Workshop 2
Teaching for Understanding

Session Summary
This session focuses on planning a social studies curriculum to maximize learning. It addresses the questions How do we plan for learning? and How can comprehensive planning increase students' understanding of social studies? It is designed to give teachers a framework for planning and connecting social studies units. To help you extend your thinking, you will:

• Identify factors that influence curriculum planning.
• Explore the Teaching for Understanding framework.
• Analyze and design social studies units.

Learning Goals
At the end of this session, you will be able to:

• Define the Teaching for Understanding framework.
• Analyze lessons using the Teaching for Understanding framework.
• Use Teaching for Understanding in your practice.

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: You will need to make copies of the following materials for all participants (pages 36–41).

Concept Chart  •  Analyzing a Lesson
Planning a Unit and Lesson  •  Summary
Key Concepts

- Teaching for Understanding
- Throughlines
- Generative topic
- Understanding goals
- Performances of understanding
- Ongoing assessment

Readings

Before arriving for this session, read each of the articles listed below to learn how key concepts define a framework for teaching social studies.

After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions. Copy the Reading Questions form on page 35.

1. How do advance organizers help students learn new concepts?
2. How does yearlong planning differ from unit or lesson planning?
3. Describe the elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework:
   - Throughlines
   - Generative topic
   - Understanding goals
   - Performances of understanding
   - Ongoing assessment

Articles

“Using Schema Theory To Teach American History”
Explains advance organizers in relationship to schema theory.

“Putting Understanding Up Front”
Provides an overview of the Teaching for Understanding framework.

“Teaching for Understanding”
Describes the elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework.

Assignment: Bring your written work to the session, and save it to submit as an assignment.

Visit the Web Site: These articles are available online at the workshop Web site at:
www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies

Go to session 2 and select Printouts.

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Be sure that everyone has access to these readings. You may want to have a few copies available for those without Internet access.
Facilitator’s Note: When the workshop session begins, you may want to spend a few minutes reviewing the Reading Questions and key concepts.

Activity 1: Getting Started

Watch the video introduction to familiarize yourself with the session, instructor, and participants.

View Video Segment: Introduction: Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment at the beginning of the video. Watch for about 15 minutes.

In this video segment, workshop participants discuss factors that influence their curriculum planning and compare their ideas to other teachers. As you watch, think about what influences your curriculum planning.

Activity 2: What Do You Know?

Facilitator’s Note: Distribute the Concept Chart.

A concept chart can help you identify the factors that influence your social studies planning. Recall a social studies unit that you have taught recently, list your understanding goals or objectives for the unit, and identify factors that influenced your planning.

Here is an example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Studies Unit</th>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th>What Influenced Planning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How We Are Alike/Different</td>
<td>Explore cultural traditions</td>
<td>• Community demographics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Recent unit on world regions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow the instructions on the Concept Chart.

Activity 3: Reflect on Your Work

When you have completed your concept chart, review the factors that influence your planning and consider the following questions:

- How were your objectives affected by the factors you listed?
- How did students demonstrate their learning?
- How did you connect this unit to other units?
The following video segment reviews the Teaching for Understanding framework, and provides an example of how it can be used in a classroom.

**View Video Segment: Identifying Elements in a Classroom Example:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 17 minutes into the video. Watch for about 20 minutes.

In this segment, workshop instructor Mary McFarland reviews the elements of Teaching for Understanding, and shows how fifth-grade teacher Rob Cuddi uses this framework in a lesson on explorers in North America.

As you watch, look for elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework and think about the following questions:

- What are Mr. Cuddi’s throughlines or yearlong goals?
- What is the generative topic used to introduce the unit?
- What are Mr. Cuddi’s understanding goals for his students in this unit?
- How do students demonstrate their understanding?
- How does Mr. Cuddi provide ongoing assessment?
- What is the culminating assessment?
Apply what you’ve learned about Teaching for Understanding as you complete the following activities.

**Activity 1: Analyzing a Lesson**

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Analyzing a Lesson form.

This activity is designed to help you identify classroom examples of the Teaching for Understanding elements. Rob Cuddi’s class is studying explorers in North America. Mr. Cuddi uses essential questions throughout the unit to remind students of yearlong goals. He also integrates other subjects in the activities his students do to demonstrate their learning. As students work together in groups, draft haiku, and rehearse skits, Mr. Cuddi engages a range of assessment methods.

Follow the instructions on the Analyzing a Lesson form.

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment.

**Visit the Web Site:** This activity is also available online as an Interactive Activity at:

www.learner.org/channel/workshops/socialstudies

Go to session 2 and select Apply.

**View Video Segment: Applying Teaching for Understanding:** Go to this segment in the video by matching the image (to the left) on your TV screen. You’ll find this segment approximately 39 minutes into the video. Watch for about 20 minutes.

In this video segment, participants work together to identify the elements of Teaching for Understanding in Mr. Cuddi’s lesson, then complete a mini-lesson that illustrates yearlong story lines in history.
Activity 2: Planning a Unit and Lesson

FACILITATOR’S NOTE: Distribute the Planning a Unit and Lesson form.

