

Introduction

If you are an educator in one of the states that has adopted the Common Core State Standards, you are undoubtedly preparing for change. Like other educators in your situation, you are embarking upon a new venture. As stated in the Center on Education Policy’s *Common Core State Standards: Progress and Challenges in School Districts’ Implementation* (Kober & Renter, 2011), “Most of these states are expecting, rather than requiring, districts to undertake such activities as developing new curriculum materials and instructional practices, providing professional development to teachers and principals, and designing and implementing teacher induction programs and evaluations related to the standards” (p. 1). It is therefore not surprising that you need some support in navigating your way through these new standards and in using them to create curriculum. That’s where I can help. I wrote this book for teachers, curriculum designers or directors, administrators, professors in teacher credentialing programs, or anyone who plans to use the ELA Common Core Standards along with content area standards, as appropriate, to write meaningful and effective curriculum that can make a lasting impression on our charges.

WHAT TO EXPECT: UNIT MAP

Curriculum mapping allows educators to purposefully plan and outline what is taught in a given year. It allows for articulation across the grades and within each grade. As I write in my book *Curriculum Mapping: A Step-by-Step Guide for Creating Curriculum Year Overviews* (2007),

A curriculum mapping document, as the name implies, maps everything—in all subject areas—that a teacher needs to cover in a given school year. The [map] accounts for all the content standards the district or state mandates, along with information that personalizes the document for each teacher. (p. 1)

Along with standards, curriculum maps can include key concepts, essential questions, skills, assessments, and more. Mapping a yearlong curriculum program allows educators to vertically and horizontally align their curriculum within a building and across the district. A map can uncover key learning that is repetitive, or missed entirely, so that educators become aware and accountable to students’ learning.

Mapping the yearlong curriculum is advisable, and your school or district might be in the process of creating this kind of map or have plans to create one. However, teachers and curriculum designers need to understand the equally critical importance of creating a

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quality-driven unit map. That is the focus for this book: to guide readers to comprehensively map a unit of study using the ELA Common Core Standards. Whether or not schools or districts are in the process of a yearlong map, sooner or later teachers will need a comprehensive curriculum map for individual units. Creating maps will clarify the outcomes for learners and increase the quality and focus of instruction.

To aid in your creation of unit maps, this book includes a template with key components of a strong map and thorough explanations for each one. The chapters feature many examples of these components, such as enduring understandings, guiding questions, culminating assessments with rubrics, differentiation ideas, skills, activity ideas, and so forth, aligned to the ELA Common Core.

There is also a lesson design template that is a natural subsequent step to the unit map. You will find several comprehensive model lessons using this template. As you dive into the process of mapping a targeted unit, you will work closely with the Common Core Standards, and become intimate with them, as you carefully determine which to group together to form the basis for a unit. You will also use the skills embedded in the standards as a guide to identify the key conceptual understandings that will drive quality curriculum and engaging instruction. As you create your unit maps, I walk you through a clearly articulated process centering on key components of unit design. Here's a snapshot of what you will accomplish as you turn the pages of this book and work on various exercises:

- Group ELA Common Core Standards
- Identify what students should know
- Develop essential understandings
- Discern between essential unit and lesson guiding questions—and craft them
- Identify or create culminating assessments for students to demonstrate learning
- Preview prepared checklists and rubrics aligned to the Common Core Standards
- Consider ways to differentiate activities, assessments, and resources
- Distinguish activities from skills and record both
- Determine evidence of formative assessments
- Select appropriate resources

Truth be told, if you have done work with backward design, curriculum mapping, and differentiation, you will be familiar with much of what is presented here, but you should learn novel ideas or ways to approach what you have done in the past. My process for creating a map is akin to other methods and a compilation of successful work in the field from H. Lynn Erickson, Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Jay McTighe, Carol Ann Tomlinson, Grant Wiggins, and a host of other revered academicians. Like my cohorts, I have my own twist on this work; my strategies have evolved from years of being in the trenches and consulting with teachers regularly. And I have found this process and the examples I share resonate with them. As one New York City teacher commented, “You have an excellent ability to present material that can be ‘overwhelming’ into manageable chunks for success!” And from a teacher in Alaska, “Your ideas helped me see a new way of presenting information I didn’t even realize. I was kind of ‘stuck’ in one way of thinking. Thank you!”

As a first step, I suggest you consider a targeted unit of study, print out the ELA Common Core Standards, gather together a textbook and readings or resources you might need for your unit, and begin to create a curriculum unit map with me. You can access my website at www.kathyglassconsulting.com for Microsoft Word formats of standards for each

grade, 5–12, by clicking on the appropriate links in the “Download Resources” section. This will enable you to download them onto your computer and cut and paste standards more easily for curriculum mapping and lesson design. For a PDF version of all the standards, go to the Common Core State Standards Initiative website, www.corestandards.org/.

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In addition to reproducibles, you can access a Resource section in the online companion website. It provides an overview of the English language arts (ELA) Common Core (CC) Standards for 6–12 and is titled “A Brief Primer on the ELA Common Core Standards.” Those of you familiar with the organization and contents of the standards might choose to skim this section or skip it altogether. Or some of you might prefer to access the original source and read the Common Core “Introduction” and appendices in their entirety. If so, go to the Common Core State Standards Initiative website (www.corestandards.org) and navigate to locate pieces of information you want to read verbatim.

To access this companion website that accompanies this book, go to <http://www.corwin.com/mappingela6-12> and follow the directions.

