

PLANNING FOR STUDENT LEARNING

A CURRICULUM PLANNING RESOURCE

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This practical resource for managing curriculum planning contains practical processes as well as a variety of templates. It is accompanied by a DVD of planning templates and is now available through ShopETFO.

ETFO recognizes the value of our members' wisdom and experience in all areas of their teaching practice and has long been an advocate for teacher professional judgement. Professional judgement is informed by professional knowledge of classroom expectations, context, evidence of learning, methods of instruction and assessment, and the criteria and standards that indicate success in student learning.

Each and every educator has a unique teaching style and that goes for planning as well. You need to find the "best fit" for you, for how you plan the templates that you use. All teachers will have some common aspects to their planning to support student learning. This is the essential part: the common aspects are important and are outlined in this resource. How you develop and deliver your plans will be distinct to you.

— Janet Millar Grant

Organize: Designing Units



“THE ORGANIZATION STEP HELPED ME BECAUSE I BEGAN MY UNIT BY DESIGNING MY CULMINATING TASK AT THE BEGINNING. THE LESSONS I DESIGNED HELPED STUDENTS BE SUCCESSFUL WHEN COMPLETING THE CULMINATING TASK.”

- ETFO MEMBER

So where do you start? Do you begin with the curriculum expectations? Do you start with the culminating task? Do you first consider student interests?

As always, the best place to begin is with the end. Figure out what you would like to achieve by the end of the unit. Here are tried-and-true questions to help you. You will need to use the curriculum document to answer some questions and to use professional judgment for others.

Many of these questions lend themselves to brainstorming. If collaborating with colleagues, you can be sure of many lively, compelling exchanges as everyone weighs in with their experiences and ideas. If you are brainstorming on your own, it can be useful to let some of these questions percolate in your mind before you sit down with a pen or keyboard.

Think about these questions while you observe the trends and interests of your students’ age group as reflected in pop culture and in schoolyard conversations and behaviours.

1. At the end of the unit, what essential understanding do I want my students to learn?
2. What understandings will matter for my students?
3. What do my students care about?
4. What human problems or real life issues does the resource/topic address?
5. What current issues/concerns are reflective of the local and/or global communities?
6. What culminating project can my students engage in to demonstrate what they have learned?

7. What learning processes do I need to teach all my students?

8. What knowledge must be developed?

9. What inquiry questions would relate to the topics to be studied?

10. How will I differentiate instruction to meet the needs and learning styles of all learners?

11. Will students have voice or choice?

12. How would they prefer to demonstrate what they have learned?



HELPFUL HINT

When designing a unit, choose a culminating task that will engage students throughout the unit. A culminating task that excites students prompts them to pay more attention to the lessons leading up to it.

Designing Tool: Unit Plan Organizer

The Unit Plan Organizer is a wonderful tool to help you identify the focus for each lesson and place lessons in an order that makes sense to you. It also helps you develop a culminating task that aligns with the curriculum expectations for evaluating student understanding.

HOW TO USE THE UNIT PLAN ORGANIZER

- Identify which curriculum areas complement each other.
- Record only one lesson focus per sticky note.
- When teaching combined grades, use different colour sticky notes to represent each grade.

FOLLOW THIS 10-STEP PROCESS

1. Record the name of the unit on your Unit Plan Organizer (e.g. Energy).
2. Record the subject and grade on the Unit Plan Organizer (e.g. Science and Technology: Grade 5).
3. Look at the overall curriculum expectations for the subject(s) you are planning to include in this unit. Make sure you are clear on the overall expectations. If you are unsure, look to the related specific expectations and any accompanying examples or teacher prompts for better understanding.
4. Consider the needs and interests of your students based on prior data (e.g. the classroom profile). If planning for September, take into account what you already know about the cognitive, social/emotional and physical development of students of this age.
5. Identify possible culminating tasks that would allow you to evaluate the overall expectations. Will the culminating task you decide on engage students?
6. Record the overall expectations and the culminating task on the Unit Plan

Organizer.

7. Begin populating the focus for each lesson on sticky notes (one focus per note).
8. Ask yourself, “Is there something missing that a student needs to be successful? Is there something left out that should be added?” If so, add this to another sticky note.
9. Arrange the sticky notes in an order so that the learning is scaffolded and creates a flow within the unit. Ask yourself, “What needs to come before/after each lesson?”
10. Record the lesson titles on the Unit Plan Organizer beginning with the first lesson and ending with the culminating task.

OPTIONS

HIGH-TECH OPTIONS (Recommended)

- Use electronic versions of organizers and cards (e.g. Smart Ideas, Smart Notebook, Linoit.com).

LOW-TECH OPTIONS

- Print out the Unit Plan Organizer.

“STICKY NOTES”

- Wallwisher (free Web 2.0 “sticky note” tool, allows for collaboration).
- Linoit.com (free Web 2.0 “sticky note” tool, allows for collaboration).

MIND MAPS

- MindMup or as a Google Apps extension.
- MindMeister.com.

VISUAL ORGANIZERS

- VoiceThread allows you to incorporate resources and ideas into planning.
- Glogster visual “poster” that allows you to create a visual “overview” of a unit.
- Google Slideshow/PowerPoint allows you to use each “slide” to represent a different lesson to see sequence and “move” lessons around.



NOW IT'S YOUR TURN ...

Use a Unit Plan Organizer to design a unit plan for your teaching assignment.



BEGIN BY ASKING YOURSELF ...

Which of the above versions will work best for me? Have I taken the time to familiarize myself with the students and curriculum content I am responsible for in teaching this unit?