Now that you have practiced identifying elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework, complete a graphic organizer based on a unit and lesson of your own. Using the Planning a Unit and Lesson form, follow these steps:

- Choose a social studies unit that you teach.
- Identify the yearlong goal or throughline your unit will relate to.
- Come up with a generative topic that provides the specific focus of this unit.
- List the unit goals that support the generative topic and one or more of the throughlines.
- Show the performances of understanding that you will require of students in each lesson of the unit.
- Show the ongoing assessment activity that you will include in each lesson.
- Describe the culminating assessment that you will plan for the end of the unit.

Assignment: Save your written work to submit as an assignment. Note: If you are taking all eight sessions for credit, you can revise the unit you began in session 1 to incorporate the elements of Teaching for Understanding.
Evaluate

What Did You Learn?

**FACILITATOR’S NOTE:** Distribute the Summary form.

In this session, you learned how the Teaching for Understanding framework can be used to develop and connect social studies units.

Review your initial concept chart, answers to the reading questions, and the unit you developed. Now write a summary of what you’ve learned. Be sure to include:

- what you learned about the factors that influence your curriculum planning;
- how you might incorporate each element of the Teaching for Understanding framework into your practice;
- the benefits and challenges of using the framework in your teaching; and
- how students’ understanding can improve over the course of the year.

**Assignment:** Save your written work to submit as an assignment. Note: If you are taking all eight sessions for credit, you may continue to work on this unit in subsequent sessions. Save a copy of your work.

Check the Assignments list that follows to be sure you’ve completed all assignments for this session.
Assignments

Submit Your Work

If you are taking this workshop for credit or professional development, submit the following assignments for session 2: Teaching for Understanding.

1. **Explore**: Read the articles and respond to the questions that follow using the Reading Questions form.
2. **Apply**: Identify elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework and complete the Analyzing a Lesson activity.
3. **Apply**: Develop a unit based on the Teaching for Understanding framework, and complete the Planning a Unit and Lesson activity.
4. **Evaluate**: Summarize what you’ve learned about curriculum planning.

For Next Week

See Explore: Readings for session 3 for next week’s reading assignment.

Resources

Print


Web

Active Learning Practices for Schools
http://learnweb.harvard.edu/alps/tfu/index.cfm
Provides information about Teaching for Understanding.

National Council for the Social Studies
http://www.ncss.org/
Provides an online version of *Expectations of Excellence: Curriculum Standards for Social Studies*. 
After you read the articles, write answers to the following questions:

1. How do advance organizers help students learn new concepts?

2. How does yearlong planning differ from unit or lesson planning?

3. Describe the elements of the Teaching for Understanding framework:
   Throughlines
   Generative topic
   Understanding goals
   Performances of understanding
   Ongoing assessment

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### Social Studies Topic:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Objectives</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What Influenced Planning</td>
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</table>

When you have completed your concept chart, review the factors that influence your planning and consider the following questions:

- How were your objectives affected by the factors you listed?
- How did students demonstrate their learning?
- How did you connect this unit to other units?
Examine how Teaching for Understanding elements are incorporated into Mr. Cuddi’s lesson by completing this activity. Write your examples of how each element is used in the lesson, and then compare your answers to the answers of other teachers.

Description:
Rob Cuddi’s class is studying explorers in North America. Mr. Cuddi uses essential questions throughout the unit to remind students of yearlong goals. He also integrates other subjects in the activities his students do to demonstrate their learning. As students work together in groups, draft haiku, and rehearse skits, Mr. Cuddi engages a range of assessment methods.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elements of Teaching for Understanding</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Throughlines</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generative Topic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>Performances of Understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ongoing Assessment</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Your Answers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Throughlines</strong> – yearlong learning goals</th>
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<tbody>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Generative Topic</strong> – an accessible theme related to the unit</th>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Understanding Goals</strong> – unit objectives</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Performances of Understanding</strong> – what students do to show their knowledge</th>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Ongoing Assessment</strong> – informal feedback throughout a unit or lesson</th>
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</table>
## Sample Answers

### Throughlines

- Students will understand the role foreign governments play in U.S. history.
- Students will understand economic influences in U.S. history.
- Students will understand how various population shifts affect the environment and geography in U.S. history.

### Generative Topic

- Exploration

### Understanding Goals

- Students will understand how and when European explorers came to America.
- Students will understand the explorers' influence on the geography of North America.
- Students will understand the explorers' impact on the economy of colonial America.

### Performances of Understanding

- Students will write their responses to essential questions before the unit begins, to predict what they will learn.
- Students will conduct individual research about one explorer to North America, using primary sources.
- Students will develop a presentation about an explorer, using literary devices.

### Ongoing Assessment

- Students' initial responses to essential questions will be compared to their responses at the end of the unit.
- Students will research an explorer.
- Each presentation should include a literary device and accurate historical material.
- Each group will post data on the classroom data chart.

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Complete a graphic organizer based on a unit and lesson of your own.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Title:</th>
<th>Throughlines</th>
<th>Generative Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Unit Goals</td>
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<td>4.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lesson</td>
<td>Performances of Understanding</td>
<td>Ongoing Assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.</td>
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<tr>
<td>End-of-Unit</td>
<td>Culminating Assessment</td>
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Write a summary of what you've learned and how you plan to apply it in your practice. Be sure to include:

- what you learned about the factors that influence your curriculum planning;
- how you might incorporate each element of the Teaching for Understanding framework into your practice;
- the benefits and challenges of using the framework in your teaching; and
- how students' understanding can improve over the course of the year.