Module Outline

Designing Powerful Instructional Units: ELA & Literacy will guide teams of educators in designing Connecticut Core Standards (CCS) ELA & Literacy-aligned curriculum units. The module begins with a brief review of basic information about the structure and intent of the CT Core Standards and three instructional shifts as they relate to unit design. Then, using a backward design model, participants begin to review a model unit and create the overview for their own units. They continue to review model units throughout the design process. Next, they learn about and design Stage 1: Goals, which includes standards, understandings, essential questions, and knowledge and skills. They continue with Stage 2: Evidence, including summative assessments–performance tasks in particular–and rubrics, and design Stage 2 of their own units. Finally, participants will be introduced to Stage 3: The Learning Plan, including Universal Design for Learning (UDL) and formative assessment practices. They create a learning plan for their unit incorporating UDL and formative assessment opportunities. Participants learn the EQuIP quality review process, and they practice reviewing a model unit before applying the process to their own units. Near the end of the module, teams plan for how they will continue to work on their units to develop lesson detail.

Prerequisites

As a prerequisite to this professional learning experience, participants will have completed CT Systems of Professional Learning ELA & Literacy Module 1: Focus on Instructional Shifts, either in person or online.

Key Messages

The CCS-ELA & Literacy require three instructional shifts: 1) building knowledge through content-rich nonfiction; 2) reading, writing, and speaking grounded in evidence from text, both literary and informational; and 3) regular practice with complex text and its academic vocabulary. The CCS-ELA & Literacy and the three instructional shifts are inseparable. (Student Achievement Partners (2012). Common Core Shifts for English Language Arts/Literacy. http://www.achievethecore.org/)

- Full implementation of the CCS-ELA & Literacy and related instructional shifts will require fundamental changes in teaching practice. The combination will result in much more rigorous curriculum, instruction, and assessment in grades K–12.
- The process of aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the CCS-ELA & Literacy and the three instructional shifts is complex and will require educators to collaborate and participate together in ongoing professional learning.
- Using a consistent model of backward curriculum design will result in high quality units of study with clear goals, aligned assessment, and an effective instructional plan.
- Formative assessment practices are essential to the learning plan of a unit.
- High quality curriculum is designed to support all learners.

Participant Outcomes

In this module, participants will write a 3-6 week curriculum unit that demonstrates understanding of quality curriculum design and the CT Core Standards for ELA & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science and Technical Subjects and related instructional shifts. The unit will meet key criteria of the EQuIP rubric (self-assessed) and will include these elements:

- Unit Overview

- Stage 1 – Learning Goals (CT Core Standards); Understandings and Essential Questions; Knowledge and Skills

- Stage 2 – Summative performance task that measures salient standards; aligned rubric; other significant assessments

- Stage 3 – Learning plan that:
  - clearly addresses Stage 1 goals and scaffolds students toward success on summative tasks;
  - shows awareness of Universal Design for Learning Principles;
  - includes reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language tasks as appropriate to learning goals;
  - includes formative assessment practices; and
  - includes appropriately complex texts and other unit resources.