Chapter 1: Introduction

Context

Transcript:

George Washington Carver once said, “Where there is no vision, there is no hope.” When students see a purpose to what they are learning and know what they are trying to accomplish, they are more likely to achieve academic success (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). Long-term goals must be in place for our students to have something to strive for. And teachers need to guide students towards reaching these goals (Locke & Latham, 2005).

Imagine being in a race and not knowing the race route or distance. How do you train? During the race, how would you know which way to go?
Transcript:

Unit planning is like running a race. It requires preparation and having a clear vision of where you are going. This planning method, in which you begin with the end in mind, is called backwards planning. In this module, you will learn some research-based benefits of backwards planning and explore a process for creating backwards-planned units.
Why backwards plan?

Transcript:

You may be thinking, “Why should I bother with backwards planning? I am fine planning one day at a time and figuring out the unit learning goals as I go.”

Research has found that some of the most common planning problems teachers experience actually arise from teaching without a clear vision of what they want students to learn (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2001; Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Failing to backwards plan creates misalignment. Either the fun activities are not aligned to the objectives, the assessments don’t align to the learning goals, or the goals are so unclear they don’t align to anything (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2001; Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).
Three Stages

Three Stages of Backwards Planning

Set the Vision  Create a Summative Assessment  Sequence Objectives

Transcript:

In backwards planning we work to align all aspects of the learning experience. We accomplish this in three distinct stages: setting the vision, creating a summative assessment, and sequencing daily objectives (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2001; Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005; Danielson, 1996).
Stage 1: Setting the Vision

Transcript:

The first stage of backwards planning is setting the vision (Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Popham, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005). This is when you answer the question “What do I want students to understand and be able to do by the end of the unit?” The vision is like the keystone of your unit plan. It holds everything together. Without a vision, your assessments and lesson activities may lack cohesion and relevance.

We create our unit vision by doing two things: unpacking standards to identify unit objectives and creating essential questions to give those objectives greater meaning.
Transcript:

All lesson and unit plans need to align to standards. However, the depth and breadth of standards requires that we break them down into smaller, more manageable learning objectives. (Kauffman et al., 2002). The process of breaking down standards into knowledge and skills is called “unpacking standards.”

If you know how to unpack standards and are comfortable doing so, click Proceed. If you would like to see an example of what this skill looks like in practice, click Learn More.

Optional: Learn More

Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, descriptive details, and clear event sequences.

When you unpack a standard you identify what students need to know and be able to do in order to perform the skills described by the standard.

One way to unpack a standard is to first find the nouns and adjectives within it. This will help you identify the key ideas and concepts students need to know.

Let’s do this together. Take a moment to look at the 5th grade literacy Common Core standard onscreen. The words highlighted in blue are our key ideas and concepts (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005).

Next, we identify the verbs in our standard. The verbs indicate the skills students need to learn. The words highlighted in red are our skills (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005).

The highlighted words are what students need to know and do to demonstrate proficiency. To create objectives...
you have to consider your students’ ability and their prior knowledge. This will help you determine the small things they need to do in order to master these bigger tasks.

Take a look at a few objectives that align to our standard. It is important to note that you do not have to use the same verbs and nouns from the standard in your objectives. You are interpreting the key skills and concepts from the standard. The most important thing is that your objectives need to make sense to the students. From time to time, check with a trusted colleague to get feedback on the objectives you create.

When you are ready to move on, click Proceed.

Check for Understanding

Apply the Pythagorean Theorem to find the distance between two points in a coordinate system.

SWBAT: Answer Pythagorean Theorem questions 1-20 on page 47 of your textbook.

Write a mock interview between yourself and Pythagoras.

Identify the hypotenuse of a right triangle.

Transcript:

Look for a moment at this 8th grade Common Core math standard and three accompanying objectives. Based on what you now know about unpacking standards, click on the objective that you think aligns best.
Correct

This is the most aligned objective. Students cannot use the Pythagorean Theorem until they know how to identify the hypotenuse.

Incorrect – 2nd Choice

This is a method for students to practice the Pythagorean Theorem but not an objective in itself. This is a task that needs to be accomplished, but not a learning goal.
Incorrect – 3rd Choice

Apply the Pythagorean Theorem

Incorrect

This may be an engaging activity but it is not clear what explicit skill or knowledge students will gain that aligns to the standard.

Essential Questions

Set the Vision

Unpack Standards

Create Essential Questions

(Wiggins & McTighe, 2011)
Transcript:

When we unpack standards, we create the learning objectives for our unit. However, we must also take the time to establish context and relevance for these objectives. This is where essential questions come into play.

Essential questions ground the content of the unit in real-life concerns that matter to students (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011).

Essential questions encourage deep thought and discussion and require students to use evidence to answer them. They also connect instruction to previously learned content and provide clarity for why the learning is important.

On screen you can see an example of an essential question that meets this criteria.
Examples

Types of Essential Questions

Real World Relevant

How can themes from Shakespeare’s plays help us better understand our current political system?

