Weeks 12 & 13 ! April 5 to 19

This week I am posting work for two weeks. Most of you are getting close to completing the main sections of your units, and I do not want to hold you up by not posting directions you need in order to keep moving. Below you will also find the schedule for the remainder of the semester so you can plan ahead. I know these weeks will fly!

For the next two weeks we will focus on these questions:

1. How do we help students take the driver’s seat?

2. How will technology meet the needs of all learners?

3. Are we there yet?

1. How do we help students take the driver’s seat? How will you help students find the answers and how will you know if they are headed in the right direction?

Instructional Sequence Directions:
Your answer to these questions will evolve as you build the instructional sequence for your unit. I am actually looking for more of a detailed timeline than a series of lesson plans. I realize that lesson plans will emerge as you teach, and that any set of lesson
plans will need to continually change to meet the realities of day-to-day work with students. With that in mind, what I am looking for is your road map. You will list the steps that you and your students will take as you search for answers to the essential questions. Please take another look at some of those ARCTIC units in the Webliography and Bibliography for a concrete visual of what this might look like. You will note that some of those unit designers used much more detail than others. You also will note that they included, as separate documents, lesson plans to accompany their timelines. To repeat and emphasize: **I am not requiring you to write separate lesson plans!** The ARCTIC folks had much more time to work on these units than we have this semester. The timeline will need to include the following:

1. An estimation of the number of days or class periods required for each step
2. A very brief description of the focus for each step
3. Strategies you will use for that step, to include technology use, groupings, etc. Basically, how you think you will structure this step.

I have found this stage of unit design most helpful when I continue to work in a backward mode. I start at the END of my timeline. I write in the target end-date and the final task first (If you do not know when you will teach this unit, you do not have to use actual dates. You may just label each step or phase with terms like, week 1, day 2.) From there, I continue backward, working to fit in all of the steps, in the correct sequence. I find that this way I am more likely to allow enough time for each stage of the unit.

I need enough information in your timelines so that I can see how this unit will actually unfold. **I should see all the items on your Know and Do Lists represented in your timeline. They should be taught in a scaffolded sequence that enables students to gain the enduring understandings and complete the culminating task(s) successfully.** Chapter 10 in *Understanding By Design* will help you...
think through strategies selection in terms of which might be most effective for particular steps in your unit.

Looking at the timelines in these ARCTIC units may help:
Rain, Rain Go Away
Forces That Change the Earth
Solar System
Planning and Mapping a School Garden
You will see that some of these teachers used their unit questions as the base for each step in their instructional sequences. That works if you choose to go that route.

**Dipstick (formative assessment) Instructions:**
Dipstick is not a Grant Wiggins term! Fagan and Morse (who modified the Wiggins/McTighe unit template) coined the term a few years ago as a metaphorical reference to the process of checking where students are in terms of gaining understandings, knowledge and skills. A bit like checking the oil level in the car. If you do not stop and use the dipstick, you might end up with a frozen engine!

Again, you might want to look at the ARCTIC units for examples.

Your dipstick list should share strategies and methods you will use to check for understanding as you move through the unit with your students. How will you know if they understand? If they are gaining the knowledge and skills they need? These dipsticks might look like traditional assessment (paper/pencil quizzes or tests, essay tests, etc.), or they may be less traditional types of assessment (authentic tasks like teaching somebody else something they have learned), or they might be quick checks for understandings (like handing out index cards and having students write one idea that they really understand on one side and an idea that is unclear or a question they have on the other side). You can find a great list of ideas for checking understanding in
Understanding By Design on pages 66 and 67. That entire chapter, Implications for Teaching, may help you think through your formative assessment.

Many of you have already written some dipstick assessments. Please be sure to go through them again per the above instructions.

**Student Self-assessment Instructions:**
You will also find a section in the unit template for student self-assessment. The dipsticks and the self-assessments might very well do some crossing over. Reviewing student self-assessments is a very good way to check for understanding. Do list, though, ways in which you plan to have students self-assess. You will find much discussion of ongoing assessment in your text. You may also want to insert your dipsticks and self-assessment ideas into your instructional sequence, so they don’t get left in the dust during actual instruction.

2. **How will technology help meet the needs of all learners?**

This information should help you with the Accommodations section in the unit template. I know most classes, if not all, include a wide range of student abilities and interests. In this section, tell us how your use of technology in this unit might be steered to help you meet the variety of student needs. This may range from using different levels of text available online to the use of Type II programs that allow for advanced students to work on a higher level, to fostering communication and support between students and community members or other students through online communication, etc. Accommodations may also include how you will group students to most effectively use technology.
To help your thinking about this type of accommodation, I am posting an article in the Resources section from the October edition of *Educational Leadership*, “Universal Design Accessibility for All Learners,” by Cynthia Curry. I realize you will not likely have access to much of the technology that is shared in this article, but I think the ideas underlying the technology use will spur you on to new ways of thinking. Also, the article includes a great resources list.

