

Virginia Support for School Improvement

# Training for Instructional Leaders

Building School Success, One Student at a Time™



## Session One Effective Teaming & Instructional Planning

Effective Teaming  
Collegial Learning  
Instructional Planning  
Classroom Culture  
Instructional Delivery

## Information Tools Training

Positive results for students will come from changes in the knowledge, skill, and behavior of their teachers and parents. State policies and programs must provide the opportunity, support, incentive, and expectation for adults close to the lives of children to make wise decisions.

The Center on Innovation & Improvement helps regional comprehensive centers in their work with states to provide districts, schools, and families with the opportunity, information, and skills to make wise decisions on behalf of students.

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***The Mega System: Deciding. Learning. Connecting.***  
***A Handbook for Continuous Improvement Within a Community of the School***

Suggested Readings  
Session 1

Effective Teaming

Chapter 2, Shared Leadership ..... Pgs. 45-51

Instructional Planning

*Aligned instruction*

Chapter 3, Introduction ..... Pgs. 65-67

Curriculum Terms ..... Pgs. 68-69

Curriculum Overview ..... Pgs. 72-75

Unit Plans..... Pgs. 76-77

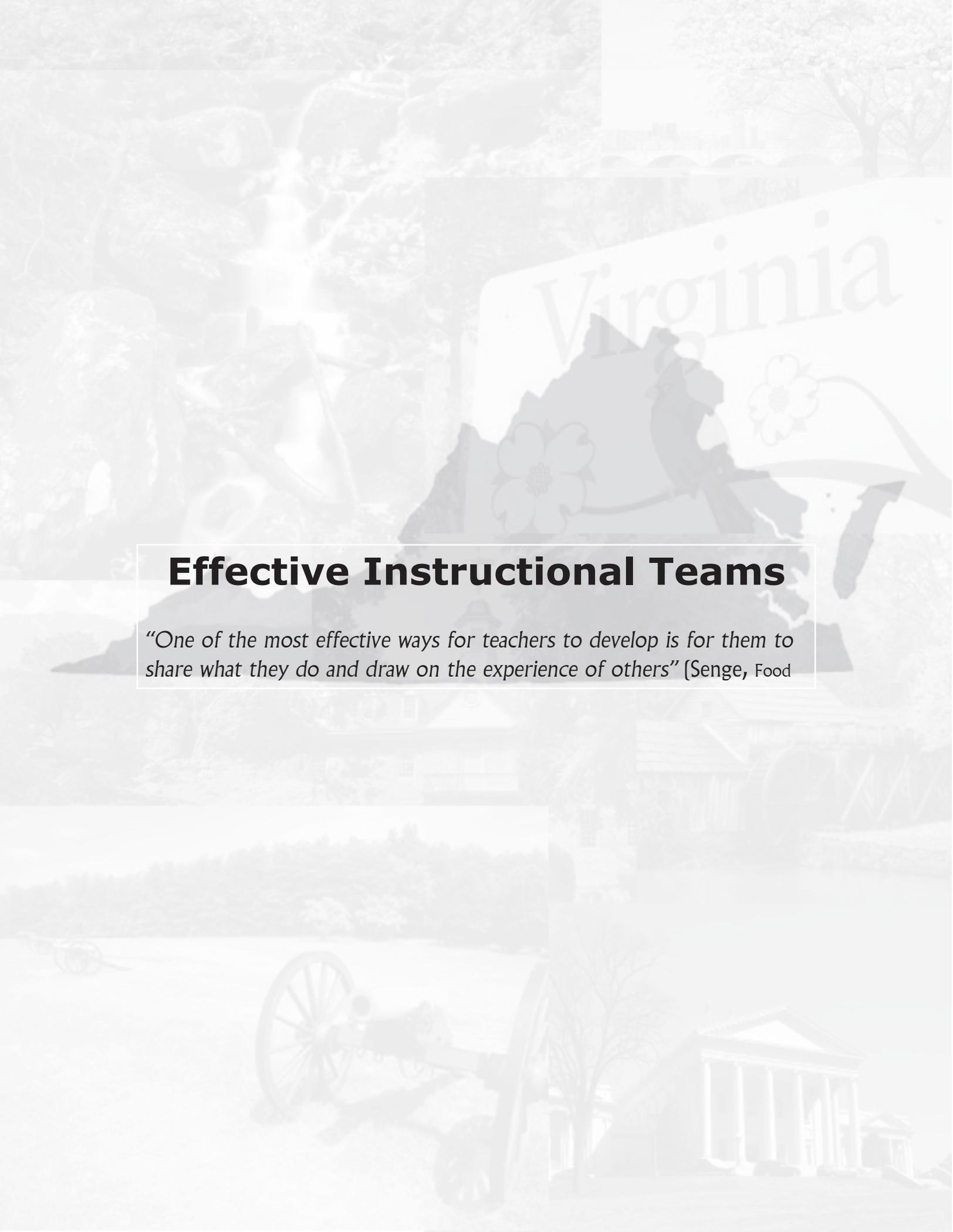
Collaborative Development of Unit Plans..... Pgs. 80-84

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Defining (leveled) objectives ..... Pgs. 84-85

Leveled and differentiated learning activities ..... Pgs. 78-79





## Effective Instructional Teams

*“One of the most effective ways for teachers to develop is for them to share what they do and draw on the experience of others” (Senge, Food*



## Effective Teaming

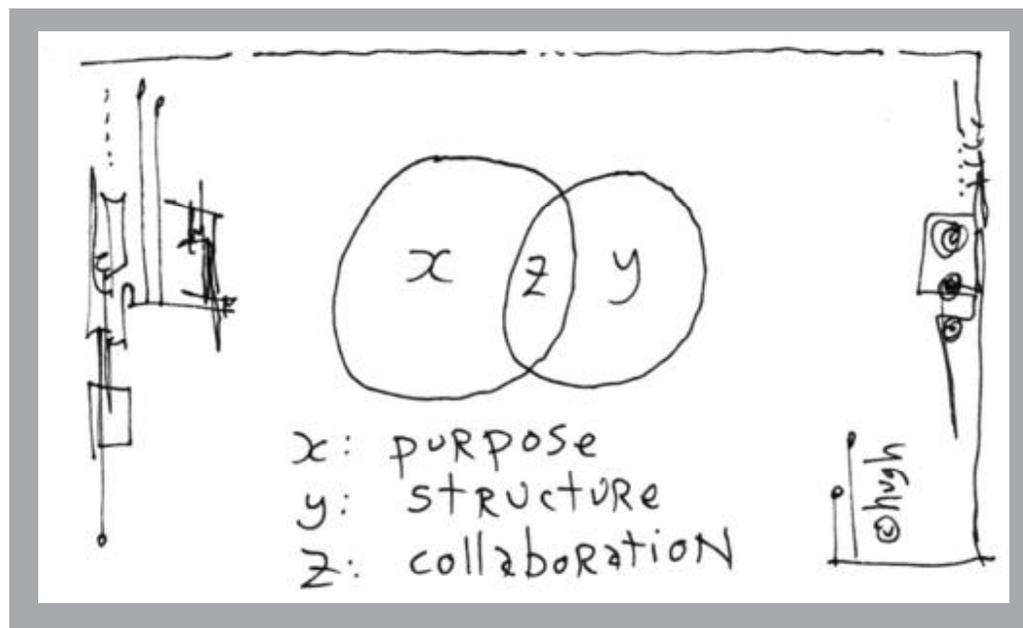
Continuous school improvement to achieve student success requires a coordinated team approach (shared leadership) and access to the information (data) upon which good decisions can be made. The decisions of teams and of individual teachers are guided by student learning data and data about instructional practices. Teachers, working in teams, align learning objectives with standards and determine grade-level unit assessments. Schools today operate within the strictures of state learning standards, and these standards provide a skeleton for the curriculum. As teachers, in teams and individually, add flesh to this skeleton, they complete the scope of what students have the opportunity to learn in the school. The curriculum is continually examined and carefully aligned with standards, assessments, and instructional strategies. Materials are developed and shared by teams of teachers to enrich the curriculum.

