

Tool: Mentor-Novice Unit Planning Guide for Culturally-Relevant & Effective Teaching and Learning

Timing: Ideally, when planning every instructional unit

Purpose: To focus Mentor-Novice collaboration when planning a unit of instruction. To ensure that appropriate, research-based recommendations are incorporated in the unit lessons. The questions pose the possibilities. The Mentors contribute their knowledge, expertise and assistance acquiring the resources to help the novice make the possibilities the realities of the lessons—to make a difference in student learning. *It may be helpful to involve your Community Mentor in planning.*

PLANNING BASICS—OVERALL PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Curriculum

Focus on Core Content: What are the essentials my students need to know and be able to do?

Interdisciplinary Units: How can I connect this content to other subject areas and topics?

Conceptual Theses: What are the powerful concepts, or *BIG* ideas to which I can link this unit?

Real-Life: How is this information used in life outside schools? What occupations?

Reading & Math Literacy: How can I reinforce and extend reading and math skills of my students?

Multicultural Literature: Are there some appropriate reading selections (or especially important quotes) that could be incorporated? Are there age appropriate, leveled readings on the topic?

Relevant Issues: What are some unit-related issues or problems the students would care about?

Cultural Resources, Community Knowledge: What community or cultural events, places, concerns, or people could be incorporated?

Positive Role Models: Are there some outstanding individuals (from the culture of my students or from a variety of cultures) associated with this content who exemplify important qualities of character?

Service Learning: Is there a way to connect to service learning projects?

Relationship & Management

Individual Assets: What are the best ways to capitalize on individual student assets of my students (e.g., learning modes, Multiple Intelligences, EQ)?

Relationship with Students: What specifically will I do to strengthen my personal relationship with my students (or target students)?

Acceptance: What specific actions can I take to help my students feel accepted and valued?

Collaborative Rules & Agreements: Is there a need to re-orient the students to any of our rules? What rules & agreements do I need to emphasize to prevent any problems from occurring? Are there any students who need an individualized behavior plan?

Leadership Roles: What leadership responsibilities can be assigned to individual students or teams to strengthen a sense of community and ownership of the classroom?

Conflict Resolution: Are there specific conflict resolution skills that need reinforcing at this point? Is there a need to hold a formal problem-solving session? Are there opportunities to address problem-solving, decision making, etc. as part of the unit—and do students need a model?

Self-Management, Organizational, & Social Skills: Which skills can be practiced and reinforced?

Learning Buddies and Cooperative Teams: Are the pairs reflective of the diversity in the classroom? Is there a need to make any changes in the pairings or team assignments—being aware of the need for students of diverse backgrounds to have opportunities to work with and learn from each other and, at the same time, to work together as a team long enough to develop productive collaboration skills?

Multitask Structures: How can I incorporate, manage, and monitor learning stations/centers, independent or group projects, workshops to catch students up, individual conferences, etc?

Absent Students: How can the students who were absent experience this content, stay connected to the instruction, and accomplish the learning expectations satisfactorily?

Expectation of Success: How can I prepare the students who do not have the background knowledge or skills to be able to participate successfully in the unit? Are there any preteaching experiences or activation strategies that could prepare the student for what is to be learned (acceleration)?

Equity: How will I monitor the consistency of my actions with my belief that all my students can learn?

Assessment

Range of Assessments: What assessments will I use to help students determine their progress during the instruction and at the end of the unit? Which tasks can be used as authentic assessments?

Test-Like Practice: Where can I incorporate standardized test-like practice during this unit?

Celebrate Success/Improvement: At what point and how will I recognize legitimate progress? How can I celebrate group and individual success?

Grading & Improvement Grading: Which sources of information will I use to determine grades? How can I justify effort or attitude as a component of grading? Is there a way to incorporate improvement grading?

UNIT SPECIFIC PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

Instructional Strategies to BEGIN a unit of instruction

Learning Goals: How will I clearly communicate the learning goals to my students? (How can I phrase these goals as questions?)

High Expectations: Are my expectations high (challenging, yet attainable) for my students' achievement? Do I anticipate that the majority of my students will be successful in accomplishing the learning goals?

Expressing Success Expectations: How can I best express my expectations that every student can be successful in achieving the learning goals?

Purpose for Learning: How will I communicate the relevance and importance of this unit (how the information and skills can be of use; real world applications; how it enhances their lives now—and in the future)?

Enthusiasm: What am I especially excited about and how can I best convey this enthusiasm to my students? How will I stimulate (or hook) student interest in the topic in advance? Can I share my personal application or find an example from others—book character, historical figure, current event, music lyrics?

Students Setting Learning Goals/Ownership/Personal Choice: How will I guide my students in identifying and recording their own learning goals?

Background Experiences: How will the students experience the information in this unit? What real or simulated experiences could strengthen their knowledge and interest? (e.g., field trips—real or virtual at the beginning of a unit; role play, simulation, or dramatic interpretation)

Adaptations, Modifications, Scaffolding: What supports or accommodations (people, technology) can be incorporated to allow more students to be successful in accomplishing the learning goals? Can time requirements be adjusted? Can materials be modified, supplemented, or replaced? Can the assignment be modified? [Sequence, Number, Cognitive Level] Can choice or options be incorporated? Can the directions be modified? [Written & oral, Flow chart, Checklist, Tasks broken down into smaller steps] Can a Graphic Organizer or [Acceleration] Guide be used? Is a model available?

