Activity Directions: Unit Planning

Description:

This activity helps educators develop unit plans for instruction based on their understanding of the standards and the learning needs of their students.

There are a variety of processes and tools that are used by various districts and content areas. This activity provides one example of a process and some considerations in developing unit plans.

Objective: Develop unit plans for a grade or course.

Time: About 2 hours is needed to train participants in the unit writing process and to jointly develop a sample unit of instruction.

Preparation:

- This activity builds on the work done in the Understanding Standards Action, the Learning Progression Action and the Scope and Sequence Activity.
- Ensure access for all participants to:
  - the Sample Unit Planning Template, or other unit planning template used in your context.
  - Understanding by Design Framework (optional)
  - EQuIP (for Math, ELA, and Science) or other rubrics for units (optional)
- Post-it notepads

Directions:

1. Discuss attributes (criteria) for quality units (could be brainstorm or based on research)
   a. Optional: Review and discuss the Understanding by Design Framework
   b. EQuIP (for Math, ELA, and Science) or other rubrics for units
2. Review the results of the Scope and Sequence activity, including the bundling of benchmarks, and discuss any modifications to the unit that may have arisen from the previous discussion.
3. Discuss the benefits and disadvantages of a variety of structures for organizing units and determine a structure that may work well for the grade/course, and teachers involved. Some examples include:
   a. Themes/Big Ideas
   b. Essential Questions/Overarching Questions
   c. Anchoring phenomena (e.g. Science) or Anchor artistic works (e.g. arts)
4. Select a unit to develop. Use the Sample Unit Planning Template (or other template used in your context) to record the following:
   a. Review the standards and benchmarks to be addressed and determine a unifying structure for the unit (such as big ideas, essential questions, etc.)
   b. Determine assessment goals: How will students demonstrate that they achieved each the benchmarks? Pay close attention to both content and rigor.

c. Identify major learning activities that could be used to help students achieve the benchmarks and key ideas.

    i. To identify these activities, write components and precursor ideas on sticky notes and lay them out in a concept map that shows how they lead to the big ideas (and benchmarks). Ideas from benchmarks at earlier grades or units in the year should be included in this step.
    ii. Refer also to effective instructional practices.

d. Develop a sequence of activities, including identifying lessons in the unit. Outline clearly what students will be doing at each step. Then clearly plan what educators will do to facilitate that, including the incorporation of effective instructional practices.

5. Evaluate the unit plan using available content area rubrics (e.g. Science unit and lesson screener) and refine. At a minimum, check to be sure that all of the learning in the identified standards and benchmarks has been planned for.

Reference:

Mctighe and Wiggins. *Understanding by Design Frameworks*, retrieved from https://www.ascd.org/ASCD/pdf/siteASCD/publications/UbD_WhitePaper0312.pdf

Achieve. EQuIP Rubrics. Retrieved 8/30/19 from https://www.achieve.org/our-initiatives/equip/equip