School of Education
Guidelines for Instructional Unit Planning

Note: This is a unit plan guide which the School of Education uses to ensure teacher candidates and course instructors have a shared language and understanding of components and expectations for unit planning assignments in courses.

In the graduate program the unit plan assignment has been identified as a Key Assessment Measure. As a key assessment measure it will be used to ensure that candidates are meeting program and licensure requirements. Therefore, all students need to meet the target performance level to move forward in the program. If a student misses the target, the student will be required to redo the portions of the unit until the target has been met.

Candidates will create a standards-based learner-centered sequential unit (1 week minimum or 2 weeks maximum) for a particular grade level.

The instructional unit will incorporate the following:

- A rationale for instructional decisions. The rationale should be grounded in evidence-based practices.
- A description of the Context for Learning
- A brief overview of the unit that identifies the central focus of the unit.
- An overview of the instructional components that includes a unit that lasts at least one week and includes three consecutive fully developed lesson plans.
- A pre-assessment activity that captures students’ readiness, interest, and learning needs relative to the learning objectives prior to a unit.
- A formative assessment to guide monitoring and adjustment during instruction
- An end of the unit assessment (summative)
- A reference page that provides citations for instructional/pedagogical choices and resources

Approved 2018.08.09
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| Central Focus (Essential Questions/Enduring Understandings) | The central focus identifies a substantial overarching goal that unifies core concepts and skills within the curriculum.  
All lessons within the unit are aligned to the central focus. |     |         |          |
| Context for Learning              | Description of students includes detail on the class demographics; significant subgroups of students with similar characteristics; and students' varied strengths (including personal, cultural, and community assets), language development, and learning needs.  
Instructional choice and learning tasks are informed by understanding of students' strengths and varied needs as well as appropriate supports. |     |         |          |
| Standards                         | The unit is aligned to relevant ISTE and K-12 MN content standards and national content standards as appropriate (e.g. NCTM, CSTA, NCTE) |     |         |          |
| Learning Objectives               | All lessons within the learning unit have a specific learning objective.  
The learning objectives are measurable; and align with the chosen set of standards.  
Lesson objectives include a variety of Bloom's Taxonomy levels or Webb's Depth of Knowledge levels. |     |         |          |
| Assessment/Evidence               | Unit includes assessment; pre-formative and summative.  
The unit incorporates effective and varied formative assessments as well as summative assessments.  
The assessments align with the learning objectives and standards.  
Scoring tools such as checklists/rubrics are well crafted and measure the learning objectives. |     |         |          |
| Lessons and Activities | The sequential unit length and scope is at least 1 week.
| | The unit contains a learning segment (3 consecutive fully developed lesson plans) and activities that reflect evidence-based teaching and learning practices.
| | **Lesson plans follow the CSS lesson plan template.**
| | The lesson activities build on each other to ensure clarity and flow.
| | Each of the fully developed lesson plans includes enough detail so that another educational professional could successfully instruct the lesson (substitute teacher ready).
| | The unit provides opportunities for students’ success with appropriate scaffolding.
| | Lesson activities address real-world/authentic experiences.
| Technology | Technology integration identifies and aligns with the appropriate ISTE standards) for students.
| | Learning experiences provide an opportunity for K-12 students to demonstrate their learning through meaningful technology use.
| | The unit provides opportunities for K-12 students to create with technology vs. just consume (e.g. LoTi level 4 or ISTE Educator Facilitator standard).
| Justification | The candidate is able to Justify instructional choices from 3 consecutive lessons, i.e., focusing on choice of teaching strategies, materials, and the learning tasks plan for students.
| | Explicitly include selected principles of research and theory from previous or current methods courses, from independent reading, or other sources.
| | Considers educational philosophy and specific theories of development, learning and motivation, as well as research-based instructional practices specific to the subject area associated with this unit.

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| **Student Centered** | The lessons, activities, and assessments are student-centered and engaging (e.g. authentic, real-world, inquiry-based, open-ended). Includes opportunities for 21st century skills (4C’s: communication, collaboration, critical thinking and creativity). |
| **Differentiation** (Tomlinson & Hockett, 2017) | The unit reflects one or more models of culturally responsive practices to support equitable and inclusive teaching and learning practices. The Unit instructional and learning tasks give all students access to the same clear, high-quality lesson/unit goals/objectives. The Unit instructional and learning tasks includes opportunities for students to mimic or approximate the skills, thinking, habits, dispositions, or work of real-world professionals (e.g., mathematicians, biologists, writers). The Unit instructional and learning tasks includes opportunities for all students to use higher-level thinking skills (e.g., analyzing, judging, and defending). The Unit instructional and learning tasks are equally appealing and engaging from the students’ perspective. A variety of instructional strategies are used to scaffold tasks. |
| **Academic Language** | Academic language is identified and supports are embedded in teaching strategies in the unit. The unit instructional and learning tasks include regular, frequent and focused accountable student-to-student discussion tasks designed to improve reading, speaking and writing skills consistent within the discipline. |
| **Resources and reference list** | Resources and materials are included. Materials go beyond a provided textbook or other provided curriculum. K-12 student support materials are included (e.g. student worksheets, directions, etc.). A reference list is provide and is formatted in APA. |

Approved 2018.08.09