**Instructional Teams** (grade-level or subject area) of teachers operate most effectively when they meet for two purposes: 1) to conduct business, review student progress, and coordinate their efforts, and 2) to co-develop aligned units of instruction and materials related to them. The business meetings may be more frequent and for smaller blocks of time (twice a month for an hour each, for example). But the instructional planning meetings require blocks of time for concentrated work (4 to 6 hours, once a month, for example, plus days before the school year begins).

Later in this session, we will address instructional planning. But first, we will look at how Instructional Teams can operate most effectively and how teachers learn together and help each other improve their skills.

### ***How Are Teams Organized in Your School?***

Describe the teams that are in your school, their purpose, how they are organized, how often they meet, where they meet. Be prepared to share your school team discussion with the session participants.



### **An Instructional Team (Barb, Selena, Tom, and Mike) Collaborates**

One morning a middle school Instructional Team planned to meet. Barb asked Mike where the meeting was to be held. He said he didn't know. When it was time, Barb went to the library. Mike went to the teacher workroom where he found Selena and Tom. Mike told them that Barb was in the library. Selena went to get Barb. When Barb and Selena got back, Tom was talking to the coach about last night's game. Barb and Selena got some coffee and started talking about Barb's daughter who was planning to visit a college over the weekend.

Tom finished talking and sat down at the table and said, "Hey, let's get started."

Mike said, "Just a minute. Let me finish grading this."

So Tom sat down and joined Barb and Selena's conversation, and the three talked together until Mike finished. Then Mike said, "OK, guys. I got that done."

Tom then said, "What do we need to talk about?"

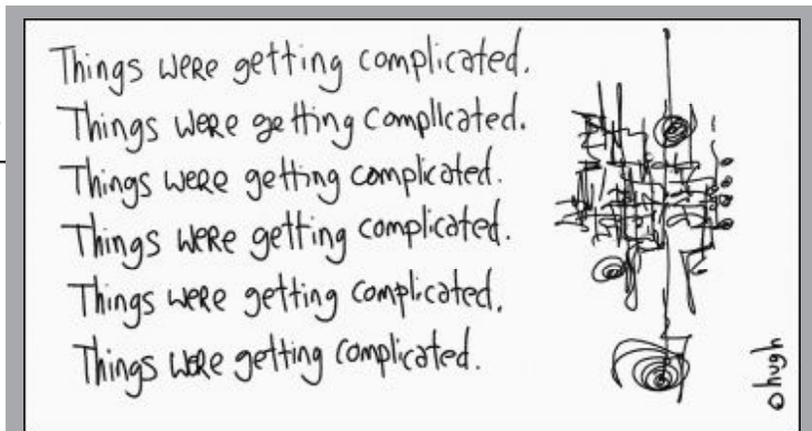
Barb explained that they needed to examine some unit test items that another Instructional Team had suggested to her three days ago. The other three asked what they were supposed to do with them, and Barb explained how the other Team thought they might be helpful in designing a new unit of instruction for their grade level. Mike did not understand the explanation, so he took out his papers again and went back to grading.

He said he did not understand what they were to do. Selena told him that if he paid attention he would know, and Barb again explained what the teacher from the other team had said. Mike got a fierce frown on his face, quit grading papers, stood up, and looked out the window into the parking lot. Tom laughed and slapped Mike on the back and said, "Chill out."

Selena got up and got another cup of coffee. Barb said that they could each take a cluster of items to review and then report back, and Tom said that he thought they did not have enough time. Tom asked Mike if he had seen the game that Tom and the coach had been talking about. The teacher from the other Instructional Team came in and asked them if they had any questions, and Mike asked her why she had given them more work. She explained that she thought that the test items would be helpful to the team, as her team had spent a great amount of time developing them, and they might be adapted to another grade level's objectives. She said that if they did not want them she would just take them back. Barb and Selena told her not to take them back, that the team wanted to use them. Barb said, "We are going to use these, right? Nobody disagrees, do they?"

Barb and Selena explained to the teacher that the team really did want to go over them. Tom told the group that he needed some help with Lou Jean Sims because she was really acting out in class. He left to go discuss the matter with the guidance counselor, saying to the team that he would be right back. Barb and Selena started sorting out the test items, and Barb asked Mike to help, which he did, after he put the class papers he was about to grade into his briefcase.

Mike said, "You know we are really wasting a lot of time today, and I have stuff I need to get done."



Tom came back and Barb explained what they were doing. The phone rang, and it was a call for Barb from her daughter. She went to the phone, and the other three talked about Lou Jean Sims until Barb came back. They started sorting test items again just as the bell to end that class period rang. Barb said she would take all of the test paperwork and get it in order and copy down what they needed, and that the next time they met, they could go over it. Selena told Barb that if Barb needed any help to just holler. Tom stuck his head back in the room and said he would like to help too, but he had games to go to on each of the next two nights and really did not have any time to help with the tests. Mike left as soon as the bell rang.

Tom said, "Hey, see you both later. Have a great day!"

Tom left. Barb stuffed the test items into her book bag. Barb and Selena walked out of the room together and continued talking about Barb's daughter.

### ***Think, Share***



## Food **Food for Thought: Geese Fly; Buffalo Don't**

Have you ever heard the honking overhead in the fall? Have you ever wondered why geese fly in a "V" formation? Here are some answers, and some excerpts from *Can You Teach Buffalo to Fly Like Geese?* by Bob Ash, used at an REI conference sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education in April of 1996.

Geese fly in a "V" and in a flock for a reason.

Geese fly in a "V" formation, scientists say, because as each bird flaps its wings, it makes an up-draft for the bird right behind it. Some theorize that flying in the "V" formation adds a 50% to 70% greater flying range to the flock as a whole, compared to what one goose could do flying on its own. The synergistic effect lets all the geese help each other. The flock flies as far and as fast as the group can, and the group can fly farther and faster than any one goose in the flock.



The lead buffalo guides the buffalo herd. They are allowed to wander off alone from time to time. The lead buffalo sets the pace of the herd, either fast or slow, depending upon the leader. If the leader is tired, the pace slows.

When the leader of the geese, the point goose, gets tired, it drops back, and another takes its place. Sometimes the leader cannot do it all. Sometimes the leader needs help. Sometimes a follower needs to be the leader. Sometimes a flock, at different times, has several different leaders. Stephen R. Covey says, "Synergy is when the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The relationship, which the parts have with each other, is a part in and of itself. It is not only a part, but the most catalytic, the most empowering, the most unifying, and the most exciting part." Geese have it; effective teaching teams have it. Buffalo don't.

We usually hear the geese honking before we look up and see them. What is all the noise for? Geese honk for encouragement. Those flying behind others encourage those ahead to keep up their speed. Every one pushes every other one to reach its full potential. If the lead buffalo does not encourage, neither does any other buffalo. Effective teaching teams often sound like a gaggle of geese.

If a goose falls or is hurt, two others will stay with it. They protect the fallen one and stay with it either until it can fly or until it dies. After either event, they fly to catch up with the others. However, if the lead buffalo leaves an injured herd member, so does the rest of the herd. Good teaching team members support each other.

Geese finish the flight. Buffalo go as far as the lead buffalo takes them. Effective teaching teams finish the task. Too bad buffalo don't fly.





## **Who Am I as a Team Member?**

The following survey helps to identify your team member style. Without knowing your team member style, it is difficult to form an effective team. Team members often find it helpful to complement (balance) each other's strengths and weaknesses. Once you know your style, it helps if you can identify the style of others on your team. A collaborative effort forms a strong team.

Complete the following survey. Each sentence has four possible endings. None of the choices is a "wrong" answer. Simply choose the one that you think best describes yourself and place a "1" on that line. (If you finish before the rest of the group, you can go back and rank the other choices for each question from "2" to "4.") As a composite, your #1 choices will give you some sense of your behavior as a team member. Compare your results with those of your team colleagues, and you should be able to identify your strengths and discover how you complement each other. You may find this a helpful tool for your team.

