

Understanding Students and Their Learning In Order to Develop Units of Study *“Planning with the end in mind”*

Understanding student knowledge begins with assessment as does the development of effective learning opportunities.

Begin with Analysis

Assessment of students after a previous unit of study:

- Where are my students now in the learning continuum?
- In what ways has the class changed?
- Do I know more about individuals and their learning styles?
- What do they need in order to strengthen their current abilities?
- In what order should these opportunities be presented?
- What do I need to do to strengthen the capacity of individuals to learn?
- At what level, and in what ways, should the new learning begin?

Assessment of contextual factors:

- How will my students’ backgrounds and learning abilities support or challenge the outcomes of the learning experience?
- What prior knowledge do my students have that will support their learning?
- What needs do they have?
- What are the differing kinds and levels of abilities in my classroom?
- In what ways can I differentiate instruction to meet the diverse needs of my students?
- What resources will I/we need?
- How much time do we have to implement the unit?
- How will the unit be structured in terms of:
 - Presentations?
 - Investigations?
 - Projects?
 - Group and independent study?
 - What other factors should I consider?

Plan With the End in Mind

Identification of standards and curriculum requirements:

- What national or state standards are to be covered and what should students know and be able to do at the end of the unit?
- What NBPTS standards should I incorporate?
- What state/district or curriculum guidelines need to be addressed?

Selection of the unit

- What will the theme of the unit be?
- What life issues or problems might be addressed in this unit?
- How will the questions and tasks of the unit be relevant to my students' lives?
- What personal, social or global concerns affect my students and could provide for higher levels of thinking and learning?

Determining Questions for learning based on the standards:

- What questions might I develop that will guide learning, deepen thinking and help students explore the topic of study AND address the standards to be covered?
- In what ways are the questions phrased to avoid “yes” or “no” answers and to deepen thinking?

Design assessments that support the plan for the instruction:

- What formative assessments will I plan that will provide my students and me with feedback about their learning?
- What might these assessments look like?
- How will I develop the types and frequency of formative assessments that will allow me to adjust the lessons to accommodate differentiated learning?
- What summative assessment(s) will I develop that will showcase student learning with regard to the standards?
- What product(s) will I ask my students to provide that will provide an opportunity for them to apply their new learning?

Rubric Design:

- In what ways does the rubric serve to inform my students of the standards on which they will be assessed?
- How have I created distinct and describable differences between levels on the rubric?
- Do I have at least one criteria for each targeted standard?
- In what ways might I have my students help to develop the rubrics?

Instructional Activities:

- Do the planned activities have an instructional focus?
- Do the activities provide for differentiated instruction in order to meet the needs of all the students in my classroom?
- In what ways have I incorporated opportunities for multiple intelligences?
- In what ways have I included opportunities for developing higher levels of thinking?
- In what ways do embedded assessments enable me to adjust the learning opportunities along the way?

Resources:

- What resources do I presently have?
- What resources need to be developed?
- Do I have resources that will meet the needs of all my students?
- Do any of my resources provide for learning outside the classroom?
- Have I incorporated resources that involve the community?
- Do my resources provide for active learning?

Do and Review

Analysis and Reflection

- Do I see ways I need to adjust instruction as I am teaching?
- Am I able to evaluate the effectiveness of the unit's abilities to meet the goals, objectives and standards for learning that were set at the beginning of the unit?
- Did I find opportunities to reflect on why I made changes to the unit? (Or didn't need to make changes, why?)
- Once completed, am I able to reflect on the unit as a whole and identify missed opportunities for deepening learning?
- How does my reflection of the completed unit help me better understand my delivery of instruction?

The Cycle Begins Again

Assessment of Students

- Where are my students now in the learning continuum?
- In what ways has the class changed?
- What more do I know about individuals and their learning styles?
- What do the students need in order to strengthen their current abilities?
- In what order should these opportunities be presented?
- What do I need to do to strengthen the capacity of individuals to learn?
- At what level and in what ways should the new learning begin?