

The Research-Driven
Solution to Raise the
Quality of High School
Core Courses



Half-Day Professional Development Description

Essential Question: Why QualityCore? What is QualityCore? How Can QualityCore help improve course rigor?

Module: QualityCore Defined

The Big Ideas

- Miscommunication and misunderstandings can occur when new programs are adopted by a school. This module serves to inform teachers about QualityCore—a research-driven solution to raise the quality and intensity of high school core courses
- Instructional improvement requires an ability to reflect on what has been done in the past and to understand why it has or has not been successful. The journey is often difficult but worthwhile in terms of student achievement

Presenter Goals

- Develop rapport with participants
- Introduce what QualityCore is and what it is not
- Introduce the terms rigor and relevance according to QualityCore

Module: Course Content and Design

The Big Ideas

- Successful teachers communicate their academic expectations to all stakeholders through thoughtful and clearly written course descriptions and syllabi
- Standards should be challenging yet within all students' reach. They should focus on knowledge and skills—"the ways of thinking, working, communicating, reasoning, and investigating, and the most important and enduring ideas, concepts, issues, etc." (p. ii, Wurtz & Malcom, 1993)—that are essential to each discipline and to success in the 21st century, both in terms of postsecondary education and work
- ACT Course Standards were derived from the ACT study *On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses That Prepare All Students for College and Work* and reviewed by content experts as well as classroom teachers whose students performed well on the ACT Assessment®

Presenter Goals

- Introduce QualityCore's model course descriptions and syllabi
- Introduce the ACT course standards and their origin
- Explain the relationship between the ACT course standards, Common Core standards, and the College Readiness Standards and how they align to form a coherent system
- Encourage participants to use the course outlines and instructional unit plans to plan their instructional sequence, develop instructional units, and construct instructionally valid assessments
- Encourage participants to discuss vertical and horizontal articulation in their schools

Module: Assessment

Essential Question:

The Big Ideas

- Rigorous assessment incorporates a balance of formative and summative assessments. It supports students' motivation, learning, and capacity for self-evaluation through emphasizing ongoing progress and achievement rather than failure
- Rigorous assessment provides clearly defined expectations, descriptive feedback, and ongoing guidance
- Rigorous assessment allows student choice and therefore a level of responsibility over how they learn
- Rigorous assessment provides data to all stakeholders that informs both instructional and school-wide decisions

Presenter Goals

- Build on participants' ideas about formative assessment by developing their understanding of the QualityCore Formative Item Pool (FIP)
- Introduce Test Builder, including its contents and uses
- Share information about the QualityCore End-Of-Course test blueprint, the test, and score reports

Module: Instruction

Essential Question:

The Big Ideas

- Learning is both a personal and a social process
- Educators who embrace rigorous instruction recognize and value students' prior knowledge and meet diverse learning styles by drawing upon multiple teaching strategies and classroom activities
- Through rigorous instruction, teachers encourage students to create meaning by applying their knowledge and skills to new contexts, thus developing the thinking strategies and habits of mind needed to achieve complex learning goals
- Based on the Guidelines for Developing an Instructional Unit, the model instructional units, and the rigor and relevance template, explicate what rigor looks like, sounds like, and feels like in a secondary classroom

Presenter Goals

- Introduce the Guidelines for Developing an Instructional Unit and the Template for Examining Assignments for Rigor and Relevance
- Invite participants to review a model instructional unit, focusing on key sections
- Describe the purpose and uses of the model units and the time and effort required to develop a rigorous and relevant unit

Module: Action Plan

Essential Question:

The Big Ideas

- Rigor occurs when dedicated educators question and reflect on what they do, work together to reach common understanding and goals, analyze data/information at critical junctures to identify strengths and areas of need, and plan next steps
- Change is difficult and happens when we direct thinking (our analytical and emotional side) and shape our path/environment to make change possible
- QualityCore provides various tools and templates to help transform courses and ultimately students' learning

Presenter Goals

- Assess participants' understanding of the QualityCore components
- Introduce planning tools to help implement QualityCore
- Invite participants to engage in discussions and in planning next steps
- Invite the principal to address implementation questions such as:
 1. Why did the district implement QualityCore?
 2. Are the QualityCore standards the teachers' new course standards?
 3. Is the QualityCore Course Outline the teachers' new pacing guide?
 4. Are teachers expected to implement the model Instructional Unit?
 5. Is there a budget to support implementation of the instructional units (for materials, paper, technology)?
 6. How will the district use the End-of-Course results?
 7. Will administrators be observing teachers to see how they are implementing QualityCore, and if so, how will they track progress?
 8. Will there be common planning time to ensure success?
 9. How will the success of the program be judged?

Educator Resources Binder

(each participant receives a course-specific binder)

1. ACT Course Standards
2. Course Description and Syllabus
3. Course Outline
4. Instructional Units Plan
5. Model Instructional Unit
6. Template to Examine Assignments for Rigor and Relevance
7. Sample Benchmark Assessment from Formative Item Pool
8. Formative Item Pool: Using Test Builder
9. End-of-Course Test Blueprint
10. Educator's Guide
11. Guidelines for Developing an Instructional Unit
12. *On Course for Success: A Close Look at Selected High School Courses That Prepare All Students for College and Work*
13. *Rigor at Risk: Reaffirming Quality in the High School Core Curriculum*