1. During team meetings I usually . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ provide the team with information
  - b. \_\_\_ keep the team focused on our meeting purpose
  - c. \_\_\_ keep everyone involved
  - d. \_\_\_ question our methods and goals
2. In working with the team leader, I usually . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ suggest our work be goal- and objective-directed
  - b. \_\_\_ try to help her or him build positive team interactions
  - c. \_\_\_ emphasize the long-term plan (see the forest)
  - d. \_\_\_ emphasize the short-term plan (see the trees)
3. People usually describe me as . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ independent
  - b. \_\_\_ dependable
  - c. \_\_\_ imaginative
  - d. \_\_\_ participative
4. Most of the time I think that I am . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ responsible and hard-working
  - b. \_\_\_ committed and flexible
  - c. \_\_\_ enthusiastic and humorous
  - d. \_\_\_ honest and forthcoming
5. In working with my team, I usually . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ show up on time for meetings
  - b. \_\_\_ complete team assignments on time
  - c. \_\_\_ object to team actions that I don't agree with
  - d. \_\_\_ see the importance of working together
6. I usually want to base our plans on . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ assessment data about our students
  - b. \_\_\_ my curriculum needs
  - c. \_\_\_ time limitations
  - d. \_\_\_ overall district standards

7. I think team leaders should . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ liaison with the administration
  - b. \_\_\_ keep us focused
  - c. \_\_\_ help us make participatory decisions
  - d. \_\_\_ bring out diverse ideas
8. I think team leadership should be . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ assigned by the administration according to administrative qualifications
  - b. \_\_\_ rotated to each person on the team by administrative scheduling
  - c. \_\_\_ volunteered for by those interested and selected by the administration
  - d. \_\_\_ rotated to each person by team design
9. I believe team decisions should be determined by . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ consensus
  - b. \_\_\_ majority vote
  - c. \_\_\_ team leaders
  - d. \_\_\_ the weight of assessment data
10. Sometimes I . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ see the team climate as an end in and of itself
  - b. \_\_\_ emphasize time constraints over team discussion and processing
  - c. \_\_\_ play devil's advocate
  - d. \_\_\_ assume too many team tasks
11. When discussion becomes argumentative in team planning, I usually . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ point out the dissension and try to tone it down
  - b. \_\_\_ point out the disagreement and push for increased listening and team member feedback
  - c. \_\_\_ suggest we refocus on our goals and objectives before continuing
  - d. \_\_\_ break the tension with a joke
12. A risky thing for me in a team meeting is to . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ question some aspect of our teamwork
  - b. \_\_\_ push for higher team standards
  - c. \_\_\_ provide feedback to other team members about their ideas
  - d. \_\_\_ do work outside of my defined role on the team
13. Sometimes other team members see me as . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ a perfectionist
  - b. \_\_\_ not as serious about the work as others
  - c. \_\_\_ concerned more with getting done than being correct
  - d. \_\_\_ an organizer of loose ends
14. I think team problem-solving requires . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ cooperation by all
  - b. \_\_\_ good listening skills
  - c. \_\_\_ a willingness to ask tough questions
  - d. \_\_\_ good solid data
15. When I'm under stress about team planning and working, I sometimes . . .
  - a. \_\_\_ use humor
  - b. \_\_\_ am direct in communicating with other team members
  - c. \_\_\_ seek help outside of the team
  - d. \_\_\_ pull back and reassess why I am stressed

16. When out-and-out team conflict arises, I usually . . .
- \_\_\_ press for an honest discussion of differences
  - \_\_\_ explain the differences as a possible basis for a change in team direction
  - \_\_\_ call for a simple time-out
  - \_\_\_ try to identify and share what I see as the reasons for the difference
17. I am usually willing to . . .
- \_\_\_ assume any team tasks
  - \_\_\_ assume team clerical tasks: typing, copying, etc.
  - \_\_\_ compile data
  - \_\_\_ help a team member with his or her work
18. I am pretty good with . . .
- \_\_\_ technology
  - \_\_\_ difficult parents
  - \_\_\_ administrators
  - \_\_\_ managing time
19. In team meetings I usually try to . . .
- \_\_\_ help the team start meetings on time and end on time
  - \_\_\_ keep the team focused and not wasting time
  - \_\_\_ help the team check known schedules and dates as we plan ahead
  - \_\_\_ help the team organize our team tasks to save time
20. I often . . .
- \_\_\_ volunteer my expertise
  - \_\_\_ volunteer my time
  - \_\_\_ offer to help
  - \_\_\_ stay positive
21. After the team has planned, I often . . .
- \_\_\_ help with team tasks
  - \_\_\_ liaison with other non-team teachers
  - \_\_\_ need time to plan my part of the team plan
  - \_\_\_ willingly share my materials and plans

This survey is modified from the original found at SBA Women's Business Center at [owbo@sba.gov](mailto:owbo@sba.gov).

## ***Building Trust***

The extent to which people seem free to be themselves appears to be highly correlated with the trust level existing in a group. When the trust level is low, people tend to be defensive, to adopt manipulative strategies, and to withhold information about themselves. When the trust level is high, people are less defensive, less manipulative, and more open.

Members of a group often experience difficulty in working towards a higher trust level, solely because they lack understanding of the kinds of behavior which make for more trust. Lacking a model of trust-building behavior, they let things happen as they will. Such behavior is almost certain to work against the growth of trusting relationships.

Group members must work to build trust. Someone (preferably all) in a group must initiate the process by making himself or herself vulnerable through either constructive trusting behavior or helpful feedback.

A person engages in constructive trusting behavior if he or she is. . .

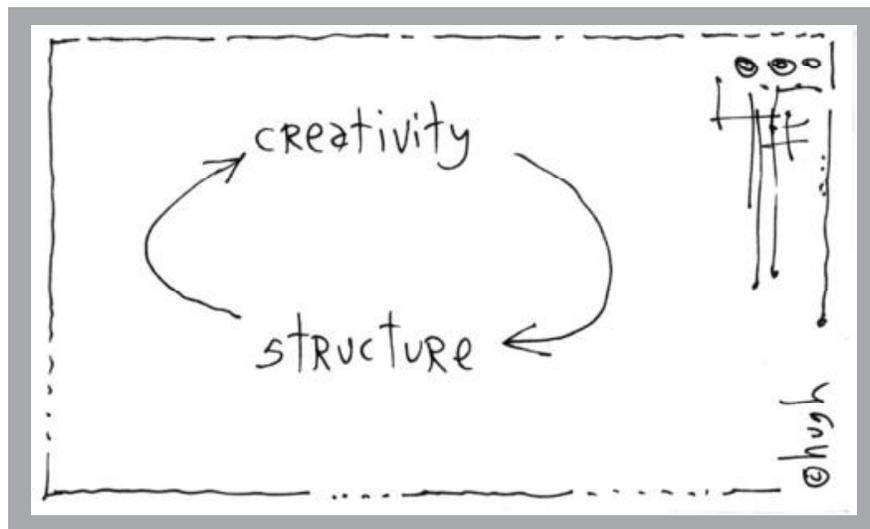
1. **Aware:** A person should recognize how thoughts and feelings influence outward behavior, and respond to those feelings appropriately. Awareness may be marked by statements such as, "I feel somewhat at a loss because we don't have a topic" instead of "We're just floundering without something we can get our teeth into."
2. **Self-Accepting:** A person accepts his or her own feelings without denying them, giving rationalizations for them, or apologizing for them. Self-acceptance may be evidenced by statements such as, "I am bored with this topic" instead of "This is a boring topic," or "I am upset with myself for being ineffective" instead of "I am upset because you all are not planning effectively."
3. **Accepting of Others:** A person is able to receive the feelings and thoughts of others without trying to change them, allowing others to be themselves even though their mode of being is different. This is evidenced by listening without trying to refute, not trying to argue, asking questions to ensure understanding, and not sitting in judgment of another.
4. **Supportive:** A person seeks ways to help others reach their goals, and tries to understand what others want to do although he or she may not agree with the conclusions of the other. This is evidenced by statements such as, "How can I help you?" or "Let me state what it is that I understand that you want us to do."
5. **Risk-Taking:** A person should go beyond the known, experiment with new behavior, try to support others rather than playing it safe, and be willing to risk being anxious, being caring, or appearing foolish. This may take the form of asking for feedback when this has not been done before or supporting someone when the consequences of such support are not clear.
6. **Problem-Centering:** A person focuses on problems facing the group rather than on controlling the group or its agenda. This trait is characterized by efforts to discover what is blocking a team from action, or in efforts to increase a team's effectiveness, to go beyond symptoms of the problem to the problem itself. Problem-centering rests on the assumption that more work gets done when individuals and groups learn how to solve problems rather than by maintaining a certain control or a certain methodological or leadership pattern.

