

Introduction

This booklet contains a set of guidelines for developing an instructional unit. The guidelines are divided into 15 sections that correspond to a unit's organizational structure. Use the following definitions and questions, which address criteria important to the unit's success, to assist you in your work. Some questions include additional descriptors, questions identified with bullets, to clarify and expand the criteria.

Questions that appear as boldfaced text address primary criteria and are **required** elements of the unit. Questions that are **NOT** boldfaced are criteria that would provide supplementary information for teachers and are not considered crucial.

Unit Development

Review each section of this document as you develop a unit and its accompanying assessments. By answering each of the questions and providing written comments regarding your decisions, you will ensure that each criterion has been adequately addressed.

Unit Sections

- I. The *Unit Number* and *Title* allow readers to identify at a glance the unit's place in the curriculum and its primary focus.
- II. The *Purpose* statement identifies the specific knowledge and skills taught in the unit.
- III. The *Time Frame* states the number and length of class periods needed for the instructional unit.
- IV. The *Overview* describes the unit's primary focus, summarizes the unit, and explains how the knowledge and skills listed in the purpose statement will be taught. It serves as a general introduction to the unit.
- V. The *Guiding Principles* section consists of one or more quotations about instruction, assessment, thinking skills, student learning, and other educationally relevant topics to encourage conversation and reflection among teachers.

- VI. The *Prerequisites* section lists specific knowledge or skills students need to have learned or been introduced to before engaging in the unit.
- VII. The *Selected Course Objectives* section identifies the specific knowledge and skills the unit will focus on.
- VIII. The *Research-Based Strategies* section lists instructional practices recommended for use in the unit; those that hold strong promise for teachers to enhance achievement for all students.
- IX. The *Essential Questions* section clearly and precisely communicates the pivotal points in the curriculum and helps avoid a random assortment of well-intended activities with no structure. When the curriculum is formed around questions, the clear message to students is that the teacher is probing significant ideas with them. There are two types of essential questions: topical questions, which are specific and lead to particular understandings of a unit; overarching questions, which point toward larger, transferable ideas. Essential questions cannot be answered with a simple "yes" or "no"; they must be composed to encourage higher-order thinking and to promote in-depth investigation.
- X. The *Suggestions for Assessment* section offers ideas for documenting and recording student learning. This section describes three types of assessments: preassessments, embedded assessments, and unit assessments.

Preassessments are typically completed before a unit is begun and provide information about students' level of understanding or skill. They also are an opportunity to identify students' perceptions or misconceptions and to preview the information to be learned. The information obtained from the assessment should be used to adjust the instruction to better meet students' needs.

Embedded assessments inform teachers of where students are in the learning process. An embedded assessment is a formative