

Considerations in Unit Planning

- Begin with a **comprehensive school calendar** that includes unit beginning and end dates, scheduled days off, early release days, shortened periods, scheduled events, and interim grade due dates. Include testing dates and assessment windows.
- **Review the End of Unit assessment questions** that must be completed in the unit. (both advanced and on-level)
 - Identify skills and content tasks that students must know and understand in order to complete the assessment items. Review the curriculum materials and decide on which formative assessments you will use to determine if students have learned the material as you go – and if any common formative assessments need to be created.
 - Determine tasks that **must** be done sequentially — e.g., comparing Aztecs to Incas AFTER they have learned about both — or that **could be** done sequentially — e.g., two tasks reliant on similar, specific background knowledge or materials. This determination will impact your calendar planning.
 - Build in sufficient instructional time to ensure students build their understanding of both the historical content and the historical thinking skills they will need to complete the assessments – it's a fact that all students will need both!
- Perhaps most important, **use your pre assessment data.** - Consider the length of the instructional stream that may be necessary to build sufficient student knowledge and skills for successful completion of the rigorous tasks. The fewer skills your students have that are germane to a specific task, the longer the instructional time it will be necessary to budget to enable your students to be successful on that task. This includes the skills students need to understand complex and provocative texts, as well as the skills necessary to show and exhibit their knowledge and skills successfully and with increasing rigor and sophistication.
- **Consider your own workload.** Try to avoid collecting major essays from all of your classes simultaneously, which would prevent a rapid turn-around of student work to inform their subsequent efforts. Also try

to avoid collecting several assignments at the end of the unit, which could create a grading crunch for you and could limit the potential of student growth by providing them with insufficient feedback or insufficient time to respond to your feedback with corrected materials.

- Keep in mind the unit's **Historical Thinking/Reading/Writing focus**: it will tie directly to at least one of the lesson sequences and indicates an explicit skill which students must master. Depending on your students' current skill level, the amount and type of instruction in this specific skill may vary, impacting the length of the instructional stream.

Other Considerations In Planning The Unit

- What types of scaffolding and accommodations will be necessary to ensure success for all students?
- How can you provide acceleration and enrichment to meet the needs of highly capable students?
- Opportunities for re-teaching and re-assessment – Do you have an advisory period? Will you need to take time in class? When in the unit can you anticipate your students needing this support?
- Availability of resources—e.g., media center, computer lab – sign up quickly as soon as you have dates on your unit plan
- Sufficient time for students to construct their knowledge through struggle with complex, provocative, ambiguous, and emotional materials – great materials at the end of a poorly planned unit are often rushed through and not given adequate time and focus!