### **Criteria for Helpful Feedback**

1. It is descriptive rather than evaluative. By describing one's own reaction, it leaves the individual free to use the feedback or not to use it. By avoiding evaluative language, it reduces the need for an individual to respond in defense.
2. It is specific rather than general. "I do not understand part A" rather than "This plan is bogus."
3. It is directed toward behavior the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of some shortcoming over which they have no control.
4. It is solicited rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receiver has asked a question that can be answered.
5. It is well-timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior.
6. It is clear. Clear communication is usually direct.

### **Characteristics of Good Teamwork**

1. High level of interdependence exists among team members.
2. The team leader has good people-skills and is committed to a team approach.
3. Each team member is willing to contribute.
4. The team develops a relaxed climate for internal communication.
5. Team members develop a mutual trust.
6. The team and individuals are prepared to take risks.
7. The team is clear about goals and establishes targets and dates.
8. Team members' roles are defined.
9. Team members know how to examine team and individual errors without personal attacks.
10. The team has capacity to create new ideas.
11. Each team member knows he or she can influence the team agenda.



## ***A Focused Team***

When team resources are focused and members are all working to accomplish the same purpose, teamwork can be very rewarding and productive. This is best accomplished when team members use a proactive approach rather than a reactive approach to accomplish their purpose (Adams, 1987).

The proactive approach manifests such characteristics as:

1. The team members take a very positive approach in jointly determining the way they are going to work together as a team and what they want to have happen. When individuals and the entire team choose to operate this way and are willing to set petty differences aside, unbelievable results become possible. When individuals adopt a positive attitude and commit to using their resources, knowledge, and skills to contribute to the goals of the team, they align with the team's overall purpose. This will not happen unless both the team leader and team members choose to do so.
2. Having a well-defined purpose or vision of what the team will accomplish is a very powerful force for the team leader and members. When goals are aligned with the team purpose, team members are empowered to accomplish these goals. This process leads to a high level of team productivity.
3. Team members have a positive attitude toward change and are willing to accept and allow change to occur as needed in order to accomplish desired results.
4. Team members understand that patience is required and that, for some goals, a long-term commitment is needed to accomplish the desired results.
5. Interests of both the team leader and team members are focused on desired results rather than on short-term problem-solving activities.
6. Members of the team must have a strong feeling of control within the team. They should be able to establish priorities and then to commit time and resources for accomplishing these tasks.
7. A well-functioning team is characterized by team members who verbally and publicly support each other. They recognize that negative comments about others tear the team down.
8. Team leaders and members that make a conscious, sustained effort to make these characteristics a part of their mindset will find that both creativity and accomplishment of desired results will be much higher than they would be otherwise.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. 1. When Can We Meet?**

✱✱ Instructional Teams need common daily planning time. If, in the beginning of restructuring, this cannot be accomplished, schedule as much time as possible for common collaborative planning. Team meeting time can be found and carved out of workshop days, time between student dismissal and teacher fulfillment of the contractual obligation, common lunch times, common preps when elementary students are pulled for special teachers, and common preps for middle and high school teachers as part of regularly scheduled prep time. But the goal should be to meet for two purposes: 1) to conduct business, review student progress, and coordinate their efforts, and 2) to co-develop aligned units of instruction and materials related to them. The business meetings can be short (an hour is ideal) and more frequent. But instructional planning requires blocks of time—4 to 6 hours each meeting.

### **2. Where Should We Meet?**

✱✱ Where you meet depends on the purpose of the meeting. If possible, make the meeting place convenient, quiet, and somewhat secluded. It might be the library, the guidance office, the principal's office, or someone's classroom. Don't meet in the lounge or teachers' room unless you have to, because you will be interrupted.

### **3. How Often Should We Meet?**

✱✱ Team meeting time needs to be scheduled at the start of the year. Twice a month is a bare minimum for business meetings; weekly meetings are better. A few large blocks of time interspersed with regular meetings help get work done.

### **4. How Do We Meet? What Should We Do?**

✱✱ Notify everyone where to meet.

- ✱ Let the secretary or the principal know where you are and ask everyone to leave you undisturbed unless absolutely necessary.

✱✱ Be punctual.

- ✱ The telephone call can wait and so can the copy machine.
- ✱ If the meeting is after school or during a prep period, give yourselves a few minutes to grab a drink or use the restroom.
- ✱ If you must be late, tell your teammates or send word to them.
- ✱ Excuse yourself if stopped by others on the way to the meeting.

✱✱ Meet for a scheduled time and end on time.

- ✱ Unless a team has a released-time day, team meetings of 45 minutes to an hour or the length of a prep period are usually enough.

✱✱ Use an agenda and follow it.

✱✱ Enlist a team leader.

✱✱ Meet with a timekeeper.

- ✱ Have someone mind the time and keep discussions on schedule.

✱✱ Meet with a note-taker.

- ✱ The note-taker will record the Instructional Team minutes, with copies kept by the team and also by the principal.

✱✱ Meet with a focus (a well defined purpose) and enlist someone to keep the team on task (focus keeper)

- \* A central focus of Instructional Team meetings is the preparation and refinement of units of instruction.
- \* A second focus is analysis of student learning data, including results of unit tests.
- \*\* Extend professional courtesy.
  - \* Bring doughnuts or candy just because it's Tuesday or because you felt like it.
  - \* Come with a thoughtful gift or a cake because it's Christmas or a birthday.
  - \* Share flower seeds because it's spring and your teammate gardens.
  - \* Treat each other with professional courtesy no matter what!
- \*\* *Remember: A little humor goes a long way to make it a better day!*

### ***Instructional Team Leader's Guide for Meetings***

1. Keep It Simple
2. Use Standard Agenda/Minutes Forms
3. Start The Meeting
  - \* It does not need to be anything formal. A simple statement like, "Okay, let's start," is fine.
  - \* Share any goodies or treats.
  - \* Share good news.
4. Check Roles
  - \* Do you have a calendar?
  - \* Is there a note-taker to keep the minutes?
  - \* Is there someone to keep the team on task (focus keeper) and does everyone know who that is?
  - \* Is there a timekeeper?
  - \* Is there anyone new who needs to be introduced?
5. Review Old Items And Try To Close Them Out
6. Focus On The Work At Hand
7. At The Conclusion, Ask If There Is Anything Else That Needs To Be Discussed

**Note:** In small groups, the same person may assume more than one role.

**Note:** A one minute report by each Instructional Team at each whole faculty meeting is a good idea.

## Template for Instructional Team Business Meeting Agenda

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Meeting Begins: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Meeting Adjourns: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Leader? \_\_\_\_\_

Approval of Minutes from Previous Meeting

Topics to discuss

Team Effectiveness:

Student Learning Data:

Instruction:

Curriculum:

Student Behavior:

Parents:

Other Business

Adjournment

Date and time of next meeting:

Location of next meeting:



## Template for Instructional Team Business Meeting Minutes

School Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Meeting Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Meeting Began: \_\_\_\_\_

Time Meeting Adjourned: \_\_\_\_\_

Who is your Team Leader? \_\_\_\_\_

Members Present: \_\_\_\_\_

Approval of minutes from previous meeting:

Notes and Actions Taken on Topics Discussed

Team Effectiveness:

Student Learning Data:

Instruction:

Curriculum:

Student Behavior:

Parents:

Other Business:

Adjournment:

Date and time of next meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

Location of next meeting: \_\_\_\_\_

## Team Effectiveness Survey

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_\_

School: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Team Leader: \_\_\_\_\_

Team (e.g. Third Grade Teachers): \_\_\_\_\_

The purpose of the Team Effectiveness Survey is to help Instructional Teams monitor and improve their effectiveness. At two times during the year, team members complete the survey and then discuss their individual scores to arrive at a group “consensus.” The results point to areas of strength for the team and to areas where the team can improve its operation. The results provide a basis for the team to discuss its effectiveness.

