student 1:** Oh no, I haven't even finished my research.
- **Student 2:** Super! My outline is done, now I can have free time!
- **Student 3:** What's an outline? I was out sick last week.
- **Student 4:** Fine, I am just about done. I just have to do a good copy. I think I will start my title page.
- **Student 5:** Boring! My essay is finished already. Outline? My whole project is complete. Hopefully I did it right.

The students reacted to the objective set by the teacher in their own way. Their reactions demonstrated panic, confusion, and boredom—none being conducive to learning. The specific nature of the assignment for the day left some students with little direction for the class period.

The teacher might have addressed this class very differently to engage students in a goal setting activity where the broad goals of the teacher could be personalized by each student.

How would you address students at the outset of each lesson or unit? In this class, how would you encourage them and provide opportunities for them to set personal learning goals?