



Unit Item: Unit Design Guidelines

Operating Concepts and Principles:

- Formatted using “Backward Design” model and elements; as such, the content within elements are meant to be aligned: essential questions-standards-objectives-assessments-activities
- Embraces Common Core Shifts in ELA/Literacy (see *Additional Resources*)
- Desires to thoughtfully and purposefully, not force, Catholic identity infusion
- Takes a “Balanced Literacy Approach” by incorporating Reading, Writing, Speaking/Listening, Language, Vocabulary, Viewing, and Critical Thinking elements
- The unit plan is a work in progress; even after you have finished writing the unit and are teaching the unit to your students, be sure to revisit the unit to add, delete, or revise content

Examples (Do’s and Don’ts):

Do

- Consider the grade level religion program, and content therein, as a potential source of topics/themes, as well as, a resource for generating Catholic identity infusion ideas
- Use an entry point to the template that best suits your planning style; e.g. some teachers may choose to begin with a topic or theme; or, by choosing a particular parable, novel, short story, biography, etc. (see *Appendix B* of ELA Common Core); or, via co-planning with colleagues in other subject areas, for example social studies or science
- Take a systematic, but organic approach; i.e. move methodically through the template, but consider revisiting parts of the template to add, delete, or revise content

Don’t

- Choose the Instructional Activities section as an entry point
- Leave portions blank
- Force content into the unit; e.g. don’t add cross-curricular links that are not feasible

Design Tips:

A balanced approach to ELA and developing literacy should include a deliberate and effective combination of the following:

- Modeled, shared, guided, independent reading/Modeled, shared, guided, independent writing
- Critical reading and study (fiction)/Critical reading and research (non-fiction)
- Comprehension skills development for fiction and non-fiction texts
- Text Forms and text features analyses of fiction and non-fiction texts
- Writing intentionally integrated into daily lessons (fiction and non-fiction writing, classwork and homework assignments, formative and summative assessments)
- Writing process via Writer’s Workshop model
- Opinion/Argument, Informative/Explanatory, Narrative writing are explicitly taught
- Research process and product (Paper, Essay, Display, etc.) are explicitly taught
- Fluency modeled and practiced: reading, writing, speaking
- Evidence-based written and oral response
- Thoughtful listening and discernment of Ideas
- Language study and practice
- Vocabulary study and practice



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Criteria for Success:

See *Unit Review Checklist*

Additional Resources:

Common Core Mapping Project, at: <http://commoncore.org/maps/>

G. Wiggins and J. McTighe, Understanding By Design, (2005)

Shifts in ELA/ Literacy

Source: <http://engageny.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/08/common-core-shifts.pdf>

Shift 1 PK-5, Balancing Informational & Literary Texts

Students read a true balance of informational and literary texts. Elementary school classrooms are, therefore, places where students access the world – science, social studies, the arts and literature – through text. At least 50% of what students read is informational.

Shift 2 6-12, Knowledge in the Disciplines

Content area teachers outside of the ELA classroom emphasize literacy experiences in their planning and instruction. Students learn through domain specific texts in science and social studies classrooms – rather than referring to the text, they are expected to learn from what they read.

Shift 3 Staircase of Complexity

In order to prepare students for the complexity of college and career ready texts, each grade level requires a “step” of growth on the “staircase”. Students read the central, grade appropriate text around which instruction is centered. Teachers are patient, create more time and space in the curriculum for this close and careful reading, and provide appropriate and necessary scaffolding and supports so that it is possible for students reading below grade level.

Shift 4 Text-based Answers

Students have rich and rigorous conversations which are dependent on a common text. Teachers insist that classroom experiences stay deeply connected to the text on the page and that students develop habits for making evidentiary arguments both in conversation, as well as in writing to assess comprehension of a text.

Shift 5 Writing from Sources

Writing needs to emphasize use of evidence to inform or make an argument rather than the personal narrative and other forms of decontextualized prompts. While the narrative still has an important role, students develop skills through written arguments that respond to the ideas, events, facts, and arguments presented in the texts they read.

Shift 6 Academic Vocabulary

Students constantly build the vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts. By focusing strategically on comprehension of pivotal and commonly found words (such as “discourse,” “generation,” “theory,” and “principled”) and less on esoteric literary terms (such as “onomatopoeia” or “homonym”), teachers constantly build students’ ability to access more complex texts across the content areas.