Circle the number to the right of each statement below to show the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement as it relates to your Instructional Team.

- 5 means you strongly agree
- 4 means you agree
- 3 means you are undecided
- 2 means you disagree
- 1 means you strongly disagree

In our Instructional Team:	Strongly disagree			Strongly agree	
	1	2	3	4	5
1. Team leadership (team leader, timekeeper, note-taker, focus minder, etc.) is shared equitably.	1	2	3	4	5
2. Tasks are equitably distributed among team members.	1	2	3	4	5
3. Dissent is handled successfully with a standard procedure.	1	2	3	4	5
4. Discussion is equitably shared among members.	1	2	3	4	5
5. We effectively limit discussion so that decisions can be made.	1	2	3	4	5
6. An agenda is prepared for each meeting.	1	2	3	4	5
7. Everyone has the opportunity to suggest agenda items.	1	2	3	4	5
8. We keep minutes of our meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
9. We meet for an adequate amount of time to complete our work.	1	2	3	4	5
10. The frequency of our meetings allows for effective continuity of our work.	1	2	3	4	5
11. We communicate effectively with team members outside of meetings.	1	2	3	4	5
12. We communicate effectively with the principal.	1	2	3	4	5
13. We communicate effectively with other teams.	1	2	3	4	5
14. We communicate effectively with support staff and specialists.	1	2	3	4	5
15. Team members are courteous and respectful of one another.	1	2	3	4	5
16. We coordinate the instructional practices of our members.	1	2	3	4	5
17. We share successful teaching methods with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
18. We share teaching materials with one another.	1	2	3	4	5
19. We develop teaching materials collectively.	1	2	3	4	5
20. We monitor the student learning data for the students we share.	1	2	3	4	5
21. We collectively develop Unit Plans with differentiated learning activities.	1	2	3	4	5
22. We focus on areas where assessment data indicates that student learning is low.	1	2	3	4	5
23. We focus on the learning needs of individual students.	1	2	3	4	5
24. We administer standards-based assessments at two or more times during the school year.	1	2	3	4	5

In our Instructional Team:

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

25. We examine the results of standards-based assessments.	1	2	3	4	5
26. We utilize team teaching effectively.	1	2	3	4	5
27. We share ideas for the use of instructional tools and activities.	1	2	3	4	5
28. We discuss ways to improve student motivation to learn.	1	2	3	4	5
29. We discuss interactive teaching methods.	1	2	3	4	5
30. We discuss ways to improve student responsibility for learning.	1	2	3	4	5
31. We discuss ways to communicate with parents.	1	2	3	4	5

Areas of collaboration that need improvement:

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Areas of team strength in collaboration:

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Comments:

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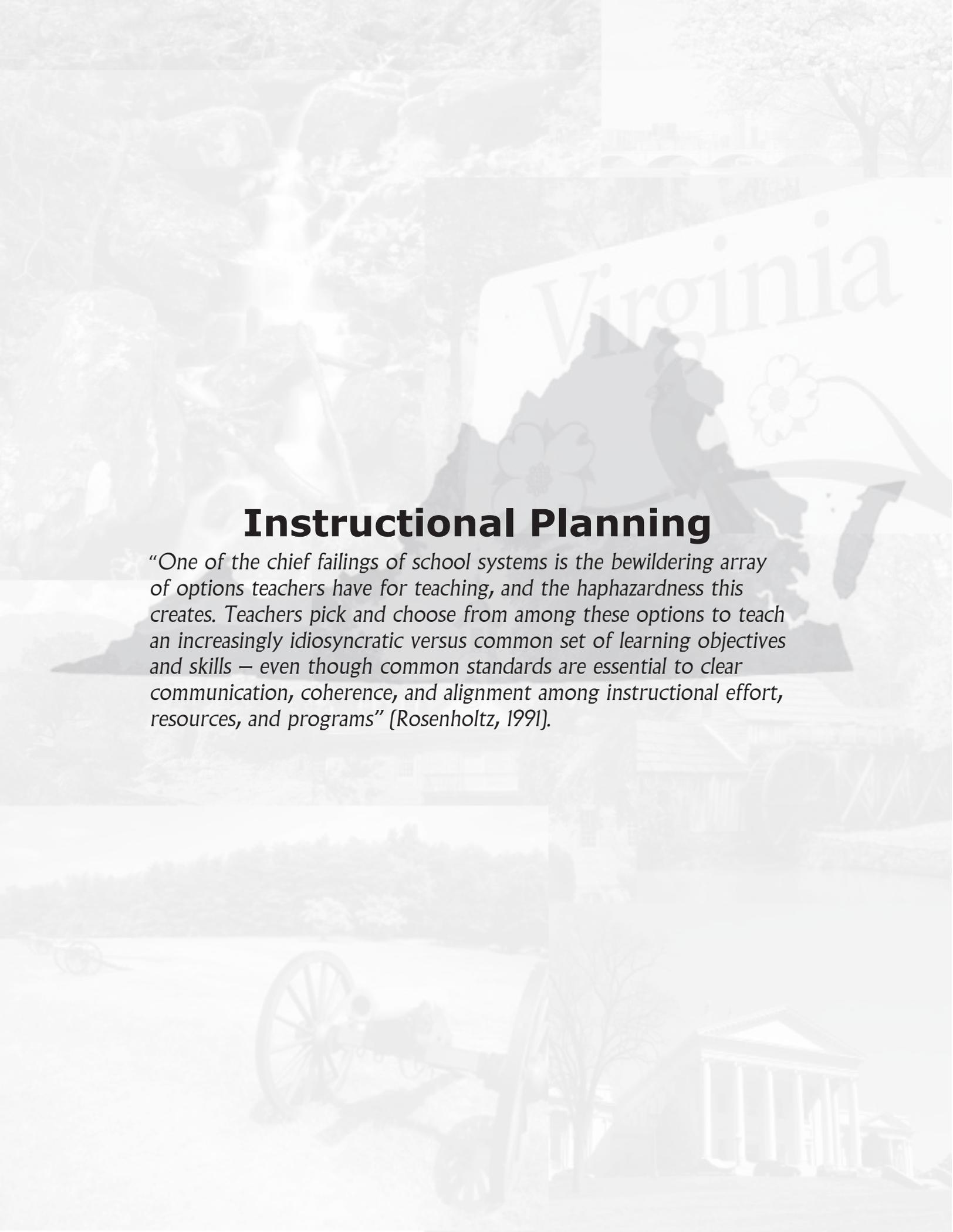
## Effective Teaming

### Next Steps

Strengthening our Instructional Team effectiveness

	What do we do now?	How can it be improved?	What is our first step?
How are the instructional teams organized?			
What is their purpose?			
When do they meet?			
How often do they meet?			
Where do they meet?			
What procedures (agendas, minutes, roles, etc.) do they follow?			
What work do they produce?			