### 3. Are we there yet?

It is time for a grand review! At this point the focus will be on one final round of response for each of you. You will have a single response partner, someone who has probably not yet looked carefully at your unit. You will serve as consultants for each other by asking important questions to help the designer improve the quality of the unit. Rather than suggesting lots of ways to ‘fix’ each other’s units, you will focus on asking questions that truly help the designer reflect on and find ways to make important changes. So, I am looking for you to ask questions that reflect the theories and knowledge you have gained through readings, assignments and course discussions. I do realize that most of you do not feel like experts in this design process yet. That is fine. If you use the following steps to help you think through your response, your questions and thoughts should prove helpful:

- **Post your unit on Caucus by Thursday, April 8th.** You will find an individual Caucus item for each class member. Post yours in your slot. Add any introduction to your unit that you think will help your partner get a better picture. This might include your particular teaching circumstances, or details for teaching this unit and how it fits in with your curriculum, or any information that you think will be helpful. Also, post at least one question or concern you have about your unit.

- **Read your assigned partner’s unit carefully.** (See partner list below)
• **Ask “skinny” questions by April 10th.** These are questions that clarify information that you need in order to understand the details of the unit. This step is not looking for any theoretical or deep level questioning; it is just for getting a clear understanding of what is happening, when and how. So, questions will be specific. For example, you might ask about the order of events in a lesson; or if groups will be used for an activity and if so, how big the groups will be; or you might need to know more details about the culminating task—who the audience is, what the criteria is, etc.

• **After you get your answers to your “skinny” questions, ask “fat” questions by April 13th.** “Fat” questions ask the designer to look more deeply and thoughtfully at the unit. They might help the designer see flaws, notice missing pieces, realize a lack of alignment between standards, understandings, questions and tasks, etc. They are not questions with right or wrong answers, but like essential questions, open doorways. Possible examples: How will the culminating task help you tell if students have gained the enduring understandings? Will the scoring guide for your culminating task actually measure the validity of the students’ answers? Is the culminating task an authentic activity? How could it be more authentic? Is there a way the technology use could be more authentic? **Use the unit scoring guide, posted in the Resources section; it will help you form your questions. Also, use the criteria for good integration of technology that you all came to some agreement on earlier. (Posted below)** You will want to include some general discussion of the unit along with your questions, but the questions are really your focus.

• **Remember: IT IS NOT YOUR JOB TO FIX YOUR PARTNER’S UNIT.** It is your job to ask questions that lead the designer to think more deeply as they work on final revision. Do feel free, however, to discuss freely with your partner and ask more questions as they arise. I know that communicating on
Caucus can be difficult, and that this process would be much easier in person. Please give it your best shot.

- Because I am only asking you to look at one other unit, I will expect you to do thorough and careful work. I will use the **reflective writing scoring guide**, also in the Resources section, to assess your response work.

- It is **imperative** that you complete this process in a timely manner. You will need to be online several times this week. Please e-mail me if you are not getting any response from your partner.

*Response Partners:*

Nycki Saxton and Monique Grasso
Faye Montoya and Kevin Lindsay
Gayle Nixon respond to Christina Hum
Christina Hum respond to Cheryl Weisenberger
Cheryl Weisenberger respond to Gayle Nixon

*Group-created Criteria for good technology integration:*

1. Technology provides opportunities and resources for authentic problem-solving, creative endeavors and research to increase or build student understanding.

2. Technology is used to communicate and exchange ideas or information in which to problem solve, research, collect data or analyze data in order to build help understanding.

*And finally, the end is in sight!* Your last assignment for this week is to revise your unit after reviewing the feedback from your response partner. You may still be revising your unit into the last week of class.

*Final directions for the next two weeks:*

So, go ahead and push on for the next two weeks.
• If you want any additional feedback from me before the final partner review, it is your responsibility to email your unit to me before April 15. Please tell me what kind of feedback you are looking for; tell me what you are feeling confident about and which pieces you would like me to look at most carefully and why. Revisit the unit scoring guide. It will help you think about areas that need more work. I realize that this work is a process. I am watching your units grow stronger. Some of you may be at the point where you do not need feedback for a while. That’s fine…do not feel you need to get approval from me constantly.

• Post the latest draft of your unit in Caucus no later than Thursday, April 8th in the conference with your name. Please ask your partner for the kind of feedback you would like. Pose at least one question about your unit. It is easy to post your unit as a file in Caucus. Just hit the upload button above the text box and then select your unit from your browser.

• I expect that you will continue to work on Caucus at least two times a week, offering feedback to your partner.

Coming Up Next Week:

Week of April 19th: This is the last week of class! You may continue to revise your unit and complete it to your satisfaction. You will complete some self-assessments. You will also complete a final reflective writing that incorporates self-assessment. Details to follow.

April 26: ALL WORK DUE BY April 26th!