Can a peer tutor or other adult provide assistance? Can technology be used? Should I audio- or videotape these events for students' later use?

Instructional Strategies to use DURING a unit of instruction

To introduce new learning—

Prior Knowledge: How will I guide the students in identifying and articulating what they already know (or *think* they know) about the topic? Which activation strategies would be appropriate? What questions might prompt students to “share their stories?”

Building on the Familiar: How can I guide the students in comparing their new learning with what they already know?

Multicultural Emphasis: Are there ways to give the students examples or illustrations from more than one culture (multiple representations)? Are there related topics or information that I could incorporate to promote positive racial attitudes? Is there a way to have students predict how they might respond to a situation before divulging how the character or main figure responded—to then identify similarities and to understand perspectives?

Notetaking: How will I direct students in taking notes? In what? Stored where? How will the notes be used?

Processing, Summarizing, & Constructing Meaning: At what points should I direct the students to process or summarize the information? Which symbols, images, icons could I share that would be good examples? How can I help students construct meaning (connect on a personal level) as they acquire new learning?

Graphic Organizer: Which graphic organizer might be appropriate in helping the students organize the information?

Reading Comprehension: Are there ways to incorporate Reciprocal Teaching or SQ3R with reading selections?

To practice, review, and apply knowledge—

Cooperative Learning: Which learning activities are more appropriate for independent work and which are more appropriate for cooperative learning?

Technology: Is appropriate software or other technology available to supplement the instruction?

Memory/Automaticity: Is there a mnemonic (illustration, visual, story, joke) (teacher or student created) that would be helpful in remembering the information? Is there a need to set a practice schedule?

Higher Level Challenge: What higher-level tasks or questions can I incorporate to help students develop a deeper understanding of the content? Can several equally challenging tasks be developed as options?

Analyzing Perspectives--Is this content appropriate to direct students in comparing this issue and the way it was dealt with to the ways other ethnicities, gender, social classes, etc. would have handled it? Can the students analyze the issue from more than one ethnic, gender, and social class?

Error Analysis—Are there any situations in which it would be beneficial to identify the errors in reasoning?

Constructing Support, Justifying Opinions, & Fostering Open-Mindedness—How can I remember to ask students “why?” and “what is your evidence?” to stimulate *critical thinking*? Is there an appropriate issue—with more than one position—to develop into a structured debate requiring students to take a position and defend it with valid support?

Teaching Higher Level Thinking Skills: If students do not possess these processes of higher level thinking, what model (or steps) can I provide to help them?

Projects: What are several longer term, real-world, challenging projects requiring students to generate and test hypotheses, solve problems, research ambiguous events or people, make decisions, or create inventions? **Are there ways to embed lower level skills and facts in more challenging activities?

Homework: What (if any) homework assignments can be appropriate to provide practice, review, and extension?

When homework is assigned, how will I check for accuracy and provide feedback to the students?

Summarizing & Updating Learning: At what points will I have students refine their initial understandings (linguistic and graphic) to reflect what they now know?

To monitor progress towards learning goals—

Student Self-Monitor: How will I require students to keep track of their achievement and of the effort they are expending to achieve the goals?

Teacher Monitor: How can I monitor students' progress of goals? On the effort expended? On the quality of their work and effort?

Teacher Feedback: How will I provide feedback to students about their progress toward achieving learning goals? What are the best ways to emphasize the positives and growth, but also identify what is yet to be learned?

Timely Intervention: When can I assist the students who are not progressing acquire the information or skills? What strategies can I use?

Instructional Strategies to END a unit of instruction

Assessments: What assessments will I use to help students determine their progress during the instruction and at the end of the unit? Which tasks can be used as authentic assessments?

Metacognition: How can I have my students think about/reflect on how much they have learned and on their progress as learners?

References

Cotton, K. (2000). *Research you can use to improve results*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Delpit, L. (1991). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. Paper presented at the twelfth annual Charles H. Thompson Lecture—Colloquium.

Ladsen-Billings, G. (1994). *The dreamkeepers: Successful teachers of African-American children*. San Francisco, CA: Josey-Bass Publishers.

Marzano, R.J., Pickering, D.J., & Pollack, J.E. (2001). *Classroom instruction that works: Research-based strategies for increasing student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Scherer, M., Ed. (April, 1999) Race, class, and culture. *Educational Leadership*, Vol. 56(7) Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Strong, R.W., Silver, H.F., & Perini, M.J. (2001). *Teaching what matters most: Standards and strategies for raising student achievement*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Weiner, L. (1999). *Urban teaching: The essentials*. New York: Teachers' College Press.

Williams, B., Ed. (1996). *Closing the achievement gap: A vision for changing beliefs and practices*. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Young, L.J. (1998). Culturally relevant pedagogy in contextual teaching and learning. In *Contextual teaching and learning: Preparing teachers to enhance student success in the workplace*

and beyond. Ed. By Susan J. Sears and Susan Hersh. Columbus, OH: Urban Network to Improve Teacher Education.

M.A. Blank & C. Kershaw (1/01)