The background is a collage of Virginia-themed images. At the top, there's a map of Virginia with the word "Virginia" written across it. Below the map, there's a large water wheel. In the bottom left, there's a cannon on a wooden carriage. In the bottom right, there's a classical building with columns. The entire collage is in a light, faded color scheme.

## **Instructional Planning**

*“One of the chief failings of school systems is the bewildering array of options teachers have for teaching, and the haphazardness this creates. Teachers pick and choose from among these options to teach an increasingly idiosyncratic versus common set of learning objectives and skills – even though common standards are essential to clear communication, coherence, and alignment among instructional effort, resources, and programs” (Rosenholtz, 1991).*



## Aligned Instruction

### *The Team-Created Unit Plan*

Alignment is a process of matching up the written curriculum (the one that appears in curriculum guides for a school or district) with the tested curriculum (the one that appears in the tests) and the supported curriculum (the one that appears in textbooks and other resources) to make the taught curriculum (the one the teacher actually delivers) more effective. The alignment process serves two related purposes: It serves as a check on guide/text/test congruence, and it provides teachers with an organizational structure for their own planning (Glatthorn, 1995).

“Alignment is an explicit match between the taught and the tested curriculum” (Schmoker, 2001, p. 53). With the development of state learning standards and state, standards-based assessments, aligning the curriculum (what is taught) to the assessment is accomplished by aligning the curriculum with the standards on which the assessments are based.

“One of the chief failings of school systems is the bewildering array of options teachers have for teaching, and the haphazardness this creates. Teachers pick and choose from among these options to teach an increasingly idiosyncratic versus common set of learning objectives and skills – even though common standards are essential to clear communication, coherence, and alignment among instructional effort, resources, and programs” (Rosenholtz, 1991, pp. 17–18). Again, this fretting about a common set of learning objectives, expressed in 1991, has been ameliorated by the development of state learning standards and assessments. But that is only one step toward solving the problem of “haphazardness.” The next big step is for teachers to align their “taught curriculum” with standards.

Cotton (2000) has identified alignment as one of the schooling practices that matters most. In her list of the kinds of monitoring of student progress that should be taking place in schools, there are 8 practices listed:

1. Collecting and reviewing student performance data to ensure early identification and support for students with learning difficulties.
2. Establishing and using procedures for collecting, summarizing, and reporting student achievement information.
3. Reviewing test results, grade reports, and other materials to identify problems and taking action based on the findings.
4. Reviewing assessment instruments and methods for their suitability to the students being evaluated, and making changes as needed.
5. Making summaries of student performance available to all staff for their use in planning; making periodic reports to parents and community members.
6. Using assessment methods beyond standardized achievement tests (e.g., performance assessments, portfolios) to enrich their understanding of students’ progress.
7. *Aligning classroom assessments of student performance with the written curriculum and actual instruction.*
8. Routinely checking students’ understanding by conducting recitations, checking students’ work during seat work periods, assigning and checking homework, administering quizzes, and reviewing student performance data. (Cotton, 2000, pp. 12–13).

## ***Collaborative Development of The Unit Plan***

The *unit plan* is developed by the Instructional Team to define a unit of instruction and outline the standards and target objectives (typically grade level) addressed in the unit of instruction. A unit of instruction is typically about four weeks of work within a subject area.

The Instructional Team:

1. Determines the concepts, principles and skills that will be covered within the unit.
2. Identifies the standards/benchmarks that apply to the grade level and unit topic. Should be explicit within those grade level benchmarks.
3. Develops **all** objectives that clearly align to the selected standards/benchmarks. Follows the suggested criteria within the *unit plan* Editing Checklist.
4. Names the objective codes in sequential order.
5. Determines the best objective descriptors.
6. Considers the most appropriate elements for mastery. Discusses this thoroughly, making sure all elements are clear (see Editing Checklist). Name them.
7. Develops pre/post test items that are clear and specific and would provide evidence of mastery consistent with the criteria established.

**Note:** A pre/post test is teacher (Instructional Team) created and may include both verbal and written questions and answers as appropriate to the grade level. It is one means for quickly checking each student's readiness for a unit (pre) and mastery of unit objectives (post).

## ***Defining Units of Instruction***

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Class Period for this Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Days Per Week: \_\_\_\_\_

1. What is the length of time of a unit of instruction for your subject and grade level? (typically 4 weeks or 6 weeks)? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How many units in your school year (typically 6, 8 or 9)? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What are the titles of your units?

Unit 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit: 3 \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 4: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 5: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 6: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 7: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 8: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 9: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit 10: \_\_\_\_\_

## Aligning Units to Standards

Which standards/benchmarks will you address for mastery in each unit?

	Standard Code		Brief Descriptor of Standard/Benchmark
Unit 1			
Unit 2			
Unit 3			
Unit 4			

Page \_\_\_\_\_

***Standards-Based Objectives***

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Number (example 3R01): \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives**

Target Objective Code (ex. 3R01-O1T): \_\_\_\_\_ Target Objective Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

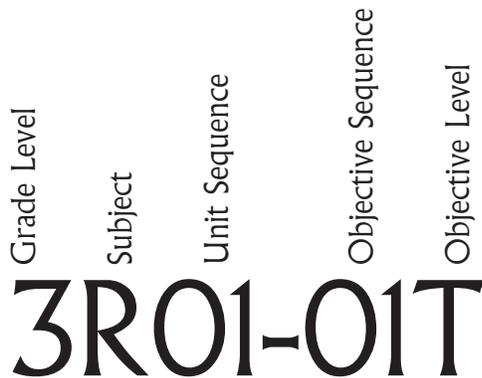
Criteria for Mastery: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Test/Post-Test Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Test/Post-Test Item: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Breaking the Code**

In order to connect the components in aligning instruction to curriculum and standards, a system of codes and descriptors/titles is helpful.



**Standard/Benchmark Code:** The code designated by the state or district for the standard/benchmark.

**Standard/Benchmark Descriptor:** Two to four words that describe the entire standard/benchmark.

**Unit Code:** Grade level, Subject, Sequence Number of Unit (example: 3R01 for third grade reading, first unit)

**Unit Title:** A phrase that describes the overall theme of the unit.

**Objective Code:** Unit Code plus a hyphen and a sequential number for each objective in the unit followed by a T, P, or E for Target, Prerequisite or Enhanced (example: 3R01-01T for third grade reading, first unit, first target objective). The Prerequisite and Enhanced levels for this objective would carry the same sequence number (3R01-01P for Prerequisite; 3R01-01E for Enhanced).

**Objective Descriptor:** Two to four words that describe the objective.

## Unit Plan

Page: \_\_\_\_\_

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Unit of Instruction Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit of Instruction Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard (Code)	Target Objectives (with Objective Code Prefix)	Objective Descriptor	Criteria for Mastery	Pre-Test/ Post Test Items

## Unit Plan

Page: 1

Grade Level: 3rd      Subject: Reading      Unit of Instruction Code: 3ROI

Unit of Instruction Title: Effective Communication

Standard (Code)	Target Objectives (with Objective Code Prefix)	Objective Descriptor	Criteria for Mastery	Pre-Test / Post Test Items
A3	3R01-O1T Construct Proper sentences using correct grammar, punctuation, and capitalization.	Sentence structure	When given a rubric that provides proper sentence structure, the student develops properly written sentences with 80% mastery.	1. Given a bank of vocabulary words, the student writes two proper sentences.
A3	3R01-O2T Determine the appropriate use of imperative and exclamatory sentences.	Oral reading	The student marks the correct punctuation for imperative and exclamatory sentences with 80% mastery.	2. Given a variety of unmarked sentences, the student correctly marks and identifies sentence.

### **Unit Plan Editing Checklist**

The *unit plan* is developed by the Instructional Team to define a *unit of instruction* and outline the standards/benchmarks and objectives addressed in the unit. A *unit of instruction* is typically three to six weeks of work within a subject area.