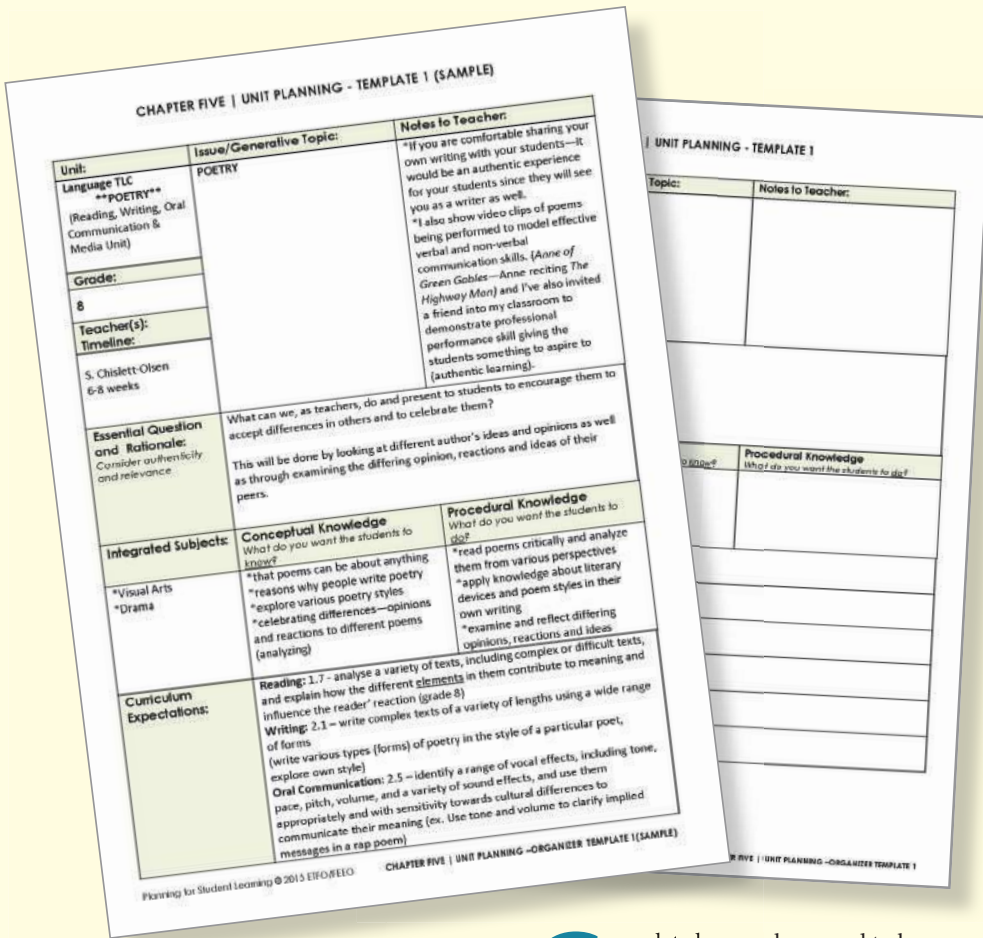
“THE ORGANIZATION PHASE WAS EFFECTIVE FOR TEACHING MY CLASS BECAUSE I HAVE STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS AND WHO ARE ON A MODIFIED PROGRAM. I THOUGHT ABOUT THE STRENGTHS AND NEEDS WHEN PLANNING.”

-ETFO MEMBER

“THIS GAVE ME A GREAT STARTING POINT FOR THINKING ABOUT ORGANIZING THE UNITS AND LESSONS.”

- ETFO MEMBER

Act: Building Unit Plans



Seek feedback after completing your first unit plan: As a starting point, complete your unit plan and seek feedback before you continue. Make the adjustments, based on the feedback you received, before completing the remaining unit plans. This check-to-be-sure approach sets you up for success.

Make your plan share-friendly: Since your unit plans will be shared with others, they must be legible. Creating your plans on a computer ensures legibility while giving you greater flexibility when making adjustments.

Include both grade expectations when teaching a combined grade: For those teaching a combined grade class, expectations for both grades will need to be identified, including expectations that are identical to both grades. There is good reason for this: As educators, we are accountable for the teaching and learning of the expectations that align with the grade in which a student is registered. That is why it is paramount that all grade expectations for a combined class appear in all planning, no matter how similar they may appear.

The Unit Plan Organizer and templates are also located on the CD that accompanies this resource and are available in Word format for easier customization.

Much of what is included in the templates will be useful when setting up the Overview for your unit.

When your unit is complete, you will have three sections: Overview, Lessons and Appendices. For every lesson that has been identified or listed in the Overview, there must be a complete Lesson included in the Lessons section. All student materials, Black-line Masters (BLM), handouts, graphic organizers, resources and assessment tools (e.g. rubrics, checklist, etc.) are to be included in the Appendices section for the unit.

**This resource is available through ShopETFO.*

“I FOUND THE ACT PHASE VERY HELPFUL IN FOCUSING MY IDEAS AND CREATING A GAME PLAN TO CARRY OUT MY IDEAS.”

- ETFO MEMBER

“THE ORGANIZE ACT REFLECT (OAR) PROCESS PUSHED ME TO LOOK AT WHAT WAS OFFERED AND THINK ABOUT WHICH TEMPLATE WOULD WORK BEST FOR ME.”

- ETFO MEMBER

Complete lesson plans need to be included as part of your unit plan. Some districts may have guidelines that require specific content be included with unit plans. The school principal is responsible for establishing the criteria for successful unit plans within your school. The suggested content shared here is a summary of what is most often required.

ACTION TOOL

- Unit Plan Templates

TIPS AND TRICKS

- Using Unit Plan Templates

Get your template pre-approved: All planning has to meet with district and school-based guidelines. With this in mind, it is a good idea to seek approval of your template/format before you invest time and effort in completing it entirely. Be sure to get approval well before any requests to share your plans.