

Before: Instructional Design

Effective instruction requires a purpose and meaningful context that establishes not only what but why students must learn the assigned materials. Rationales such as “To meet the standards,” or “To pass the test” lack meaning and do not motivate.

Content Standards

What should students know and be able to do by the end of this task, unit, or course?

Considerations

- Connections to previous and future skills and concepts
- Constraints of time and resources
- Availability of necessary materials and resources

Student Preparation

What must students know or be able to do to accomplish Step One?

Considerations

- Specialized or new vocabulary terms
- Background knowledge on the idea, historical period, or story
- Skills, capacities, habits, or techniques
- Connections to previously learned skills and concepts

Teacher Preparation

What skills, knowledge, or resources does the teacher need to effectively teach this skill or concept?

Considerations

- What the teacher needs or wants to teach *after* this unit
- What support and material resources are available help teach this skill or concept?

Instructional Standards

What strategies and instructional designs are most effective and efficient in teaching this skill or concept?

Considerations

- Graphic organizers
- Notemaking strategies
- Instructional strategies: reciprocal teaching, literature circles, direct instruction
- Class and student configurations (e.g., pairs, groups, whole class)
- Visual aids, multi-modal, multi-sensory approaches

Curricular Conversations

How does this skill or concept relate to the larger themes in the course, curriculum, or lives of students?

Considerations

- Workplace connections
- Personal connections
- Cross-curricular connections

Standards Alignment

Which standard(s) will this task or unit help students master?

Considerations

- Curricular objectives and context of the lesson
- Current progress toward mastery of this standard
- Connections to and reinforcement of standards students have already met
- Standards you have not yet addressed or which students have not yet mastered

- Extent to which this task or unit prepares students to meet other standards---e.g., district frameworks, ESLRs, Advanced Placement, exit exam, or SAT standards

Performance Standards

What evidence of student learning or mastery are you willing to accept?

Considerations

- Is there more than one way to show mastery of this skill or concept?
- Do students have ample opportunity and means by which to master this standard?
- Do students know what a successful performance looks like (e.g., through exemplars or modeling)?
- Do students know the criteria by which their performance will be evaluated up front (e.g., through exemplars, rubrics, directions, modeling)?
- Are the criteria for mastery consistent with those in other classes, schools, districts, and states?
- Are all skills and concepts equally important---and given equal weight on any assessments?
- Is this method an effective and appropriate use of the teacher’s time and attention?

During: Implementation and Experience

Effective design demands that we lay a solid but adaptable foundation that will ensure the success of the task or unit once it begins. While such attention to design asks a lot of the teacher at first, such questions and considerations become mental habits that lead to efficient but effective instructional design.

Teaching & Learning

This list offers a sequence of steps that build on learners’ knowledge and progress by extending their capacity and competence as they move toward mastery of a standard:

- *Introduce* the skill, concept, or task with clear instructions that students can hear, see, and read
- *Connect* the task, concept, or unit to what they have studied or will study
- *Assess* prior knowledge and current understanding of the skill or concept
- *Demonstrate* the task, explaining what you are thinking as you do so
- *Try* the task or explain their initial understanding of the concept
- *Evaluate* their performance; check for understanding
- *Correct* or clarify their performance as needed based on observed results
- *Practice* the skill or continue study of the concept
- *Assess* level of mastery and need for further group or individualized instruction
- *Extend* students’ understanding and mastery by increasing the difficulty of the task
- *Monitor* students’ level of mastery and need for further group or individualized instruction
- *Reinforce* understanding and mastery as you move on to next task or concept

After: Evaluation and Planning

Feedback and reinforcement are essential elements in any instructional design. In this last stage, teachers answer the question, “What next?” before returning to Step One and beginning the process with a new task or concept.

Instructional Design

What does the performance data tell me they need to do or learn next?

Considerations

- Did all students master the skill or concept?
- What is the next step---and why?
- Was my method the most effective means to teach this skill or concept?
- What changes should I make in the technique or assignment next time?

What’s Next?

Return to Step One and follow the sequence for teaching the next skill or concept