Helps students make sense of complicated ideas.

Engages a diverse set of learners.

Types of Essential Questions

Real World Relevant

In what ways are mammals able to adapt to their ecosystem?

Helps students make sense of complicated ideas.

Engages a diverse set of learners.
Transcript:

Throughout a unit, teachers should refer students to the essential questions and connect individual learning experiences to these questions.

On screen there are a few types of essential questions to consider. Click on each to see an example.

Video Introduction

Transcript:

If you would like to see a teacher explain how creating essential questions benefits her instruction, click the image of the teacher. If you would like to move on, click Proceed.
Transcript:

“So, whenever I am thinking about essential questions, I always think how can I make whatever I’m teaching relevant to real-world? So, how can I make this have a purpose for the students? So, we’re doing the wax museum research report right now and our essential question is ‘What positive impact has your person that you’re researching made on the world?’”

“So there is always more than one essential question. And then a lot of times we do discussions on it.”

“So, like today for our wax museum the essential question was ‘What impact are you making on the world.’ So, now taking it from that essential question of the person they’re researching to now what impact are they making. So, it always has something to do with that essential question. It’s almost like a sub-question that I use.”
Chapter 3: Create an Assessment

Stage 2: Create Assessment

- Clarifies the benchmark for proficiency.
- Ensures learning activities are rigorous and aligned to the standards/objectives.

Transcript:

Once you have your standards unpacked and your essential questions formed, you can move on to the second stage of backwards planning: creating a summative assessment.

Summative assessments should be created before you begin a unit because they help clarify the benchmark for proficiency.

Creating an assessment before beginning the unit helps ensure that learning activities are rigorous and aligned to standards and objectives (Graff, 2011; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Popham, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011, 2005).
Summative Assessment Criteria

Criteria:

- Each unit standard is assessed.
- All questions or tasks are aligned to a standard.
- The assessment incorporates real-world application.
- Students are required to address the essential questions.
- Proficiency is defined for each question.

Transcript:

On screen you can see some criteria that should help you in creating a summative assessment (Bransford, Brown, & Cocking, 2001; Jones, Jones, & Vermette, 2011; Popham, 2011; Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). If you would like to see an example of a summative assessment that meets these requirements, click the Learn More button. If you would like to move on, click proceed.

Example

2nd Grade ELA Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>RI.6: Identify the main purpose of a text, including what the author wants to answer, explain, or describe.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essential Questions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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For a complete list of references, refer to the On-Demand Module ‘Backwards Planning a Unit.’
2nd Grade ELA Example

**SWBAT:**
- Describe what purpose means.
- List the three main purposes that an author might have for writing: answer, explain, describe
- Describe an author’s main purpose in a given text.

2nd Grade ELA Example

Why is it important to think about an author's purpose for writing?
Transcript:

Let’s look at a second grade ELA example. Click each button to see the standard, objectives, essential questions, and exemplar assessment question.

This question is well-aligned to the standard. Students have to identify the author’s purpose and explain how they are able to determine that purpose. It is real-world relevant because in their lives, students will need to understand the purpose of various texts they interact with.

Unit Goals

UNIT GOALS:

- Clarify the level of performance expectation
- Motivate and focus effort.
- SMART
Unit goals clarify what level of performance we want to see from all students on summative assessments (Klein et al., 1999; Latham, 2006). Goals can be motivating and help focus everyone’s efforts. Effective goals embody the five SMART criteria. To learn more about SMART goals, be sure to check out the Understanding SMART Goals module.

Here is an example of a unit goal.

**EXAMPLE:**

By the end of the unit, all students will achieve mastery (80% or higher) on all assessed standards.
Chapter 4: Sequence the Objectives

Stage 3: Sequence Objectives

Transcript:

The last stage of backwards planning involves sequencing your daily objectives. Logically ordering objectives helps ensure that the unit is organized and cohesive. This can aid in students’ conceptual understanding of the unit.

For example, students cannot do long division without having mastered multiplication. Therefore, in a unit on long-division the objectives related to multiplication should be taught first. To sequence unit objectives, first review the objectives created in stage one. Then, group similar objectives together, and sequence the grouped objectives in a logical order, from simple to more complex (Wiggins & McTighe, 2011). In some cases, smaller objectives can be combined in a single lesson while more complex objectives may need to be practiced over multiple days.

To see an example of this click learn more. To move on, click proceed.
Example

Transcript:

Let’s practice sequencing objectives. Ms. Quinn is preparing her kindergarten science unit: *Our bodies and the world around us*. She has chosen four objectives she wishes to use for the first week of this unit. Take a look at these objectives and think about how you would logically sequence them.
Call to Action

Transcript:

When you backwards-plan a unit, you align standards, assessments, and daily objectives. From day one, you give meaning to what students are learning.

Doing this takes time and dedication, but it pays off when your students make meaningful connections to the content and reach greater levels of understanding.