<b>Standard/Benchmark (Code)</b>		
Benchmark written with state code	YES	NO
Clearly aligns with target objective	YES	NO
<b>Target Objectives</b>		
Consistent format of all objectives (SWBAT)	YES	NO
Aligned to grade level benchmarks	YES	NO
Stated with appropriate verbs	YES	NO
Are clear and succinct	YES	NO
Not too broad, not too narrow	YES	NO
<i>(Total objectives should reflect variety of taxonomy levels)</i>		
<b>Objective Descriptor</b>		
Describes with minimal words	YES	NO
Seems clear in description	YES	NO
<b>Criteria for Mastery</b>		
Gives conditions under which mastery is demonstrated	YES	NO
Indicates level of accuracy required	YES	NO
Gives measurable outcome for success (mastery)	YES	NO
<b>Pre-Test/Post Test Items</b>		
Specifically states test items (by reference or explicitly)	YES	NO
As necessary, identifies assessment tool (i.e., rubric, teacher observation checklist)	YES	NO
<i>(Pre-test and post-test items are identical; or are exactly parallel items drawn from different reading passage or sets of problems, for example.)</i>		

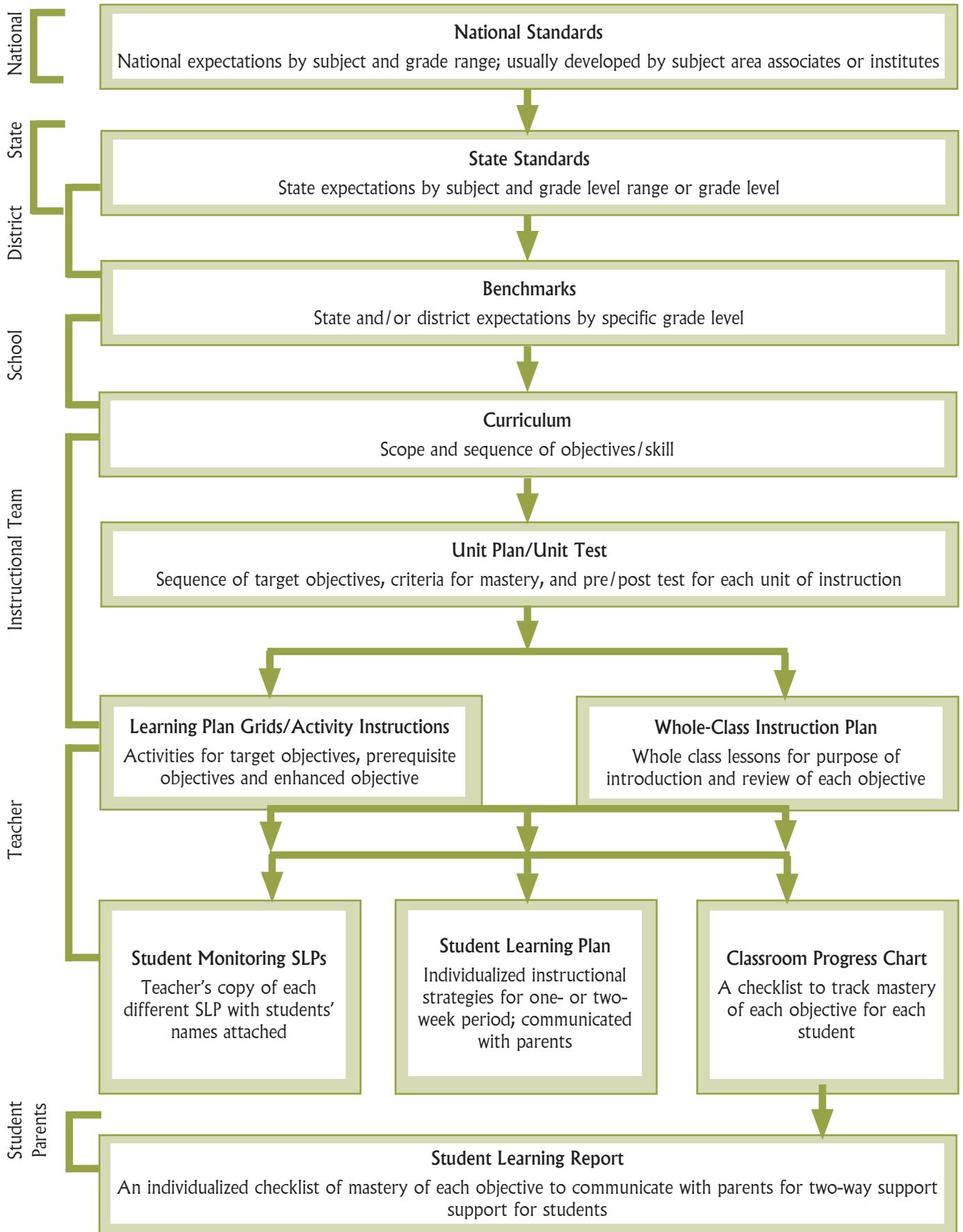
### **Unit Plan Editing Checklist (with explanations)**

The *unit plan* is developed by the Instructional Team to define a *unit of instruction* and outline the standards and objectives addressed in the unit. A *unit of instruction* is typically four weeks of work within a subject area.

<b>Standard/Benchmark (Code)</b>		
Benchmark(s) written with state code	YES	NO
Review the standard/benchmark to be sure you are assigning the appropriate standard/benchmark to the intent of your stated objective.		
Clearly aligns with target objective	YES	NO
Do the verbs agree? Is the content in standards/benchmarks and objectives clearly the same?		
<b>Target Objectives</b>		
Consistent format of all objectives	YES	NO
The "student will be able to" (SWBAT) . . . This prefix may be stated once and assumed thereafter.		
Aligned to grade level benchmarks	YES	NO
The benchmark may be for a grade higher than the objective, but the objective is clearly a building block to the benchmark.		
Stated with appropriate verbs	YES	NO
The verb guides the student in what action is required to achieve the objective. It should be appropriate and specific to what will be measured by the <i>unit test</i> .		
Are clear and succinct	YES	NO
State the objective clearly and succinctly, but be sure it conveys exactly what is expected.		
Not too broad, not too narrow	YES	NO
Objectives are the basis for instruction and student achievement. If objectives are too BROAD, they will be vague and will not serve as a model for instruction or assessment of mastery. Instructional objectives help the classroom teacher in the daily management of instruction. Broad objectives are better labeled as "goals". If objectives are too NARROW, they become disconnected tasks and do not provide the scope for learning. <i>(Total objectives should reflect variety of taxonomy levels. Using Bloom's Taxonomy helps identify a more specific expectation of the content, so as not to make the objective too broad).</i>		
<b>Objective Descriptor</b>		
Describes with minimal words	YES	NO
This is difficult, but necessary, to transpose the main idea of each target objective onto the class progress chart, and the <i>student learning report</i> .		
Seems clear in description	YES	NO
The description should be concise enough, yet clear to the teacher using the class progress chart and to the parent reading the <i>student learning report</i> .		

<b>Criteria for Mastery</b>		
Gives conditions under which mastery is demonstrated	YES	NO
How will the student show mastery of the objective?		
Indicates level of accuracy required	YES	NO
The criterion quantifies the acceptable level of accuracy, (i.e., 4/5, 80%). Most objectives will require accuracy at 100% of attempts.		
Gives measurable outcome for success (mastery)	YES	NO
Objectives written toward MASTERY require a form of measurement, which includes a simple Yes or No observation of specific performance.		
<b>Pre-Test/Post Test Items</b>		
Specifically states test items	YES	NO
State the actual test item or reference specific item on a test or other assessment to be used.		
When necessary, identifies assessment tool (i.e., rubric, teacher observation checklist)	YES	NO
Instructional objectives often require a specific assessment tool to measure mastery. This tool should be identified in this column, and a copy attached to the <i>unit plan/unit test</i> . <i>Pre-test and post-test items are identical whenever possible; or are exactly parallel items drawn from different reading passages, for example.</i>		

# Instructional Planning Flowchart



## Differentiated Instruction

In a differentiated classroom:

- \* Assessment and instruction are inseparable.
- \* The teacher adjusts instruction to account for differences in student readiness for a specific objective.

Instructional Teams prepare each teacher to differentiate instruction for each student by:

- \* Leveling the target objectives
- \* Developing a variety of learning activities aligned with each objectives
- \* Assigning individual and group learning activities to each student following presentation of new material by teacher

The individual teacher then draws from this reservoir of aligned, differentiated learning activities (and related materials prepared by the Instructional Team) to target instruction to each student, based on classroom assessment of the student's readiness for or mastery of objectives.

In choosing the appropriate mix of instructional modes, the teacher provides variety in instruction and further differentiation. Instructional modes include:

- \* Teacher-Directed, Whole Class
- \* Teacher-Directed, Small Group
- \* Student-Directed, Small Group
- \* Independent Work
- \* Homework
- \* Computer-Based Learning

### ***Leveling the Target Objectives***

Not every student begins a unit with the same level of prior learning and mastery relative to an objective. While the "target objective" may be appropriate for most students, some students will enter the unit at or near mastery and would be held back if tied to the target objective. Some other students need a prior step before tackling the target objective. One way to differentiate instruction while maintaining the focus on aligned objectives is to first level each objectives so that learning activities can be assigned at three levels for each objective. In addition to the target objective, the Instructional Team can define a related "enhanced objective" and a "prerequisite objective." Bloom's taxonomy is a good tool for leveling objectives.

The form on the next page adds a section to the one previously reviewed for developing standards-aligned units of instruction. This form guides the team to level the objective.

Page \_\_\_\_\_

**Standards-Based Objectives**

Grade Level: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_

Unit Number (example 3R01): \_\_\_\_\_ Title of Unit: \_\_\_\_\_

Standard Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Standard Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

**Objectives**

Target Objective Code (ex. 3R01-O1T): \_\_\_\_\_ Target Objective Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Criteria for Mastery: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Test/Post-Test Item: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-Test/Post-Test Item: \_\_\_\_\_

**Now Differentiate (Level) the Objective Below**

Pre-requisite Objective Code (ex. 3R01-O1P): \_\_\_\_\_ Pre-requisite Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

Pre-requisite Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

Enhanced Objective Code (ex. 3R01-O1E): \_\_\_\_\_ Enhanced Descriptor: \_\_\_\_\_

Enhanced Objective: \_\_\_\_\_

### ***Learning Plan Grid: Filling the Toolbox***

The unit plan aligns the curriculum to standards and benchmarks. The next step is to align the curriculum to instruction. This is where the real fun begins—teachers sharing their most successful instructional strategies for meeting each objective in the unit of instruction. Learning plan grids level each objective into three tiers—target, enhanced, and prerequisite. The learning plan grid also differentiates learning activities among various modes of instruction.

When teachers have taken the time to pre-plan for differentiated instruction in their classrooms, they have a toolbox of instructional choices ready to go. The teacher's ability to work with varied groups or individuals within the classroom setting is made possible through differentiated instruction. Learning opportunities are enriched and strengthened. Classroom time is maximized. Students, taught to share the responsibility, become practiced in making decisions. They are better prepared for classroom work, and life.



#### ***Things to consider when developing a Learning Plan Grid and Activity Instructions:***

Once a team has a well-developed unit plan that identifies clear target level (grade level) objectives and assessments that measure a student's ability or skill level in that objective, the learning plan grid becomes a teacher's best "toolbox" of learning opportunities. The toolbox is filled with aligned learning activities the teacher can access to differentiate instruction for each student, based on classroom assessment of the student's prior learning and readiness for the objective.

## Bloom's Verbs

KNOWLEDGE		COMPREHENSION		APPLICATION	
Name	Recall	Explain	Paraphrase	Transfer	Apply
List	Draw	Summarize	Review	Compute	Show
Define	Count	Interpret	Demonstrate	Produce	Change
Match	Identify	Predict	Conclude	Choose	Paint
Label	Sequence	Tell	Generalize	Use	Select
Describe	Quote	Discuss	Locate	Demonstrate	Prepare
Recite	Write	Restate	Identify	Interview	Dramatize
Tell	Find	Illustrate	Report	Draw	Imitate

ANALYSIS		SYNTHESIS		EVALUATION	
Differentiate	Compare	Create	Produce	Judge	Predict
Contrast	Outline	Design	Compose	Select	Rate
Deduce	Characterize	Propose	Invent	Prove	Choose
Classify	Separate	Organize	Pretend	Decide	Evaluate
Debate	Analyze	Construct	Originate	Appraise	Conclude
Research	Discriminate	Develop	Integrate	Rank	Assess
Distinguish	Examine	Plan	Rewrite	Criticize	Justify
Relate	Diagram	Make up	Perform	Prioritize	Argue

## Using Bloom's Taxonomy to Level Objectives and Learning Activities

Area of Taxonomy	Definition	What Teacher Does	What Student Does
Evaluation	Judging the value of materials and methods given purposes, applying standards and criteria	Accepts Exposes Harmonizes	Judges Disputes
Synthesis	Putting together constituent elements or parts to form a whole	Reflects Extends Analyzes	Discusses Generalizes Relates Compares Contrasts Abstracts
Analysis	Breaking down a communication into its constituent elements	Probes Guides Observes Acts as a resource	Discusses Uncovers Lists Dissects
Application	Using methods, concepts, principles, and theories in new situations	Shows Facilitates Observes Criticizes	Solves novel problems Demonstrates use of knowledge
Comprehension	Understanding communicated material without relating it to other material	Demonstrates Listens Questions Compares Contrasts Examines	Explains Translates Demonstrates Interprets
Knowledge	Recall specific information	Directs Tells Shows Examines	Responds Absorbs Remembers Recognizes



## Learning Plan Grid

Standard Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Target Objective Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Enhanced Objective Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Prerequisite code: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective Descriptor	Mode of Instruction				Homework
	Independent Work	Computer Based	Student-Directed Group	Teacher-Directed Group	
Enhanced					
Target					
Prerequisite					

Exploratory topics:



## Activity Instructions

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Activity Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective Code(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Activity Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One: \_\_\_\_\_ Independent Work \_\_\_\_\_ Computer Based \_\_\_\_\_ Homework  
\_\_\_\_\_ Student-Directed Group \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher-Directed Group

Directions:

Materials:

Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_ Practice Work \_\_\_\_\_ Graded Work

When Finished: \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Check \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Check \_\_\_\_\_ Show Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Hand In  
[Teacher may check more than one.]

Indicators of Success:

-----

## Activity Instructions

Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Activity Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Objective Code(s): \_\_\_\_\_ Activity Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Check One: \_\_\_\_\_ Independent Work \_\_\_\_\_ Computer Based \_\_\_\_\_ Homework  
\_\_\_\_\_ Student-Directed Group \_\_\_\_\_ Teacher-Directed Group

Directions:

Materials:

Purpose: \_\_\_\_\_ Practice Work \_\_\_\_\_ Graded Work

When Finished: \_\_\_\_\_ Self-Check \_\_\_\_\_ Peer Check \_\_\_\_\_ Show Teacher \_\_\_\_\_ Hand In  
[Teacher may check more than one.]

Indicators of Success:



## Instructional Planning Next Steps

	What do we do now?	How can it be improved?	What is our first step?
<p>Framework for developing unit plans. Review the Unit Plan format on page 77 in the Mega System Handbook. How does this compare with your current method for developing unit plans?.</p>			
<p>Editing Tools for developing units. Review the Unit Plan Editing Checklist found in your session folder. Is a tool like this helpful?</p>			
<p>Consider the idea of “leveled objectives.” How do you now approach different levels of student readiness for particular objectives?</p>			
<p>Consider the Learning Plan Grid and Activity Instructions as ways an Instructional Team can prepare a toolbox of activities that each teacher can draw from to differentiate instruction.</p>			



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Virginia

